

# CONSERVATION FACT SHEET



## Harpy Eagle Project

The harpy eagle is a rare apex predator found in tropical forests of Central and South America. One of the largest and most powerful birds of prey in the world, it needs large, undisturbed tracts of forest to survive. Throughout its range, it faces constant threats from habitat destruction and hunting. A lack of understanding combined with misconceptions about this magnificent raptor has led to additional persecution. These long-lived, slow-reproducing eagles present unique challenges when it comes to conservation.

Harpy eagles play a vital role in the overall health of the tropical forests and as an “umbrella species,” their protection leads to the protection of countless other lesser known species in one of the most bio diverse ecosystems on earth. As part of Zoo Miami’s commitment to protect wildlife in the native habitat where it naturally exists, we partnered with the government of Panama and private enterprise to establish the Harpy Eagle Project in the Republic of Panama.

Zoo Miami spearheaded an effort to design and build a state-of-the-art Harpy Eagle Center at Summit Zoo and Gardens just outside of Panama City. The center hosts tens of thousands of visitors each year and serves as the base for harpy eagle conservation and education programs throughout the republic. Subsequently, Zoo Miami played a vital role in lobbying the Panamanian Congress to pass a law officially declaring the harpy eagle the National Bird of Panama and thereby providing it with additional federal protection. In 2013, Zoo Miami brought the first harpy eagle to ever hatch in captivity at its facility to Summit Zoo and Gardens in Panama to be exhibited at the center and to serve as a wildlife ambassador for the Harpy Eagle Project and to help educate the thousands of visitors about the many wonders of this incredible bird and the beautiful tropical forest world in which it lives. Zoo Miami staff has participated in various field studies of the harpy eagle in Panama while providing ongoing funding and support for those studies as well as a wide variety of educational programs within the indigenous communities.