



Bristol Zoological
Society
Saving Wildlife Together

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 5 a.m., February 25, 2015

US Media Contact:

Lynne Venart
Project Manager and Creative Director,
Lemur Conservation Network
+1 571/213-6717
lvenart@msn.com

European Media Contact:

Christoph Schwitzer
Project Advisor,
Lemur Conservation Network
Director of Conservation,
Bristol Zoological Society
UK Phone Number: 0117 974 7358
cschwitzer@bristolzoo.org.uk

**Lemur Conservation Network Unites Over 40 Organizations
to Implement \$7 Million Lemur Action Plan**
New initiative to streamline the global effort to protect
the world's most endangered group of mammals

Washington, D.C. – One year ago, primatologists from the Bristol Zoological Society, Conservation International, and the Primate Specialist Group of IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Species Survival Commission announced a three-year action plan for lemurs. Organized by hundreds of primatologists from across the world, the plan targets 30 priority sites across Madagascar with urgent conservation strategies.

One year later, more than 40 organizations unite to form the **Lemur Conservation Network** (www.lemurconservationnetwork.org)—streamlining conservation in Madagascar and urging donors to support this \$7 million lemur action plan. This online funding guide makes it easy for donors to find lemur conservation organizations to support, and engages the public with content from researchers and conservation leaders. The Network includes well-known organizations like Conservation International, WWF Madagascar, and Centre ValBio, alongside organizations of all sizes from the United States, France, Germany, the UK and Madagascar, including community-run Malagasy conservation groups, such as Association Mitsinjo and the ONG Reniala Lemur Rescue Center.

To create the Lemur Conservation Network, the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group partnered with Lynne Venart of Washington, D.C. design firm The Art Monkey LLC (www.theartmonkey.com). As a web designer and lemur enthusiast, Venart recognized that the lemur action plan needed an accompanying online funding guide, so she and advisors from the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group set out to create a platform to unite Madagascar's lemur groups and promote lemur conservation to a worldwide audience.



Bristol Zoological
Society
Saving Wildlife Together

Bristol Zoological Society's Dr. Christoph Schwitzer, an author of the lemur action plan and advisor to the Lemur Conservation Network states, "The IUCN lemur action plan gives us the toolset to fight lemur extinctions. The fact is that if we don't act now, we risk losing a lemur species for the first time in two centuries. The importance of the projects we've outlined in the IUCN lemur action plan simply cannot be overstated."

With over 90 percent of lemur species threatened with extinction, urgent conservation measures are critical. Over 80 percent of Madagascar's forests have been lost, and lemurs are in danger from hunting and the illegal pet trade, which threatens over 28,000 lemurs per year.

Dr. Russ Mittermeier, Chairman of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and the Executive Vice-Chair of Conservation International, says that "Lemurs are without a doubt the country's most distinctive brand in the global arena, and a major asset in scientific, cultural, and economic terms. Their conservation should be a very high priority focus for government and civil society at all levels."

"Lemurs are the goose laying the golden eggs for Madagascar; tourists are not going to come and see empty forests without lemurs. Thousands of families depend on them for their livelihoods," says Dr. Jonah Ratsimbazafy, Co-Vice Chair of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and Secretary General of GERP, an association which connects Malagasy scientists with the international community to build in-country capacity for lemur conservation.

Dr. Steig Johnson, an advisor to the Lemur Conservation Network, echoes this, stating "Lemurs play crucial roles in the growth and spread of forests, and without them we might lose these natural areas that provide clean water, food and shelter to so many people in rural Madagascar. *Saving lemurs means saving people's livelihoods.*"

The Lemur Conservation Network website launches February 25 at www.lemurconservationnetwork.org. On March 19, the network will host a launch party at the Right Proper Brewing Company in Washington, D.C.

The press kit for the Lemur Conservation Network can be found at www.lemurconservationnetwork.org/presskit/. The network can also be found on Facebook (www.facebook.com/lemurconservationnetwork) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/LemurNetwork).