

American Institute of Rhinoceros Science (AIRS) A model for saving species with science *ex situ*

CREW is partnering with The Wilds, Disney's Animals, Science and Environment, George Mason University, the South-East Zoo Alliance for Reproduction & Conservation, and Stellenbosch University, South Africa, on a new, big initiative, taking rhino science and collaboration to a new level while helping to save rhinos from extinction.

AIRS in a Nutshell

AIRS is led by a coalition of expert rhino scientists and is founded on the partnership between CREW (with its renowned Rhino Signature Project), and The Wilds (one of the most successful rhino breeding and management facilities). This large coalition will employ a multidisciplinary, integrative strategy to overcome the four greatest scientific challenges to sustaining rhino populations within our nation's zoos. The team recognizes that the scientific challenges are inter-related, and studying one of them in isolation will fall short of what could be achieved by tackling all of them together. In short, **the whole is greater than the sum of its parts**. AIRS will consist of a diverse, inclusive team of scientists in all stages of their training/careers. The project will produce science-based, affordable and feasible management recommendations for monitoring and controlling physical condition, iron overload, and reproduction, while ensuring optimal rhino wellbeing. This program will set a precedent for saving species with science in zoos, a model with value for all species at risk in the wild. (AIRS is supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services #MG-249011-OMS-21.)

The AIRS Team

Director

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AIRS Partners

AZA Rhinoceros Taxon Advisory Group
AZA Eastern Black Rhino Species Survival Plan
AZA Greater One-Horned Rhino Species Survival Plan
AZA White Rhino Species Survival Plan
Birmingham Zoo
Brookfield Zoo
Buffalo Zoo
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
Columbus Zoo & Aquarium
Detroit Zoological Society
Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
Indianapolis Zoo
International Rhino Foundation
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens
Lincoln Park Zoo
Lion Country Safari
Lowry Park Zoo
Maryland Zoo
Milwaukee County Zoo
Museum of Osteology
North Carolina Zoo
Sedgewick County Zoo
Skulls Unlimited International, Inc.
White Oak Conservation



Dr. Mandi Schook

"I am so excited that AIRS gives us the foundation to look at how physical fitness relates to health, wellbeing, and reproductive success in a holistic way across rhino populations."



Dr. Michele Miller

"AIRS offers the rare opportunity to apply new techniques for tackling key rhino health issues while comparing wild and human-managed rhinos."



Dr. Terri Roth

"Rhino iron overload disorder has stumped scientists for decades, but with so much expertise and diverse experience within AIRS, already novel approaches have evolved for studying this phenomenon."

PHYSICAL
FITNESS

IRON
STORAGE

The whole
is greater than
the sum of
its parts

REPRODUCTION

WELLBEING



Dr. Parker Pennington

"The AIRS partnerships provide a unique opportunity to learn from The Wild's historical success and develop new and innovative ways to support rhino reproduction into the future."



Dr. Elizabeth Freeman

"By demonstrating the importance of integrative research and the strength of women in STEM, AIRS is a model for training the next generation of conservation scientists."

Dr. Lara Metrione

"Promoting the wellbeing of rhinos in our care is at the heart of what we do. The interdisciplinary approach of AIRS is the best way for us to comprehensively understand how to help our rhinos thrive."



Dr. Jan Ramer

"The Wilds is honored and excited to be a part of this program. Our successful rhino breeding herds and talented, experienced animal management staff make The Wilds an invaluable resource for this important work."

