

# St. Louis Zoo helps oryx species come back from near-extinction

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Scimitar oryx at Chester Zoo. Credit: [Mike Peel](http://www.mikepeel.net) (www.mikepeel.net).  
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The status of one species has gone from "extinct in the wild" to "endangered," thanks in part to the efforts of the St. Louis Zoo. The scimitar-horned oryx, a member of the antelope family, had stopped existing in its native habitat as of 1991, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. At the time, they only remained in zoos.

But a consortium of zoos and other conservation organizations started sending oryxes that had been born in zoos back to Tunisia in 2007, where they were kept in fenced reserves. The St. Louis Zoo was an incubator in the project, zoo officials said, and served as the base of operations for the program in the United States.

In 2016, the organizations began sending 285 oryxes to the country of Chad to be reintroduced into the wild. With births, including second-generation births, the herd now stands at more than 600.

The St. Louis Zoo did not have any scimitar-horned oryxes of its own to send to Africa, said spokeswoman Megan Pellock, though at one time it did have Arabian oryxes. Along with organizational support, the zoo helped to raise funds for the project.

In addition, the zoo sent some addaxes to Tunisia to stay in the same mixed-species reserves with the oryxes. Oryxes and addaxes are closely related, and addaxes are classified as critically endangered.

Although the number of oryxes in the wild are increasing, "some of the threats still exist, and sustained efforts are still required to ensure the oryx's long-term survival in the wild," the zoo said in a statement.

Other organizations involved in the [conservation efforts](#) include Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi, Fisheries and Sustainable Development representing the Government of Chad, Sahara Conservation, the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, the Zoological Society of London, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center and others.

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