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Austin Zoo's mission is to assist animals in need through rescue, conservation and education. For most of the zoo's history, that meant rescuing animals from situations where they could no longer be properly cared for and giving them a forever home in the Texas Hill Country. In recent years, we have greatly increased our commitment to being an educational resource for the community. By telling the stories of our animals and the challenges facing their natural habitats, we not only raise awareness but also inspire a new generation of conservation-minded animal lovers.

Since 2018, we have been proud to be accredited by the Zoological Association of America (ZAA), and we added an explicit focus on conservation to our mission statement in 2020. Beyond providing exceptional care to our animals and educating the public about them, we can do more to promote conservation. It's not just our animals who are in need – entire species are at risk.

We have been provided an opportunity to make a positive difference in the future of a magnificent animal species in need. Earlier this year, we were approached by the ZAA-accredited Cheetah Animal Management Program (AMP), whose mission is to ensure the long-term survival of the species through managed propagation, which is the only effective means of insulating against a potential collapse of wild populations. We whole-heartedly wanted to support this program.

Austin Zoo has always been a non-breeding facility, and our participation in the Cheetah AMP will not change that Instead, we will provide care and housing for individual cheetahs until space becomes available at a zoo that has a breeding program. We may also take in older cheetahs who are past the age of safe breeding, so that there is room in those facilities for cheetahs who can still be bred to preserve the species.

The Cheetah AMP is a cooperative managed effort to achieve scientific goals for long-range population management as a supplement to wild populations' propagation. Coordinating across ZAA-accredited members ensures the greatest genetic variability, which is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the species. It is conservation by action.