



MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN



Saint Louis Zoo

Animals Always®

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MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN, SAINT LOUIS ZOO SIGN LETTER TO MADAGASCAR

*Malagasy government's decree for precious wood export will unleash
further environmental pillaging*

The Missouri Botanical Garden and Saint Louis Zoo have joined worldwide conservationists and scientists in issuing the following letter to the government of Madagascar:

Recently Madagascar's transitional government issued two contradictory decrees: first, the exploitation of all precious woods was made illegal, but then a second allowed the export of hundreds of shipping containers packed with this illegally harvested wood.

Madagascar's forests have long suffered from the abusive exploitation of precious woods, most particularly rosewoods and ebonies, but the country's recent political problems have resulted in a dramatic increase in their exploitation. This activity now represents a serious threat to those who rely on the forest for goods and services and for the country's rich, unique and highly threatened flora and fauna.

Precious woods are being extracted from forests by roving and sometimes violent gangs of lumbermen and sold to a few powerful businessmen for export. Madagascar has 47 species of rosewood and over 100 ebony species that occur nowhere else, and their exploitation is pushing some to the brink of extinction. Lumbermen are trapping endangered lemurs for food, and the forests themselves are being degraded as trees are felled, processed and dragged to adjacent rivers or roads for transport to the coast. No forest that contains precious woods is safe, and the country's most prestigious nature reserves and favoured tourist destinations, such as the Marojejy World Heritage Site, the Masoala National Park and the Mananara Biosphere Reserve, have been the focus of intensive exploitation. Currently thousands of rosewood and ebony logs, none of them legally exploited, are stored in Madagascar's east coast ports Vohemar, Antalaha, and Toamasina. The most recent decree will allow their export and surely encourage a further wave of environmental pillaging.

Malagasy civil society, conservation and development organisations and the international community are united in lamenting the issue of the most recent decree, in fearing its consequences and in questioning its legitimacy. Consumers of rosewood and ebony products are asked to check its origin, and boycott those made of Malagasy wood.

AZA Association of Zoos and Aquariums
CAS California Academy of Science

(over)

ADD ONE: Letter to Madagascar

CI Conservation International
DWCT Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
EAZA European Association of Zoos and Aquaria
ICTE Institute for the Conservation of Tropical Environments
MFG Madagascar Fauna Group
Missouri Botanical Garden
The Field Museum, Chicago
Dr Claire Kremen, University of California, Berkeley
Dean Keith Gilless, University of California, Berkeley
Robert Douglas Stone, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
WAZA World Association of Zoos and Aquariums
WCS Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF World Wide Fund for Nature
Zoo Zürich

The Missouri Botanical Garden has sustained a research program in Madagascar, a biologically rich island nation off the east coast of Africa, for decades. Two resident botanists are stationed in the capital of Madagascar; they work with a talented staff of 70 local Malagasy botanists and botanists-in-training. The Garden has supported the expansion of the herbarium there, a multi-tiered botanical training program, and development of conservation initiatives and publications. Garden scientists are involved in the creation of forest preserves and are teaching sustainable agriculture techniques and resource use to local residents so they can survive without destroying the forest. Madagascar's flora is one of the world's richest, with tremendous numbers of species found nowhere else. Of its 10,000 to 12,000 plant species, 80% are endemic (including more than 1000 species of orchids). Nine plant families are found nowhere else in the world.

The Saint Louis Zoo has been a member of the Madagascar Fauna Group, an international consortium of zoos and botanical gardens that work together to save Madagascar's unique and critically endangered plants and animals, since 1988. The Zoo has served as its international headquarters since 2003. Madagascar Fauna Group's multidisciplinary conservation programs are carried out by a team of 39 Malagasy employees through its in-country office in Tamatave, one of Madagascar's major cities. The Zoo has taken a major role in developing a Conservation and Training Center and in partnering with experts to initiate an eco-agriculture research and training program through the University of Tamatave. Conserving habitat for Madagascar's endangered lemurs must include assisting the Malagasy people develop appropriate methods that increase their production of wood and food crops on existing farm lands. The Zoo also carries out research projects to conserve critically endangered lemur species, including habitat surveys, diet evaluations and health assessments.

(more)

ADD TWO: Letter to Madagascar

Since becoming a founding member of Madagascar Fauna Group in 1988, the Saint Louis Zoo has also initiated a number of research projects to conserve critically endangered lemur species, including habitat surveys, diet evaluations and health assessments.

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The Missouri Botanical Garden's mission is "to discover and share knowledge about plants and their environment, in order to preserve and enrich life." Today, 150 years after opening, the Missouri Botanical Garden is a National Historic Landmark and a center for science, conservation, education and horticultural display. *Missouri Botanical Garden: Green for 150 Years.*

The Saint Louis Zoo is widely recognized for its innovative approaches to animal management, wildlife conservation, research and education. The Zoo has been named America's #1 Zoo by Zagat Survey and Parenting Magazine. One of the few free zoos in the nation, the Zoo attracts 3,000,000 visitors each year.