

PRESS RELEASE

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Media link for videos and photos:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=3939&k=a938c52516>

Videos contain camera trap footage of wild, endangered Matschie's tree kangaroos and critically endangered Eastern long-beaked echidna near the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program's Wasaunon research site in Papua New Guinea's YUS Conservation Area.

Credit for videos: Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program

Credit for photos: Jeremy Dwyer-Lindgren/Woodland Park Zoo



Cams and collars help tree kangaroos and local communities *World Wildlife Day, March 3: digital innovation saving wildlife*

SEATTLE—Imagine a world without digital technology. It would be nearly impossible to track a mysterious animal that has exceptional climbing and jumping skills...an animal that lives high in the dense canopy of the tropical cloud forest... a forest that flourishes in the remote, rugged mountains of the Huon Peninsula in Papua New Guinea. If not for the ever-evolving digital assets of today, little would be known about this stealthy animal, the Matschie's tree kangaroo, found only in Papua New Guinea.

Tomorrow, March 3, is World Wildlife Day, a day the United Nations designated a decade ago to celebrate Earth's precious wild animals and plants. The theme for 2024 is *Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation*.

The [Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program](#) (TKCP), a signature program of Woodland Park Zoo, works with local communities on a remote peninsula in Papua New Guinea to save endangered Matschie's tree kangaroos and, in turn, works to benefit local communities through supporting education, health and livelihoods programs. TKCP established Papua New Guinea's first and only nationally-recognized Conservation Area, which protects more than 187,000 acres of forest and 50 villages against logging, mining and over-hunting.

The communities of YUS, named for the Yopno, Uruwa and Som Rivers that run through the area, are recognized around the world as conservation innovators. "Over the last five years, the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program has applied several innovative, complementary tools and techniques, including custom GPS tracking collars, camera traps and fixed-wing mapping drones," said Lisa Dabek, PhD, founder of the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program and senior conservation scientist at Woodland Park Zoo.

Last October, TKCP researchers, veterinarians, local wildlife trackers, and conservation officers teamed up in the remote cloud forests to temporarily capture and safely immobilize adult tree kangaroos, collect various biosamples and attach GPS collars. The animals were then released to where they were caught, and remote cameras, known as camera traps, were deployed at each of the animal's home trees to video their behaviors. The collars and cameras will be retrieved in April to download and analyze the data.

To complement the GPS-tracking and camera trap data, drones will be piloted this year to generate digital three-dimensional maps of the canopy structure throughout the home ranges of the collared tree kangaroos to better understand their behavioral ecology and habitat use.

“These valuable tools help us monitor and visualize the movements of tree kangaroos among the forest canopy and help advance the local and global knowledge on these marsupials to help protect them into the future,” said Dabek.

TKCP’s coffee and cocoa programs also help improve livelihoods for the people in YUS while providing incentives for conservation.

“The applications of digital technology are boundless. We’re harnessing the assets of digital technology to further our understanding of wildlife friendly coffee growing practices,” said Samuel Merson, conservation monitoring strategist for the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program. “Coffee farmers naturally use sustainable growing methods—no pesticides or chemical pest control—that protect the forests and enable wildlife to thrive, including providing a deep knowledge of wildlife species passing through coffee gardens and how they vary across the landscape.”

In collaboration with Wildlife Conservation Society - PNG, camera traps are set up in coffee gardens at high and low gradient elevations to document how wildlife vary with the intent of protecting and maintaining coffee gardens as friendly to native wildlife.

Woodland Park Zoo is home to five Matschie’s tree kangaroos who currently live in a behind-the-scenes habitat while a new exhibit is being built. The new immersive, best-in-class exhibit, Forest Trailhead, will be home to Matschie’s tree kangaroos, red pandas, keas and forest reptiles and is scheduled to open in 2026.

Tree Kangaroo Facts:

- Fifty percent of all tree kangaroo species are classified as either endangered or critically endangered.
- There are 14 species of tree kangaroos found in only three countries: Papua New Guinea, Indonesia (the Province of West Papua) and Australia.
- Woodland Park Zoo’s Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program and its partners in Papua New Guinea are working to strengthen the protection of wildlife and habitat throughout the country.
- Major threats to tree kangaroos on the island of New Guinea include habitat destruction from logging and land clearing and overhunting. In Australia, the major threat is habitat loss and defragmentation and injury and death due to cars and dogs.

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Through the [Forests for All](#) campaign, Woodland Park Zoo is activating a conservation revolution. And it starts with each individual—because every person has the power to create meaningful change. Join the zoo today to save forests and the countless lives they sustain.

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