American Institute of Rhinoceros Science (AIRS) A model for saving species

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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Co-PIs/Team Leaders:

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Consultants:

Kari Morfeld, PhD For Elephants, Inc.

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."



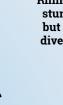
The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

with science ex situ



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. 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."



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."



"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."