



Freeport-McMoRan Audubon
Species Survival Center
A Facility of Audubon Nature Institute

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 23, 2019

Baby Boom at Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center

(New Orleans, LA) – There was a spring and summer baby boom at Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center where the [Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife and whooping crane and Mississippi sandhill crane programs](#) are housed.

The breeding success within the Alliance was among many different species: giraffe, sable antelope, bongo, eland, and sitatunga. The most recent birth was a giraffe, the sixth male born at FMSSC. Giraffe populations in the last few decades have seen a decrease by about thirty percent and are now classified as vulnerable. Habitat loss due to expanding agriculture, human-wildlife conflict, poaching for their meat pelt and tails are among the reason for their decline.

ASW also welcomed a baby bongo - a critically endangered species of antelope. The plight of the bongo represents a textbook case for this initiative as there are more bongos under human care than in the wild and their numbers continue to dwindle due to habitat loss from illegal logging, hunting and transmission of disease from grazing cattle.

“The partnership of these organizations demonstrates the importance of collaboration to achieve measurable conservation results and make significant impacts on the future of endangered species,” says FMSSC General Curator Michelle Hatwood.

The Alliance, an innovative partnership between Audubon and San Diego Global was established in 2017 to preserve species that are vulnerable in the wild. Spanning more than 1000 acres, ASW is a haven for more than two dozen endangered and threatened mammal and bird species all part of [Species Survival Plan administered by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#).

With the birth of four chicks the commitment to the long-term growth and stability of the whooping crane population to save this species from extinction continues.

Supported by generous donors like Chevron, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Audubon have been longtime leaders in whooping crane conservation and are continuing to expand their partnership. This partnership is an example of the importance of collaboration

between state agencies and non-profit organizations, leveraging the strengths of both to achieve measurable conservation results and make a significant, historic impact on the future of this species.

“It’s impressive the strides that have been made since we began our journey to restore the whooping crane to the wild in Louisiana in 2011,” says LDWF Secretary Jack Montoucet. “Our primary goal is to establish a self-sustaining whooping crane population in Louisiana. To do so takes working in concert with our many partners, including the Audubon Nature Institute. We look forward to having these four chicks join our wild population.”

The birth of eight Mississippi sandhill crane chicks helps bolster the population of this North American crane subspecies and add to the more than 200 chicks produced at the Survival Center. With most of the chicks being released back into the wild, the goal of the recovery program is to create a self-sustaining population of these cranes.

As of 2016, the wild population of Mississippi sandhill cranes was approximately 130, with 65% of the wild birds hatched and raised at FMSCC. There is a high mortality among chicks in the first year, so to help increase the number of surviving offspring staff use predator aversion training to demonstrate correct protective behaviors to the soon-to-be released crane chicks.

“Conservation efforts under the guidance of the SSP may be the last hope for many of these species. Audubon is privileged to be able to work with so many partners to ensure the survival of so many beautiful animals,” says Hatwood.

Media Contact:

Lauren Conrad

Director of Public Relations

Office: (504) 378.2693 / Cell: (504) 222.8014

Lmessinaconrad@auduboninstitute.org

###