

Protecting and rescuing animals during wartime





Contents

5	Foreword	35	Recommendations
7	War in Ukraine	36	How to be prepared for a disaster?
8	General overview	37	How to respond to a disaster effectively?
9	Impacts of the war on animals	38	How to establish the foundations for recovery and resilience?
13	IFAW's response to the war in Ukraine	39	Appendix
14	Holistic approach to disasters	40	List of local partners supported by IFAW
15	Emergency response in Ukraine		
16	Long-term strategy to rescue and protect animals	42	Endnotes
31	Conclusions		

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◀ Rori the lion in care at Wild Animal Rescue in Ukraine.



Foreword

War causes damage, displacement, destruction, and devastation.

The Russian-Ukrainian war started in 2014, but the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 shook the sense of peace and stability we had in Europe. The lives of Ukrainians changed, dealing with a new reality: day-to-day warfare and uncertainty about what the future holds. The broader international community strongly condemned the invasion and mobilised emergency support for the Ukrainian people. However, not only people are affected by war. Animals, too, pay a heavy price.

Whether domestic or wild, free or captive, on land, in water or in the air, animals endure suffering and are exposed to dangers that are no different from those faced by human communities. Fear, starvation, thirst, stress, injury, disease, isolation and many other ailments have become the daily reality of many of them. To this day, no one can say how many animals have perished, as victims of bombardments, mines, devastating fires or by acts of cruelty by the Russian occupying forces. Nor how many have fled their homes and their vital habitat, are struggling to survive or bear the physical or psychological scars of war.

There are undoubtedly hundreds of thousands, if not millions.

No one can say, because animals are often the forgotten victims of war, excluded from existing aid and support mechanisms. Yet there should be no need to point out that animals guarantee the food security and livelihoods of billions of people around the world. They provide health and economic benefits, with some contributing to the health of ecosystems and others being a source of well-being and emotional support.

We thus have a duty and a moral obligation to protect and help animals. Firstly, because of their intrinsic value, but also because our health and well-being, and their health and well-being are interconnected on this planet we share. Looking after animals is looking after our humanity.

That's why, for more than 50 years, IFAW has been helping animals in need all over the world, particularly through its disaster response and wildlife rescue programmes, whose respective strengths were mobilised from the very first day of the full-scale invasion. This case study is a testament to the tireless work carried out, helping almost 192,000 animals and their guardians between February 2022 and June 2024. It highlights the initiatives developed and the solutions implemented to meet the emergency needs of domestic and wild animals. It also shows the key role of partnerships with local organisations and communities, the everyday heroes, in maximising our impact across Ukraine. In addition, it demonstrates the need to include animals and animal aid organisations in crisis management plans. This case study, therefore, is intended to be a practical tool for those who have to rescue animals during long-term disasters such as armed conflict and war.

IFAW's work in Ukraine would not have been possible without the support of our volunteer animal rescuers and veterinarians, our translators, our Ukrainian team and also our donors and supporters from around the world. We are grateful for every donation we received. The continued generosity has enabled us to offer animals in need in Ukraine a better future. Our special thanks go to the Andrew Sabin Family Foundation; Anicom Holdings, Inc; explore.org; BNP Paribas - Fonds Urgence & Développement; and Mars, Incorporated.

Wishing for peace,
With all my gratitude,

Céline Sissler-Bienvenu
Programme director - Disaster response in Europe

◀ Mere days after IFAW supported the emergency evacuation of 38 horses from a stable in Kharkiv, it was completely destroyed by a missile attack. Thankfully all horses and staff were out of harms' way in time.



Photo: Michael Comer / © IFAW

War in Ukraine



Photo: © Save the Dogs

General overview

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. That military aggression has created a real humanitarian tragedy, and immense needs persist as it displaced civilians and reduced access to education, economic opportunities, health care, food security, and gender equality. According to the regional bureau of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in May 2024, nearly 6 million Ukrainians¹ have joined the swelling ranks of refugees in Europe, and local authorities report that nearly 5 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine.²

The war has devastated Ukraine's economy, which has shrunk by more than 35%, with hostilities and displacement driving the loss of livelihoods and income. The war has destroyed farms, eroded soil, and displaced farmers, which has been particularly damaging for Ukraine—long known as the breadbasket of Europe. The loss of human capital due to the massive migration of Ukrainians both abroad and within the country has been a serious challenge.³

The capacity for nature conservation has been undermined by the severe impact of the war on the management of protected areas, the direct destruction of ecosystems, and the loss of human capital. Hundreds of towns and villages were turned to ruins. Trench warfare has turned hundreds of square kilometres of fields into scorched wastelands with contaminated soil and groundwater. Unique steppe and

wetland ecosystems in the south and east of Ukraine, habitats of vulnerable plant and animal species, were also destroyed. Ongoing movements of large-scale military vehicles and explosives continue to damage habitats both inside and outside protected areas.

The war has affected millions of hectares of forest, contaminated vast areas of soil, and polluted land and bodies of water. Such damage may impact the regional climate and may lead to significant erosion in the future. In addition, land mines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war do not only take human lives but also generate large volumes of military scrap that can contain a range of polluting materials, contaminating groundwater, and exposing people to acute and chronic health risks.

Reports from Ukraine in 2023 already indicated that an area of over 170,000km² (roughly 30% of its territory) will need to be surveyed for mine contamination or other explosive ordnance⁴. Many forests have been heavily mined, and it will require years, even decades, to clear them. Russia also uses phosphorus munitions that lead to fast-spreading fires, most of which have occurred in the military combat zone.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, at least 900 protected areas together covering 1.2 million hectares, or 30%

of all protected areas, in Ukraine have been affected by shelling, bombing, oil pollution, and military manoeuvres. The destruction of water infrastructure and wastewater treatment plants not only cuts off people's access to water but also pollutes water sources. Damaged treatment facilities such as Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne, and Popasna are spewing untreated wastewater into the environment and polluting water resources.

The destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam on 6 June 2023 caused a catastrophic flood, affecting 620km² of land and altering river morphology, causing chemical pollution, habitat destruction, and potential long-term environmental impacts. The mines that ended up in the Black Sea during the attack on the Kakhovka dam will require years to be removed. Countless ecosystems were severely damaged or completely destroyed. For instance, in the Black Sea, a sediment transport led to a sediment plume, causing high turbidity and affecting activities near the shore for months. Over 192 facilities were identified as hazardous, including 54 as potential hotspots.⁵

▲ Refugees with their dog helped by Save the Dogs, supported by IFAW, in Odessa during the war in Ukraine.

Impacts of the war on animals

Humans are not alone in facing the outcomes of ongoing disasters. Animals are also victims and share the burden of the damaging consequences. The war in Ukraine has affected many thousands of pets, stray populations, farm animals, and wild animals both living in captivity and in the wild. While it is impossible to provide an exact number, it is known that thousands of animals have been killed by mines, shelling and rocket attacks, as well as faced incredible cruelty and death from hunger and thirst.

Impacts to animal welfare

During hostilities, companion animals in Ukraine were stressed, shocked, and disoriented by new sounds, smells, people, and circumstances. The effects of war on the nervous system of pets are underestimated. Many pets did not survive the loud sounds of explosions, travelling long distances with their owners, and the general panic they sensed through the people around them. Thus, unfortunately, many pets died while leaving the occupied territories or while on the road to safer places.^{6,7}

Day after day, the war has resulted in tragedy for companion animals. Many were lost or abandoned by their guardians, who may not have had pet carriers to transport their pets while fleeing their homes. Thus, animals ran away during evacuations and many of them became stray animals. Some families left their pets at home, locking them in with the intention of reuniting

with them later, while some asked their neighbours to take care of their animals. Sadly, many owners could not return to retrieve their pets. And even when they did return, they did not always find their pets alive.

Some companion animals were later rescued by animal rescuers and volunteers and placed into pet shelters. Although there are some positive stories of pets being successfully reunited with their families or adopted by new guardians, most lost pets are fated to be homeless (either living on streets or in animal shelters). With the rapid increase of strays and a constant inflow of rescued pets evacuated from the active war zone, local pet shelters quickly reached and exceeded their capacities and were unable to provide housing to all animals in need.

Alongside the stories of rescues, there were also stories of cruelty that shocked the world, such as in March 2022, when Russian troops were said to have burned as many as 30 horses alive in a stable in Hostomel⁸ (a town near Kyiv, where Russian troops landed on the first day of the full-scale invasion), and in April 2022, when 300 dogs died of hunger and thirst in an animal shelter in Borodyanka when the city was under Russian occupation.⁹

Protecting farm animals is always critical to economic security. Farm animals play an essential role in the recovery of affected regions. Rescuing them is vital to the resilience of the local communities after a disaster and is also cost-effective. A loss of farm animals for a farmer means loss of food security, loss of workers' wages,

and reduced productivity among workers due to psychological trauma. In Ukraine, farms became highly vulnerable. During the first few months of the invasion, there were numerous reports of cowsheds and other animal barns burned down by missile strikes, where many animals were burned alive in the fires. According to the Ukraine government, more than 200 local agricultural enterprises were destroyed or damaged. Farm animals suffered the most in areas with active hostilities in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv (Eastern Ukraine), Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy (Northern Ukraine), Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions (Southern Ukraine).¹⁰ As of November 2022, some 6,000 cows had been confirmed dead, while up to 100,000 pigs and more than 3.5 million poultry have been lost.¹¹

For both companion and farm animals, the bond between people and animals can be strong and affects all stages of the disaster cycle. Studies have shown that up to 70% of animal owners would attempt to evacuate with their animals.¹² This was well illustrated in Ukraine. Since half of fleeing Ukrainian families had pets, millions of Ukrainians reached European countries with their animals.¹³ Still, many pet owners and families with private farms refused to evacuate due to the fear for their animals.

▼ Stray dogs being fed through IFAW's partnership with Element of Life and Kormotech.



Photo: © Element of Life/Kormotech

Environmental and wildlife impacts

The war in Ukraine has severely damaged the environment and its wildlife. Due to shelling and wildfire, wild animals have been injured or killed, or have suffered the destruction of their habitats, such as the destruction of pastures essential to the survival of lemmings or dwarf hamsters. While terrestrial animals (mainly small mammals) have been deeply affected, so too have cetaceans (aquatic mammals), where strandings on the shores of the Black Sea doubled during 2022 compared with previous years.¹⁴ Larger animals, such as ungulates, some predators, and even some hares, have become 'natural explosive technicians', unintentionally demining territories at the cost of their lives.

Some wild animals such as doe, majestic deer, reindeer, wild boars, and wild foxes were forced to migrate because their natural habitats were destroyed (especially in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv regions) and ended up in urban and other unsuitable areas. In contrast, animals such as bears, foxes, wolves, and deer expanded their habitats because of fewer human interventions in some areas, such as in the woods in the north part of Ukraine alongside the Belarus border or in uncultivated farming fields. The hunting ban imposed by martial law right after the invasion has brought some relief to animals

in wartime and could potentially lead to an increase of their population. According to the State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine, the number of foxes has increased almost fivefold since 2021, from 48,000 to 220,000.¹⁵

The war has also affected migratory birds, such as the greater spotted eagle, which is listed as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. According to scientists studying this vulnerable species, tagged individuals that entered Ukraine a few days after the war started, changed their behaviour. After being exposed to the war, they visited fewer stopover sites than before and deviated routes, increasing the energetic cost of the migration and delaying their arrival to their breeding area.¹⁶

Captive wildlife has also paid a high cost. The full-scale war has highlighted the problem of exotic pet ownership, including the lack of licensing, poor animal welfare, and almost no monitoring and accountability. Experts estimate that about 200 big cats (mostly lions) were kept in private homes in Ukraine as exotic pets before the invasion. As the war continued, several dozen owners of big cats had to flee their homes and/or lost their income. As a result, many exotic pets were abandoned and needed to be rescued. The war has also negatively affected local zoos, causing the animals living there to suffer.

Some zoos (like Feldman Ecopark in Kharkiv and Kazkova Dibrova in Nova Kakhovka) were destroyed by shelling or extreme flooding after dams collapsed in the first months of the full-scale invasion. Most of the other zoos suffered from disrupted feed supply chains and reduced staffing as animal caretakers had difficulties getting to the zoo facilities. However, the massive support from the international community throughout 2022 helped local zoos overcome supply problems, as well as mitigate the impact of electricity cutoffs caused by Russian shelling of the Ukrainian energy infrastructure by supplying zoos with power generators and power banks. In 2022, local zoos also played an unprecedented role in housing abandoned exotic pets. The same way that animal shelters accept cats and dogs, zoos have become the number one option to accommodate exotic animals left behind by private owners. Although most of the local zoos have now reasonably adapted their key practices for wartime operations, they continue to suffer from a lack of income (due to fewer visitors), a lack of staff (as many have either joined the army forces or fled the country), and a surplus of animals.

▼ Wolves Dora and Venera are ready to continue on their way from Ukraine to Greece after crate transfers and customs at the Ukraine-Poland border.



Photo: © M&M Zoo Service



Photo: © Wild Animal Rescue

Without doubt, the war will have significant long-term environmental impacts in Ukraine. In addition to damaging the environment, some effects also pose a danger of spreading zoonotic or infectious diseases and even epidemics, e.g., the mass deaths of animals and fish whose decomposition contaminates water and soil represents a public health risk. In 2023, local populations of 82 species of animals and plants protected by the Bern Convention were affected by wartime destruction, and that year, there were 1.6 times more cases of leptospirosis (a zoonotic disease) than in 2022.¹⁷ Another example is the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam in June 2023. Its breach caused a catastrophic flood that affected 620km² of land and drowned, among others, more than 300 animals from the Kazkova Dibrova Zoo in Nova Kakhovka (a town in Kherson region occupied by Russia since February 2022).¹⁸ Around 150 newts listed on the IUCN Red List were found dead along the Black Sea coast in the Odessa area, as they cannot survive in sea water.¹⁹ Notably, martial law restricted the delivery of anti-rabies vaccines for wildlife in 2022, which combined with an increased population of some wildlife

species in certain regions, caused a rabies outbreak (2-to-3-fold increase in cases among animals) in 2023. This outbreak led the State Service of Ukraine on Food Safety and Consumer Protection to resume the immunisation of wild animals in 2023.^{20,21}

The Black Sea is also experiencing catastrophic consequences of the war, largely due to pollution caused by the destruction of the infrastructure of large cities such as Mariupol. The Sea receives water from the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Dnipro regions, which have been polluted by military operations. Recent reports estimate that anywhere from 900²² to 50,000 dolphins²³ died in the Black Sea during the war.

The role of EU institutions and member states

After the war started, to facilitate the entry of animal refugees within the European Union (EU), the European Commission

called on member states to waive the strict travel requirements for entering pets.²⁴ However, while the EU, its member states, and NGOs all made efforts to help Ukrainian animals, Russia's war revealed the lack of preparedness in the EU to protect animals during a disaster. These shortcomings were often intertwined and require joint actions from the EU, its member states, and the country experiencing a disaster.

The EU recognised the need to provide direct aid to animals on the ground but did not suggest any coordination mechanism between member states. Neither did Ukraine when it activated the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and requested aid for the people and the agriculture sector, which only included veterinary medications, pesticides, seeds, and animal feed for animals in agriculture—no provisions of pet food, nor aid for wild animals in captivity, were secured through this mechanism.

▲ Lioness Vanda receives medical treatment while at Wild Animal Rescue.



Photo: Michael Zomer / © IFAW

Emergency planning is key to coping with a disaster, but it was sorely lacking in Ukraine. Emergency plans are best developed locally, where authorities on the ground are best informed of the potential disaster risks, and require long-term thinking and investment. The absence of robust emergency planning for animals is associated with the lack of legal protections of animals in disasters, coupled with the lack of long-term funding and institutional support for animal facilities, such as shelters. Though animals were evacuated from Ukraine, it occurred on a very ad hoc basis, often without any specific criteria or planning.

Once the influx of refugees began, lack of appropriate facilities, such as pet-friendly refugee camps, places to quarantine animals, and social housing allowing pets, became an issue in several EU member states. In the first weeks of the war, there were up to 600 pets crossing the Ukraine–Polish border daily, and 12,000 pets were vaccinated and microchipped in Poland alone. However, refugee camps were not fit to safely accommodate people and animals, and there were no facilities ready to host animals for the necessary quarantine period, which differed at national and regional levels. The burden of finding pet-friendly accommodations for Ukrainian refugees tended to be pushed over to the private sector.²⁵

Supporting animals affected by the war became very challenging for local shelters and volunteers rescuing animals. All animal shelters continue to face a shortage of pet food and veterinarian supplies and need financial support to fund rescue missions for both companion animals and wildlife.

▲ Veterinarian Andrew Kushnir at the Medyka border crossing between Ukraine and Poland, with dogs belonging to Ukrainian refugee Tatiana. Some of the dogs are in new carriers provided by IFAW.

IFAW's response to the war in Ukraine



Photo: Vitaliy Novikov / © IFAW

Holistic approach to disasters

IFAW's Disaster Response programme aids species affected by extreme climate events and other disasters such as wars. It addresses the needs of wildlife, companion animals, and farm animals by implementing a holistic approach that engages local animal guardians and authorities and respects local culture and community leadership. The programme also empowers local animal guardians and authorities through mentorship, specialised training, capacity building, and a lifeline to IFAW's expertise to build communities' resilience to disasters and include animals in their disaster planning.

IFAW's work in Ukraine has been focused on providing emergency relief to domestic and wild animals affected by the ongoing war, preventing the separation of animals from their families, and working with communities, authorities, and other stakeholders to help them better prepare for disasters. The tremendous public support of IFAW's efforts has enabled us to extend our support and help thousands of animals and their guardians in Ukraine.

▲ Akeru the lion is sedated and carefully moved to a transport crate in preparation for his move out of war-torn Ukraine.

Emergency response in Ukraine

When the full-scale invasion of Ukraine started in early 2022, IFAW provided immediate support to a few animal shelters that we had supported in 2014 when Russia occupied Crimea. During the first two weeks, IFAW issued 11 emergency grants to animal rescuers and shelters in Ukraine and neighbouring countries supporting both companion and wild animals. These grants enabled our partners to buy animal food and veterinary supplies and also arrange rescue and evacuation missions.

- ▶ Seven bears were evacuated from the White Rock Bear Shelter in the Kyiv region—IFAW paid for the transportation.
- ▶ A few dozen big cats and other captive wild animals were evacuated to Poznań Zoo in Poland—IFAW paid for food and a veterinarian in Poznań.
- ▶ Later, two lions, two caracals, two bears, and one wolf were all transported from Poznań Zoo to Natuurhulpcentrum VZW in Belgium—IFAW paid for the transportation.

From March to June 2022, IFAW deployed its emergency response team to the Ukraine–Polish border to support thousands of families fleeing the war with

their pets. The team coordinated work with government authorities, local NGOs, and other organisations to help as many people and animals as possible.

IFAW-trained responders and veterinarians managed the so-called ‘Blue Tent’, the only animal emergency care tent at the Medyka border crossing between Poland and Ukraine, which was originally set up by two German NGOs, namely Deutscher Tierschutzbund (DTSchB) and Bundesverband Gemeinschaft Deutscher Tierrettungsdienste. Rotating in 12-hour shifts, the team members provided 24/7 access to pet food, triaged veterinary care, and distributed leashes, collars, pet carriers, and other supplies for families fleeing with their pets. Animals that arrived for care were traumatised from the war and stressed from long days of travel to the border crossing. The most common health issues documented by veterinarians at the station were malnutrition, dehydration, hypothermia, urinary issues, and stiff joints (mainly for cats) from being carried in cardboard boxes, coats, and plastic bags.

Another key transit location for refugees and their animals was the Przemyśl Główny train station, where trains arrived mainly from Lviv (Western Ukraine).

IFAW partnered and worked with the Polish veterinary authorities to support Polish veterinarians operating the animal border control by supplying them with pet food, water, and items such as carriers, leashes, harnesses, and muzzles. Two IFAW-supported Ukrainian veterinarians assisted the Polish veterinarians in examining, vaccinating, and microchipping pets.

- ▶ At the Blue Tent, IFAW helped 2,425 animals; at Przemyśl Główny train Station, IFAW helped 3,355 animals.
- ▶ A total of 43 IFAW responders, including seven veterinarians, deployed to care for refugees and their pets as they entered Poland and began the next part of their journey. Our responders came from all over the world to help, including Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Mexico, and Costa Rica.

▼ IFAW-sponsored Ukrainian veterinarian Veronika Herasymenko fills out paperwork for a Ukrainian refugee's small dog at the veterinarian post inside the Przemyśl train station in Poland.



Photo: Michael Zomer / © IFAW

Long-term strategy to rescue and protect animals

In summer 2022, after the immediate response needs at the borders had slowed down and the team demobilised, IFAW refocused its efforts in Ukraine by formulating a long-term strategy to address the specific needs of animals affected by the war and their guardians. The strategy was framed by applying the One Health concept and enhancing the One Rescue approach.²⁶ By helping animals, we also improve the mental health of their guardians by reducing the stress and psychological impact of a disaster and relieving their concerns around their animal's well-being.

With that perspective, IFAW developed a multi-year relief and recovery Ukraine Rescue project that included hiring a dedicated team of five staff (four Ukrainians, with two based in Ukraine).

The Ukraine Rescue project's key objectives included the following:

- ▶ supporting and restoring functional veterinarian services and rescue centres to provide continuous emergency relief to community animals and wildlife,
- ▶ ensuring community animals and their families can stay together and remain healthy,
- ▶ supporting wildlife—including captive wildlife—and habitats, and
- ▶ raising in-country animal welfare standards to meet EU standards by helping local partners, the government, and the public sector to improve their animal welfare practices, standards, and regulations.

To ensure a comprehensive and nationwide approach (apart from sanctioned areas such as the Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhya regions) that addresses the critical support needed for community animals and wildlife, with an emphasis on building the sector's resilience, IFAW created two target initiatives:

▶ FTHR: Feed-Treat-Heat-Reunite

community animals and their guardians. The number of animals in shelters and in the care of volunteers increased rapidly: by 20-30% in rear areas, by 60% in care of animal rescuers and by 100% or more in shelters, mainly in frontline areas.²⁷

- **Feed:** provide animals food
- **Treat:** provide veterinary care
- **Heat:** ensure a warm and comfortable place
- **Reunite:** keep families and their pets together

▶ RRR/R: Rescue-Rehabilitate-Rehome/Release for wild animals and their caretakers:

- **Rescue:** remove from the war zone/ immediate danger (e.g. rescuing wildlife affected by the war, from intensified human-wildlife conflict, and evacuating captive wildlife from zoos and sanctuaries in active hostilities areas)
- **Rehabilitate:** provide food, shelter, and veterinary treatment

- **Rehome:** transfer to other sanctuaries or zoos when release into the wild is not possible (including, but not limited to, captive big cats that were victims of the exotic pet trade and were abandoned by their owners in wartime)
- **Release:** release back into the wild into safe habitats (e.g. bats, hamsters, deer, swans)

IFAW worked with local groups to rescue and evacuate captive wildlife from zoos, sanctuaries, breeding facilities, private ownership, and other facilities affected by war. IFAW's wildlife rescue field officer Natalia Gozak, based in Kyiv, worked jointly with wildlife authorities and local rescue and rehabilitation organisations to assess the damage and emergency needs of the sector. She facilitated the provision of emergency support for animals suffering from the war and helped build up the sector's resilience.

We also supported local brigades rescuing and providing relief to native species of wild animals before releasing them back into safe habitats. Moreover, as a part of the resilience building component of our work, IFAW trained wildlife caretakers and veterinarians in best practices for animal welfare and handling, and supported them in developing a network of regional centres for the rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals.

- ▼ Swans are released back into the wild in ponds at Mezhyhiria, a public park in Novi Petrivtsi during a swan release event organised by Bird Shelter Niushannikovo in the Kyiv region.



Photo: © Bird Shelter Niushannikovo

Support companion animals

FEED – Provide animals food

Since the start of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, pet food has been the most urgent need, especially for pets in shelters and for roaming animals. That is why, in 2022, IFAW issued 46 emergency grants to 32 local shelters and distribution organisations supplying pet food to animals. Then, in January 2023, to enhance its support, IFAW partnered with Kormotech, the largest pet food manufacturer in Ukraine. Via the company's initiative called 'Save Pets of Ukraine' managed by the charity Element of Life and U-Hearts Foundation, IFAW was able to support the local economy and to maximise the capacity of delivering pet food to local beneficiaries by:

- ▶ sourcing pet food from Kormotech for discount prices,
- ▶ funding logistical costs for bringing pet food donated by European suppliers into Ukraine, and
- ▶ paying logistical costs for the distribution of pet food to local beneficiaries.

Impact highlights:

- ▶ Between January 2023 and June 2024, IFAW purchased and delivered 422,8 tons of pet food (932,114 lbs) to about 54,200 animals. Together with Kormotech and Element of Life, IFAW supported 280 local shelters and distribution organisations nationwide (except in sanctioned areas).
- ▶ In the winter of 2022-2023, IFAW also supported the Ukrainian Equestrian Federation in delivering hay and 156 tons of compound feed to 2,302 horses and ponies at 120 stables (located predominately in the South of Ukraine, in the Kharkiv and Kyiv regions).

- ▶ Stray cats being fed through IFAW's partnership with Element of Life and Kormotech near houses destroyed by the war.



Photo: © Element of Life/Kormotech

Alina Smyshliak-Boroda, Chief Reputation & CSR Officer of Kormotech
Yuriy Tokarski, CEO of U-Hearts Foundation
Taras Nagirny, President of Element of Life

“We sincerely thank you for your support to the Save Pets of Ukraine initiative! Thanks to your generous contribution, we have been able to provide reliable protection for many animals in Ukraine, offering emergency relief, helping them stay healthy and well-fed. Our cooperation made a significant impact, not only on the lives of the animals we care for but also on our entire community. Your support has allowed us to provide essential services such as food, shelter, veterinary care, and rehabilitation to countless animals. For the past two years, at a time of greatest need, IFAW has been a reliable, dedicated and engaged partner in supporting the animals suffering from the war in Ukraine. Your contribution is a testament to the goodness that exists in this world.

We thank you for standing with Ukraine in this challenging time, and for supporting our mission to rescue, help and offer aid to animals.”

Lyudmyla Burlachenko,
pet volunteer in
Zatoka, Odessa region

“Before the war, there were significantly fewer homeless animals, and it was possible to buy food and find homes for the majority of them. Our district, Zatoka, is in a remote area. Due to the war, roads and bridges have been destroyed, cutting us off from the rest of the Odessa region. People and animals have been left without support and assistance. Thanks to IFAW and Save Pets of Ukraine, we have been able to feed the animals.”

Maryna Tykha,
Kyivski Khvostyky
(Kyiv Little Tails) Pet Shelter in Kyiv

“When the animals in your care look at you with hungry eyes and you have no food for them, it is the greatest nightmare for a volunteer. But the many boxes of food that we got from IFAW, piled to the ceiling, have warmed our hearts and given us hope that, at least tomorrow, no one will go hungry, and we will be able to keep going. We are grateful to IFAW for their help. You are saving lives!”

Yaryna Vintoniuk, Animal Rescue Kharkiv

“We are incredibly grateful to Save Pets of Ukraine and IFAW for helping us with food, it has been very important! As our organization is engaged in rescuing animals from frontline areas during the war, quality food is an important component for saving an animal’s life and its recovery. Due to the stress from shelling, loss of family and home, and inability to find food and water, animals get health issues, gastrointestinal problems, weaker organs and systems in their bodies begin to suffer. Often, they lose the desire to eat due to pain, weakness, and their emotional state. Due to the large number of animals that we evacuate from frontline areas on a regular basis, we always have a huge need for high quality food that the animals will enjoy and that has a therapeutic effect on their bodies. Getting wet food from IFAW and Save Pets of Ukraine has been great and has helped many rescued animals, including puppies and kittens, during a very difficult time in their lives. Many thanks!”



Photo: © USAVA

TREAT – Provide veterinary care

The war displaced hundreds of thousands of people and animals. Local shelters were and are still overcrowded with pets. With the shrinking of the country's economy, neither families nor shelters have sufficient means to pay for veterinary services. In addition, with many people forced to abandon their homes and leave their animals behind to fend for themselves in areas where human settlements and natural habitats have been destroyed, the number of free roaming companion animals has significantly increased. As a result, Ukraine continues to face a high risk of a rabies outbreak. To address this threat, IFAW supported local shelters, veterinary clinics, and animal rescue teams by providing free basic emergency veterinary care for companion animals in need.

Between July 2022 and June 2024, together with local partners, IFAW helped more than 53,600 pets, providing them with more than 125,000 veterinary services, including vaccinations against rabies, microchipping, spaying and neutering, and other services (multi-vaccinations against infections, anti-parasitic treatment, treating war injuries, etc.).

Key activities operated under the TREAT initiative:

- ▶ **'Protect your Pet':** Free veterinary services for resident and displaced families.
 - From July 2022 to December 2023, together with the Ukrainian Small Animal Veterinary Association (USAVA), IFAW provided free vaccination, microchipping, and sterilisation services for the pets of families in 10 regions across Ukraine

by utilising 31 stationary veterinary posts and deploying mobile veterinarian brigades.

- Initially, 'Protect your Pet' was designed to address the emergency needs of Ukrainian families fleeing to Europe—ensuring their pets complied with EU travel regulations. Later, the scope expanded to include pets at shelters, as a response to the constant influx of animals rescued from the frontlines.
- Through the initiative, USAVA was able to help more than 35,000 animals. In the winter of 2022–2023, IFAW also supplied 13 electricity generators to USAVA to ensure that partner veterinary clinics could continue their operations during the frequent power outages.
- ▶ Supporting rescue teams and **mobile veterinary brigades.**
 - To ensure the provision of veterinary services to pets in remote areas with no stationary veterinary posts, IFAW supported six animal welfare organisations that deploy rescue teams and mobile veterinary brigades. These teams have played a vital role in providing emergency veterinary care for stray animals and family pets whose owners did not have access to veterinary services. More than 6,300 animals have been helped this way.
- ▶ IFAW **field missions to shelters** in West Ukraine.
 - In April and May 2023, IFAW deployed Dr. Veronika Herasymenko, a veterinary surgeon, to vaccinate 562 dogs and 118 cats against rabies and multiple

infections at seven shelters in the Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Zakarpattia regions in West Ukraine.

- ▶ **'Safe Paws':** Free veterinary services for pets of displaced families and at shelters.
 - In 2024, together with Element of Life, IFAW vaccinated 8,200 and microchipped 6,775 pets at 29 stationary veterinary posts nationwide.
 - IFAW supported the national reform of the government of Ukraine on pet identification and the launch of the National Registry of Pets. IFAW partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture to record identification details of pets helped via 'Safe Paws' in the new National Registry of Pets during its soft launch in May–June 2024. IFAW became the pioneer international NGO to support this national reform by providing veterinary supplies and supporting 22 partner veterinary clinics engaged in the soft launch. In those two months, the clinics recorded 6,469 pets in the Registry. This enabled the government of Ukraine to test the administration procedures and technical capacity, as well as to collect user feedback from veterinary doctors to optimise Registry applications before its future nationwide launch.

▲ A kitten is treated by a veterinarian at one of the clinics participating in the vaccination, chipping and sterilization programme in Ukraine.



Denys Bashlyk, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food of Ukraine

“The Ministry expresses its respect to IFAW for your active participation and cooperation in the implementation of the experimental project on the identification and registration of pets in Ukraine. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Ukraine and IFAW, testing of the National Registry of Pets has begun, which will contribute to improving the living conditions of domestic animals, increasing the responsibility of their owners and the general level of animal protection and welfare in our country.”

Vladlen Ushakov, President of USAVA

“I would like to sincerely thank you for your cooperation in providing emergency veterinary assistance to animals affected by the war in Ukraine. We appreciate the efforts of IFAW’s team of like-minded individuals in assisting thousands of companion animals and their caregivers (families of refugees, internally displaced persons, and resettled individuals) within the framework of our joint initiative “Protect Your Pet,” which was implemented in Ukraine from July 2022 to December 2023 with the financial support of IFAW.”

Anastasiya Ivanichenko, Veterinary Projects Manager, Element of Life

“Rabies vaccination is essential for preventing the disease in both animals and humans, as people often get infected through bites from unprotected pets. In addition, microchipping is key for identifying pets. It helps to quickly reunite lost pets with their families.

Mura is a cat that participated in the free vaccination program of our Safe Paws initiative in Zhytomyr. One day, she ran away from her carrier, and her owner searched for her for almost a month. Then, some girl informed Mura's owner that she had seen an ad about the lost cat. That's how Mura and her owner were reunited.

This is why our team is truly happy for the support from IFAW to deliver 8,200 vaccinations and microchipping services to pets in Ukraine. This number might not seem like a lot on a national scale, but it's incredibly valuable and important for each animal and its owner in every part of Ukraine where our program operates.”

Anastasiya Bodnaryuk, Pan Kotskyi Veterinary Clinic, Chernivtsi

“When we were offered to participate in the program, we immediately agreed. We have been able to vaccinate over 300 animals. Interestingly, the majority of internally displaced persons who adopted pets after February 2022, have animals from shelters or rescued from the streets. Despite the difficult situation and their own forced relocation, these people still provide warmth and homes for these animals.”

◀ Peppa the dog is reunited with her owner.



Photo: © Nova Ukraine

HEAT – Ensure a warm and comfortable place

Many houses and animal shelters were damaged and/or destroyed due to the ongoing war. In addition, Russia has been purposefully bombing energy-generating facilities, leading to extreme shortages of power supply and continued blackouts across Ukraine. In response to urgent needs, IFAW supported local charities to ensure that animals would have, as much as possible, a safe and comfortable place to live. IFAW funded emergency repairs at some shelters (e.g., roof repairs) and provided a variety of pet supplies (e.g., insulated pet beds, thermal dog houses, kennels, and modular enclosures).

Key activities operated under the HEAT initiative:

- ▶ During the winter of 2022–2023, IFAW supported the **Red Cross** in providing 900 insulated pet beds (mattresses) for 900 families in the Bashtanka district in the Mykolaiv region. This area was liberated from Russian occupation in November 2022. Along with the mattresses, the Red Cross team supplied pet food and veterinary supplies to resident families who survived the occupation and took care of their own pets, as well as other abandoned pets in the area.
- ▶ In June and July 2023, IFAW supported the organisation **Innovative Solutions for Animals** in purchasing and distributing 167 crates and kennels among 13 animal shelters, four veterinary clinics, and two rescue teams actively engaged in

rescuing and rehabilitating companion animals. Many of these were used to accommodate cats and dogs rescued after the Kakhovka dam destruction in the summer of 2023.

- ▶ Starting November 2022, IFAW supported the efforts of **Nova Ukraine** in equipping five shelters that housed pets suffering from the impacts of the war.
 - During the winter of 2022–2023, some 26 dog kennels, 246 cat boxes, and 14 puppy boxes were supplied to four pet shelters in Kyiv.
 - Preparing for the winter of 2023–2024, eight large outdoor kennels and seven high-quality insulated dog houses were built for a shelter in the Kyiv region that specialises in large dog breeds. The kennels provided the animals with a safe and comfortable space, lowering their stress and anxiety. The shelter's dedication to adoption creates a high turnaround allowing each of the eight spaces to accommodate multiple animals every year.
- ▶ During the winter of 2023–2024, IFAW supported **ZooFamily** to equip a pet shelter in Pavlysh, Kirovohrad region, with 9 new insulated thermal dog houses.

REUNITE – Keep families and their pets together

In June 2023, in response to the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, IFAW launched a joint initiative with Nova Ukraine to reunite companion animals with their

families. With financial support from IFAW, Nova Ukraine and Animal Rescue Kharkiv ensured temporary placement of family pets at local shelters until their owners could reunite with them (once they had settled in a new location). Our local partners also rescued and accommodated companion animals that were evacuated from the frontlines to local shelters, while searching for their families.

In 2023, more than 200 pets were reunited with their families. In addition, more than 185 animals found new families after being released by previous guardians.

Deciding to surrender their pets is extremely difficult for families. They often consider pets as a member of their family and would certainly not leave them behind unattended or surrender them to someone unless it was absolutely necessary. Our emergency response team witnessed this first-hand during the 'Blue Tent' period in early 2022. Several people had to choose to surrender their pets after crossing the border when they were not able to or allowed to bring pets along to their next destination. The difficult decision to surrender a pet not only affects the animal but also their guardians. Therefore, at IFAW, we try to facilitate rehoming where possible, as we've done through the initiative with Nova Ukraine.

- ▲ Nova Ukraine, with support from IFAW, supplies appropriate sheltering such as thermal kennels and insulated dog houses, to animals in shelters and those with war-related injuries.

Support wildlife (captive and free)

IFAW supported wildlife in Ukraine in a variety of ways:

- ▶ Evacuation of captive wild animals
- ▶ Addressing emergency needs of local wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centres and zoos
- ▶ Capacity building of local animal welfare organisations

Evacuation of captive wild animals

IFAW has been supporting emergency evacuations for captive wild animals by providing grants to local and international organisations arranging urgent rescue missions. Together with local partners, we have supported the transportation of several dozens of captive wild animals to safer locations inside and outside of Ukraine.

To facilitate the rescue and 'rehoming' of captive wildlife into new safe locations, IFAW funded animal rescue and rehabilitation centres' covering their needs, such as fuel, animal food, and veterinary care. We also supplied rescue vehicles, transport crates and power batteries, established connections between local organisations and facilities abroad for temporary (quarantine) or permanent placements of rescued animals, and facilitated export and retroactive export permits for cross-border evacuations.

Wildlife rescues and evacuations from Ukraine supported by IFAW:

- ▶ Evacuation of **seven bears** from the war zone/Kyiv area to Domazhyr Bear Sanctuary (Lviv region, Ukraine) in March 2022.
- ▶ Evacuation of **dozens of wild animals** from the war zone/Kharkiv Zoo to wildlife centres in South and Central Ukraine in March 2022.
- ▶ Animal food and veterinary care for about **50 animals** (big cats, bears, wolf, and others) evacuated from Ukraine to Poznań Zoo (Poland) in March 2022.
 - Most of the animals were later transported farther to other locations (including transportation of seven animals to Belgium listed below).
- ▶ Transfer of **two lions, two caracals, two brown bears, and a wolf** from Poznań Zoo to Natuurhulpcentrum VZW (Belgium) in March, April, and June 2022, including veterinary care and quarantine costs upon arrival.
- ▶ Evacuation of **four lion cubs (Taras, Stefania, Lesya, and Prada)** from Ukraine to Poznań Zoo (Poland) in October 2022, and their subsequent transfer to The Wildcat Sanctuary in Minnesota (USA) in November 2022.
- ▶ Evacuation of **black leopard Kiara** from Ukraine to Poznań Zoo (Poland) in October 2022, and Kiara's subsequent transfer to Tonga Terre d'Accueil (France) in December 2022.
- ▶ Evacuation of **two lionesses Luna and Plusha** from Ukraine to Poznań Zoo (Poland) in December 2022, and their subsequent transfer to Natuurhulpcentrum VZW (Belgium) in February 2023.
- ▶ Evacuation of **mother lion Asya with three lion cubs (Teddi, Emi, and Santa) and male lion Akeru** from Ukraine to Poznań Zoo (Poland) in June 2023.
 - Later, in March 2024, Asya and her three cubs were moved from Poznań Zoo to Yorkshire Wildlife Park in the UK.
- ▶ Evacuation of **African leopard Brave** to Animal Advocacy & Protection – AAP (Spain) in November 2023.
- ▶ Transfer of **17 deer, two mouflons, one wild Przewalski's horse, and five hares** to the Kasova Hora nature reserve (Ivano-Frankivsk region, Ukraine) between December 2023 and June 2024.
- ▶ Evacuation of **three lions Atlas, Queen, and Luladja** to Parc de l'Auxois (France) in January 2024.
- ▶ Evacuation of **two wolves Dora and Venera** from Ukraine to Arcturos Environmental Centre and Bear Sanctuary (Greece) in February 2024.

For the other big cats, **Yuna, Rori, Alex, Mir, Vanda, Amani and Lira**, at Wild Animal Rescue that IFAW has supported to date, we will continue to provide them with food and veterinary care until such time that they can be evacuated to new homes outside of Ukraine – which is expected to be in the second half of 2024.

- ▼ Mouflon rescued and cared for by Eco-Halych and partners, with support from IFAW, before being released in a newly established nature reserve in the Kasova Hora area in western Ukraine.



Photo: Volodymyr Burdyak / © Eco-Halych

Natalia Popova, Director of Wild Animal Rescue

“IFAW was among the very few organizations that supported us during the most difficult time. First, we received support with the very basics like food, fuel, and veterinary services. Then, with critical equipment like a vehicle for wildlife transportation, proper transportation crates, and batteries for backup electricity supply. On top of that, IFAW’s wildlife rescue field officer Natalia Gozak facilitated emergency evacuations for animals from our centre to abroad by helping us with the process of preparing for and obtaining CITES permits. Thanks to IFAW we have new equipment and knowledge needed to perform future animal rescues and evacuations. And I’d like to express my sincere gratitude for all this support in a time of war.”

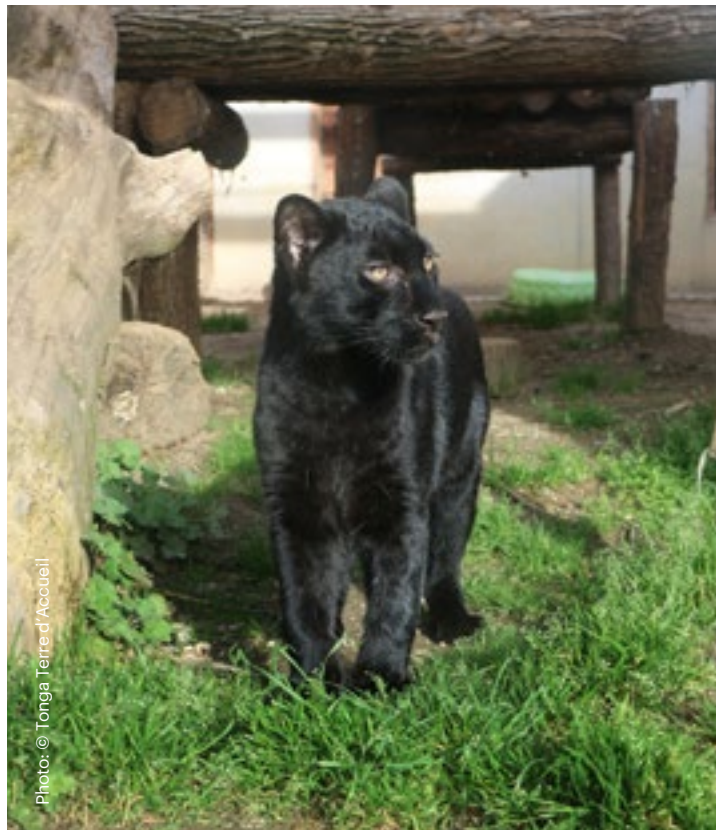


Photo: © Tonga Terre d'Accueil

Addressing emergency needs of local wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centres

IFAW helped address the emergency needs of local wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centres largely by funding their needs for animal food, veterinary supplies and care, as well as transport costs for rescue (and rehome or release) missions.

We provided their teams with new rescue equipment, vehicles, and transport crates for animals. We also equipped their facilities with power banks to ensure the continuation of daily operations during electricity cutoffs caused by Russian air strikes targeting thermal and hydroelectric power stations and the main power distribution substations. By June 2024, Russia destroyed more than 60% of Ukraine’s electricity production, reducing generation from 55 to 20 gigawatts of power and forcing rolling blackouts across the country.²⁸

Capacity building of local animal welfare organisations

As a global organisation, our goal is to provide immediate support where needed while also ensuring we build resilience and capacity in communities so that they can continue their lifesaving work. While our work in Ukraine was focused on providing emergency relief to animals suffering from the war, we also took and supported long-term measures to improve local animal welfare standards and the sector’s preparedness to build on our work into the future.

We have helped our wildlife partners in Ukraine improve their regular practices so that they can continue to provide vital care for animals. This included enhancing animal enclosures to accommodate more rescued animals and to provide better care for them. Our experts also trained our partners on the CITES permit process (which is important for cross-border translocations of captive wildlife) and enabled their access to new knowledge on best international practices by translating available educational materials into local language.

To support local animal aid organisations in Ukraine in their efforts to improve welfare practices for handling and rehabilitating wild animals, IFAW hosted several in-person events and trainings and online webinars focused on promoting wildlife rescue and rehabilitation standards and best practices.

- ▶ Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Conference co-organised with Save Wild, the Bat Rehabilitation Centre in Kharkiv, and the Domazhyr Bear Sanctuary in July 2023.
- ▶ Bat Rescue & Rehabilitation Training for 26 bat rescuers co-organised with Ukraine Independent Ecology Institute in July 2023.
- ▶ Online series on Welfare for Captive Wild Animals and local accounting implications for charities co-organised with WildWelfare (UK) and EcoAction (Ukraine).

▲ Kiara the leopard cub in care at Tonga Terre d'Accueil in France.



In 2023, IFAW also facilitated establishing an **Animal Rescue Network (ARN)** in Ukraine to foster knowledge exchange and peer-to-peer capacity building. During the first 18 months of its operations, the ARN has united 38 member organisations, including local animal rescue brigades and rehabilitation centres.

Moreover, in cooperation with Save Wild, IFAW translated the [Guide: Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation](#) publication from English to Ukrainian—making it accessible to local rescue and rehabilitation organisations supporting wildlife in Ukraine. This publication was produced as a cooperative effort by the US National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council. IFAW and Save Wild shared the Ukrainian version of the publication with local rescue and rehabilitation centres in March 2024.

In addition, we helped establish connections between local organisations and facilities elsewhere in Europe and globally that might take in rescued captive wildlife for temporary placement or offer them a permanent home. This is all part of our strategy to not only provide immediate support during a disaster but also build resilience, capacity, and knowledge so that local organisations can continue this important work going forward.

Key activities by IFAW to support local wildlife rehabilitation centres in Ukraine during wartime and to increase their resilience to respond to disasters:

Kasova Hora nature reserve

Starting from June 2023, IFAW supported the Ukrainian NGO Eco-Halych in establishing 71 hectares of Kasova Hora as a new nature reserve near Burshtyn town in the Ivano-Frankivsk region of West Ukraine. This included fencing off 23 hectares to serve as a wildlife rehabilitation area to accommodate wild animals rescued from the war or from inappropriate living conditions.

IFAW’s support enabled:

- ▶ Completion of a biodiversity research study by local scientists on the importance of the Kasova Hora area and how grazing animals can stop the degradation of, and uncontrolled wildfires in, the meadow steppe ecosystem. The study also indicated that the Kasova Hora area can accommodate a few dozen ungulates (hooved mammals), which means that establishing a rehabilitation area will not only provide relief to rescued wildlife but also eventually enrich the biodiversity in Kasova Hora.

- ▶ Construction of a fence around 23 hectares of the Kasova Hora area, which includes open-air animal enclosures, a special quarantine enclosure, two pre-release adaptation enclosures for young roe deer and hares, a hay storage, and animal feeding station. The ranger station was also equipped with supplies.
- ▶ Release of 25 animals to date into the newly fenced area, including 17 deer, two mouflons (wild sheep), one wild horse, and five hares.
- ▶ Obtaining an approval from the Ivano-Frankivsk region government to establish the Kasova Hora nature reserve.
- ▶ Submission of an application to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention for Kasova Hora to be listed in the global list of Emerald Network sites.

▲ A Przewalski’s horse rescued and cared for by Eco-Halych and partners, before being released in a newly established nature reserve in the Kasova Hora area in western Ukraine.

Volodymyr Buchko, Director of Eco-Halych

“As Eco-Halych we would like to express our sincere thanks to IFAW for their financial support of our project aimed at the restoration and preservation of the meadow-steppe ecosystems, which are disappearing in the west of Ukraine, and the rescue of wild animals. By proposing a new effective model for the restoration of these valuable ecosystems, we created the largest (in terms of area) rehabilitation area for wild animals in Ukraine.

The project was implemented during an extremely difficult period for our country - the invasion by Russia. But, despite all the difficulties, thanks to your support we managed to accomplish everything planned and even much more!”

Oleksiy Vasylyuk, Chairman of the UNCG Board

“The Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG) would like to sincerely thank IFAW for the cooperation that made it possible to save rare wild animals in the regions affected by the war in Ukraine. Our cooperation also helped us take important strategic steps to improve the conditions for the protection of wild animals.

Thanks to IFAW’s timely support, our team organized the rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals, in particular ground squirrels and hamsters, which are critically endangered and on the edge of extinction. Rescue expeditions were organized, special safe traps were provided, and feed and equipment necessary for rehabilitation were purchased. The animals were rehabilitated and returned to the wild in suitable protected areas. In addition, IFAW’s support is sustainable, because the equipment will help us continue to save these rare animals.”

Taras Boiko, Director of Save Wild

“We express our sincere gratitude to the IFAW team for your support during difficult times. Especially then, it’s important to know that you are not alone.

Thanks to your help, we were able to withstand the attacks in 2022, and subsequently implement initiatives that are important for the development of both our organization and the field of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in Ukraine.”

Anton Vlaschenko, Head of the Ukraine Independent Ecology Institute

“On behalf of the team of the Ukrainian Bat Rehabilitation Center, I would like to sincerely thank IFAW for your generous financial support of the Ukrainian Independent Ecology Institute and our project ‘Capacity Development of the Ukrainian Bat Rehabilitation Center’. Your contribution is invaluable to our ongoing efforts in bat conservation and research in Ukraine.

With your support, we have improved our facilities, reached more areas, and made our programs stronger. This help comes at a very difficult and challenging time and allows us to keep doing our important work, even under full-scale war conditions. Your support not only helps us now but also helps us make long-term plans that will benefit wildlife and our community for many years. We are truly thankful for your trust and support.”

Wild Animal Rescue centre in Kyiv region

As of October 2022, IFAW has been supporting the Wild Animal Rescue centre in Chubynske in the Kyiv region. Operated by Natalia Popova, the centre focuses on rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife (both native and captive) affected by the war in Ukraine. To date, together with Wild Animal Rescue, IFAW has helped 321 wild animals that were either released back into the wild in safer areas or evacuated to wildlife sanctuaries abroad.

Support provided by IFAW:

- ▶ Animal feed and veterinary care.
- ▶ Transportation costs for local rescue missions and cross-border evacuations.
- ▶ Costs for eight transport crates and one rescue vehicle to help safeguard animal welfare.
- ▶ Facilitation of obtaining CITES export permits for evacuating wildlife out of Ukraine.

Bird rehabilitation centres in Kyiv and Lviv regions

IFAW supported the Mezhyhira Swan Shelter and the Niushannik and Vilni Krula rehabilitation centres by funding their urgent needs for fodder, feeding buckets, enclosure repairs, and veterinary products.

As a result, these centres were able to help several hundred wild birds. Many of the native birds were later released back into the wild—IFAW's wildlife rescue field officer Natalia Gozak has joined and supported several release events.

Ukrainian Bat Rehabilitation Center in Kharkiv

Over two years, IFAW support helped the Ukraine Independent Ecology Institute, which runs the Ukrainian Bat Rehabilitation Center in Kharkiv, fund bat rescue missions and rehabilitate 9,795 bats, most of which have been released back into the wild.

Support provided by IFAW:

- ▶ Veterinary supplies and transportation costs for rescue and release missions.
- ▶ New bat crates and cages.
- ▶ Batteries to ensure a stable supply of electricity during cutoffs (e.g., for the fridge, which can be used for the hibernation of bats).
- ▶ Training for a team of 26 bat rescuers operating across the country.
- ▶ A new mobile hibernation and rehabilitation unit for 5,000 bats during the winter to ensure better resilience of the centre during attacks on Kharkiv.

Wild hamster rescue & conservation centre in Kyiv

Between April 2023 and May 2024, IFAW granted emergency financial assistance to the Ukraine Nature Conservation Group (UNCG), which runs the Breeding and Reintroduction Center of Protected Species at the Kyiv Zoo, and is focused on a scientifically-based conservation programme for the European ground squirrel and the European hamster. IFAW's support helped provide feed, veterinary care and supplies, some equipment, and crates for their hamster rescue and release missions and animals in rehabilitation. Thanks to support from UNCG and IFAW, the centre at Kyiv Zoo was able to start a new initiative in 2023 in response to reports of human-wildlife conflict. Intensive agriculture and the destruction of wild hamsters' habitats (also due to the war) has been bringing them closer and closer to humans, such that they are sometimes found foraging in rural gardens. The centre has started rescue missions to catch the hamsters and release them either directly into the wild elsewhere or to include them in the conservation programme. With IFAW support, more than 40 hamsters were helped last year, including some that have already been released back into the wild into safe habitats in the Odessa and Kyiv regions.

- ▼ A bat in care at the Ukrainian Independent Ecology Institute eats an insect.



Photo: Dmitry Zubkov / © Ukrainian Independent Ecology Institute



Photo: © White Rock Bear Shelter

Bear rehabilitation centre in Kyiv region

From March 2022 until March 2024, IFAW supported Save Wild, which runs White Rock Bear Shelter, a bear rehabilitation centre in Chubynske in the Kyiv region. Our financial aid addressed emergency needs and helped improve the centre's animal welfare practices.

Support provided by IFAW:

- ▶ Transportation costs for the evacuation of seven bears from the frontlines to the Domazhyr Bear Sanctuary in the Lviv region.
- ▶ Construction of four transportation crates and two units for capturing animals to undertake sedation/veterinary checks.
- ▶ Operational costs for staff handling four bears and one wolf.

Kyiv Animal Rescue Group

IFAW financially supported the Kyiv Animal Rescue Group (KARG) for five months in 2022 and 2023. We helped facilitate their emergency rescue missions of wild and community animals in the Kyiv area by funding their transport costs, rescue vehicle, and supplies (power banks, crates, binoculars, and uniforms). During those five months, the KARG team rescued more than 200 wild animals (including birds, foxes, squirrels, reptiles, and other small wildlife), almost half of which were released back into the wild shortly after. A little more than 100 other animals were placed at various rehabilitation centres, including Wild Animal Rescue and the Mezhyhirya Swan Shelter—two of IFAW's other partners.

Advocate for sustainable, long-term solutions

IFAW's advocacy and policy work focuses on disaster response, risk reduction, and resilience. We promote the inclusion of animals in national and regional disaster preparedness and response plans. We also build strategic and strong animal rescue networks to be able to immediately address crisis needs as and when they arise.

To ensure our response in Ukraine has long-lasting positive impacts and serves to improve in-country animal welfare standards, IFAW's Ukrainian advocacy officers Maryna Ergemlidze and Svitlana Slabinska, based in Brussels, contributed to advance policy and legal changes. By liaising with governmental officials, the parliament committee, and local animal welfare organisations, they helped to identify legal gaps, promoted best practices, and advanced the IFAW mission in Ukraine.

By being actively involved in rescuing and supporting animals affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine, IFAW was able to identify key legal gaps affecting animal welfare in the country—lack of animal identification and registration, no control over illegal breeding, and poor conservation policies and regulations governing the welfare of wild animals in captivity.

Throughout our response, we actively engaged with local and international stakeholders to improve regulations and raise local standards. Together with 11 local wildlife rescue and rehabilitation organisations from Ukraine, in summer

2023, IFAW signed a joint statement with a call to the government of Ukraine to:

- ▶ strengthen the control over circulation, breeding, and keeping of wild animals in captivity and set up quarantine centres for wild animals seized/rescued from maltreatment and/or during disasters, and
- ▶ prioritize the development of legislation on the protection of marine mammals and shark species and the development of the Emerald Network (an analogue of Natura 2000 for non-EU European countries).

To advocate for better animal welfare practices, IFAW has become a member of three public working groups run by the Ecology Committee of the Ukrainian Parliament:

- ▶ Working group on the humanization of the treatment of animals in the entertainment sector and the introduction of animal identification and registration to strengthen responsible care for them
- ▶ Working group on the Emerald Network
- ▶ Working group on nature reserves

▲ Bear Liubochka at White Rock Bear Shelter in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Oleksiy Vasylyuk, Chairman of the UNCG Board

"Thanks to the support of IFAW, we organized the largest collecting of information in Ukraine on the Emerald conservation areas, designed to ensure the management of the most important species. The collecting engaged 170 specialists and officials, including deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Together with the participants of the collecting, they shared information with the Bern Convention about finds of rare species (a total of more than 9,000 records, mainly in the zones affected during the war). This will make it possible to plan the Green Restoration of Ukraine taking into account the needs of rare species of animals."



Photo: © Beremyske Biosphere



Photo: © UAnimals

With IFAW support, in May 2024, the Ukraine Nature Conservation Group hosted the Emerald Network Conference (online), which was attended by more than 100 participants from the Ukraine national and regional governments and the scientific and NGO sectors. As an outcome of the conference, the Ukraine Nature Conservation Group has developed recommendations for introducing Emerald Network regulations in Ukraine and expanding the list of local Emerald Network sites in Ukraine.

To raise community awareness of animal welfare issues, of the impacts of war on animals, and of best practices on disaster preparedness, IFAW took part in several public events hosted by local partners—from participating in round tables and working group meetings with the Ukraine government and local NGOs to joining the juries of the National Animal Protection Award and the National Media Contest.

▲ A fox wanders through open land while in care at Beremyske Biosphere during the war in Ukraine.

◀ Natalia Gozak (left), IFAW's Wildlife Rescue Field Officer in Ukraine, and Natalia Popova, Director of Wild Animal Rescue (which is supported by IFAW), receive an award in 2023.



Conclusions

Conclusions

Society always recognises that war causes harm to people. However, many people are not used to thinking about the suffering that war causes to animals. Animals are caught in the middle with no means of escape. When measuring losses, we hardly ever mention the impact on the environment or biodiversity. However, animals, humans, and the environment are all connected—our collective well-being is intertwined. And we have no right to ignore animals or the environment in times of war.

Animals became silent victims of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Both domestic and wild animals were directly and indirectly severely affected by the implications of military actions. Constant shelling of the civilian infrastructure triggered a refugee crisis and economic downturn, which resulted in an increase of stray animals and a decrease of animal welfare standards. Many animals have lost their guardians, and hungry, stressed, and injured pets now roam many towns, as well as abandoned and destroyed settlements, with no access to even the most basic veterinary care. The number of roaming

pets has been increasing due to insufficient capacity to undertake animal population management measures. The immense negative impact of the Russian military campaign on the environment has resulted in huge loss of biodiversity and much suffering among animals.

Unfortunately, like other types of disasters, the effects of war occur and escalate swiftly, and when prevention and de-escalation fail, there is no best way to prepare for wartime. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has become the largest war on the European continent since World War II, resulting in huge human loss and drastic impact on biodiversity, where the habitats of many wild animals have been destroyed. With ongoing hostilities, the massive scale of these negative implications is yet incalculable.

Towards the end of June 2024, IFAW had issued 147 grants to 80 partners in Ukraine and surrounding countries. Investments to support animals affected by the war totalled € 5 million. We helped 191,795 companion and wild animals, most of

which were cats, dogs, and wild animals like deer, bats, hamsters, and hedgehogs, as well as captive wildlife (bears, wolves, and big cats). In addition to helping animals in crisis, we also supported the animal caretakers, local communities, and the national economy. We supported 63 local partners in Ukraine, many of which were the distribution organisations that delivered our support to dozens of small-scale animal shelters and community volunteers supporting (stray) animals in war-affected regions, as well as to thousands of families with pets suffering from the negative impacts of war across Ukraine.

Our support to local wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centres largely focused on funding their needs for animal food, veterinary care, transport costs for rescue operations, as well as supporting 'rehoming' missions for more than 80 wild animals that could not be released into the wild (including evacuating 50 big cats formerly kept as exotic pets but abandoned in wartime).

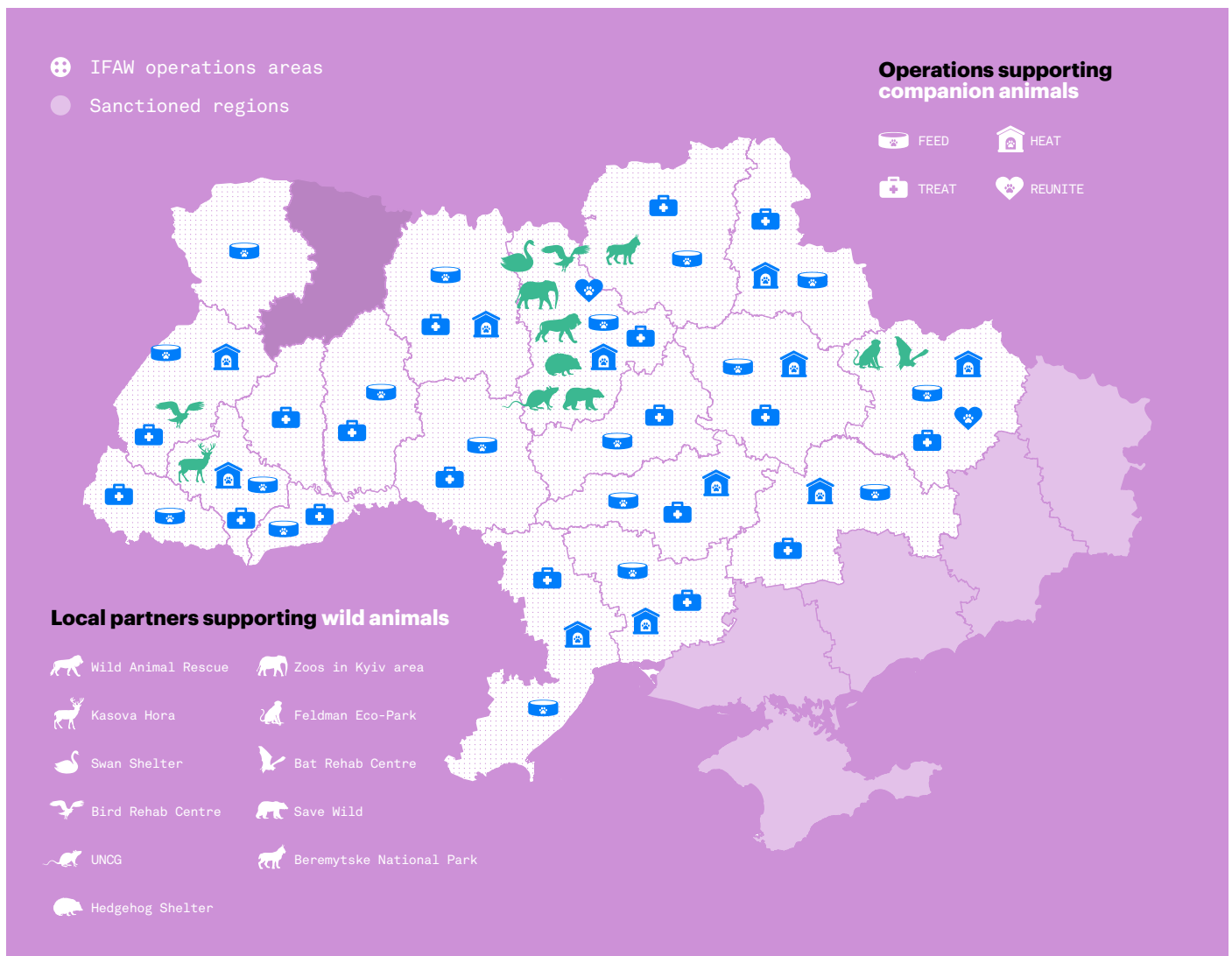
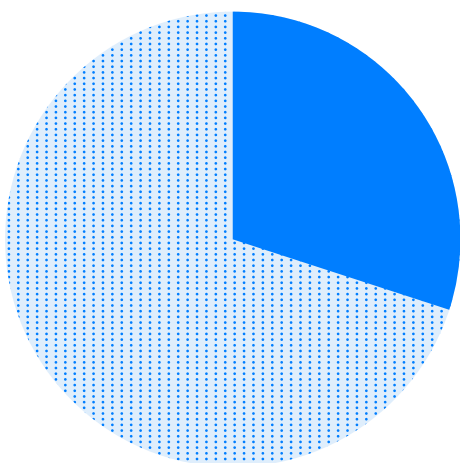




Photo: © IFAW

Support for companion animals vs. wildlife

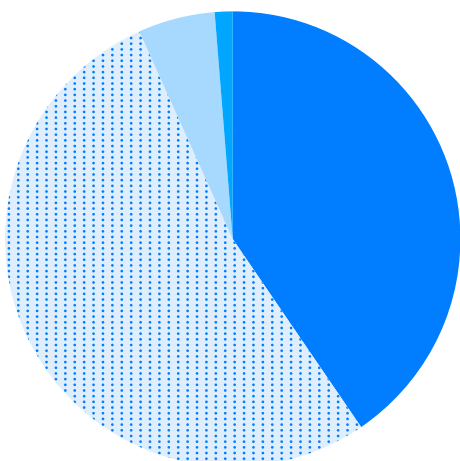


- Companion animals 70%
- Wildlife 30%

The long-standing partnerships we have established with local organisations in Ukraine and the work we have achieved together was built on more than just financial support. We empowered and equipped local charities to carry out their vital work for animals. This included facilitating training sessions, building technical and operational capacity, and so much more. Our support enabled our partners to improve their animal welfare practices and has left them better equipped to continue caring for animals affected by the war in Ukraine.

The legacy of our work continues to make a difference for the animals and people affected by the war in Ukraine. Being present in Ukraine and working alongside our local partners for more than two years enabled us to gain first-hand experience of structuring and implementing a disaster response project with a resilience building component to meet both short- and long-term needs of animals and their caretakers.

Support for companion animals: feed, treat, heat, reunite



- Treat 53%
- Feed 40%
- Heat 6%
- Reunite 1%

▲ IFAW-supported veterinarian Svetlana Varzhainova is helping a refugee with her pet at the Blue Tent at the Medyka border crossing between Ukraine and Poland.



Recommendations

Recommendations

Below are the key takeaways and lessons we learned on how to best protect and rescue animals during a time of war:

How to be prepared for a disaster?

The best way to mitigate the potential negative impact of disasters, including armed conflict and war, is to be prepared for it. Resources invested into disaster preparedness will always pay off when a disaster happens. First and foremost, when a disaster strikes, it is very important to consider all possible risks and not ignore (early) warnings and signals.

Key tips for individuals

- ▶ Consider your pets in your family emergency plan.
- ▶ Make sure your pets have up-to-date vaccinations and are microchipped.
- ▶ Have all your necessary supplies ready and keep them within easy reach (and preferably in one location), e.g., carrier, pet food and water, pet medication, leash, pet passport and medical records, picture of your pet, etc.
- ▶ Know the phone number of your local animal rescue services.

Key tips for animal shelters, rescue brigades, and veterinary clinics

- ▶ Improve your knowledge of animal needs in emergencies.
- ▶ Develop emergency protocols and train a team of responders. Consider different scenarios, e.g., enclosure destruction after shelling, limited food access, electricity cutoffs, etc.
- ▶ Become familiar and establish links with the animal rescue network in your region.
- ▶ Equip your facility with transport crates and rescue supplies in advance.
- ▶ Have a plan of what to do in an emergency with the animals in your care, e.g., temporary emergency placement, rehoming, euthanasia, etc.

Tips for governments and intergovernmental organisations

- ▶ Develop animal disaster risk reduction management guidelines and standards.
- ▶ Integrate animal welfare into emergency planning and management.
- ▶ Define clear organisation and allocation of responsibilities for animal welfare in emergencies. Establish a list of experts with experience intervening in disasters.

- ▶ Consider the classification of intentional and malicious harm to animals as a war crime, recognising that in times of conflict, threats to animals are often used as leverage to exert influence over people, break morale, and compel obedience.
- ▶ Allow for expedited procedures around domestic animal transport (and potential financial assistance for medical requirements) across international borders in conflict situations.
- ▶ Consider, if you haven't yet, adopting 'ecocide'²⁹ as a fifth crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which would provide further avenues to hold responsible those who damage the environment in conflict situations.

▼ Hrom and Dunai were rescued from Ostriv in the south of Ukraine, following the devastating flooding caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam.



Photo: © Animal Rescue Kharkiv



Photo: Vitaliy Novikov / © IFAW

How to respond to a disaster effectively?

- ▶ **Develop and follow the response protocol adjusted to the specifics of the disaster.** Train and equip your team of responders. Ensure everyone knows the protocols and their roles in the field. Keep track of all activities.
- ▶ **Have a long-term vision.** Start thinking about building resilience and improving animal welfare practices and disaster preparedness as early as during the emergency response phase.
- ▶ **Set up partnerships with international and local responders** to ensure that your actions compliment (and do not duplicate) each other and that your support is delivered to whom needs it the most.
- ▶ **Engage/hire local staff to join your response team and help you to plan and implement activities.** People sharing the cultural background and speaking the same language will facilitate your communications with local partners and enable you to respond swiftly to specific emergency needs of local animals and their caretakers.
- ▶ **Envision and be ready to respond quickly to potential consequences of armed hostilities destroying civilian infrastructure.** Russian airstrikes on the energy infrastructure of Ukraine resulted in frequent electricity cutoffs. From October to December 2022, the country faced a huge demand for power generators for which it was not ready.
- ▶ **Check and consider any special legal restrictions introduced during wartime** (e.g., banking, taxation, trade, travel, and other regulations).
- ▶ **Be aware of any international sanctions and limitations imposed on individuals, entities, and regions associated with the disaster area.** For example, massive sanctions were introduced against a large list of Russian individuals and entities in response to Russian military aggression against Ukraine and Russia's violation of human rights. Moreover, restrictions were introduced for any cash and goods transfer to Ukrainian regions illegally annexed by Russia—the Crimea, Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions. Only NGOs authorized by an OFAC license are able to operate in those sanctioned areas.
- ▶ **Conduct due diligence checks of your new partners.** Background checks may and should include checking internal/external references, online presence, news feeds, national public registries (if any), etc.
- ▶ **Always focus on long-term planning and building resilience.** Apply the best international practice for animal handling and animal welfare standards. Work to ensure the sustainable and long-lasting impact of the support you provide to local partners. For example, IFAW has been asked to fund urgent production of transport crates for wildlife rescue and evacuation missions. Alongside the financial support provided to our local partners, we have advised them on International Air Transport Association requirements for live animal transportation to ensure the new crates meet the best animal welfare standards.
- ▶ **Target the specific needs of different groups of animals.** To address the specific needs of various animals suffering from the Russian war in Ukraine, IFAW has developed the Feed-Treat-Heat-Reunite initiative for pets, and the Rescue-Rehabilitate-Release/Rehome initiative for wildlife.
- ▶ **Support the local economy.** A strong national economy is important for building a country's resilience. To support Ukraine's economy, IFAW has been partnering with local veterinary clinics and sourcing animal feed from local manufacturers.
- ▶ **Help local partners with in-kind donations.** Consider a 'centralised' procurement of most wanted 'typical' supplies and distributing them among your partners. This will enable you to maximise your capacity to support animals in wartime and give your partners more time to concentrate their efforts on field work and rescuing/helping animals. IFAW has purchased and donated pet food to animal shelters and power generators to veterinary clinics.

▲ One of the crates used to move a lion, a lioness and her three cubs out of war-torn Ukraine.



Photo: © Step Up rehabilitation center

How to establish the foundations for recovery and resilience?

- ▶ **Have a long-term vision.** Start thinking about resilience and improving animal welfare practices and disaster preparedness as early as during the emergency response phase.
- ▶ **Improve regular practices of animal rescue and rehabilitation teams.** Assess emergency and strategic needs of local partners and support them with sustainable solutions.
- ▶ **Establish animal rescue networks.** Set up coalitions of local animal rescue brigades, rehabilitation centres, veterinary specialists, and animal welfare organisations to foster knowledge exchange, peer-to-peer capacity building, and fortify the sector's resilience to care for animals and respond to disasters.
- ▶ **Increase sector awareness.** Promote new knowledge and cultivate skills. Identify areas of common interest for animal aid organizations and organise in-person and online trainings, workshops, and conferences. Provide key materials in the local language.
- ▶ **Diversify funding sources where possible.** To ensure the sustainability of the work implemented, don't rely on one funding source only. Diversification enables continuation of the work and its impacts if one source of funding ends.

◀ Karasik the shelter dog swims during physical therapy at Step Up rehabilitation center, supported by IFAW through Nova Ukraine.

Appendix

List of local partners supported by IFAW

Organisations in Ukraine

1. Anatoliy Norchenko Zoo
2. Animal Park Zoo
3. Anna Kurkurina Foundation
4. BCYPO Berdyansk (Service Protection of animals)
5. Beremytske Biosphere
6. Bird Rehabilitation Center 'FreeWings' (Vilni Kryla)
7. Bird Rehabilitation Center 'Nyushannik Estate. Help for Birds'
8. Cat House Animal Shelter
9. Cat's House - Wet Noses Animal Shelter
10. Discovery VS
11. Dukat Animal Shelter
12. Eco-Halych
13. Element of Life
14. Enjoying Life
15. Favourite Animals Animal Shelter
16. Feldman Ecopark Zoo
17. For Good, Animal Shelter
18. Friend Animal Shelter
19. Friendly Paw
20. Give a Paw, Friend
21. Gostomel Animal Shelter
22. Hedgehog Rehabilitation Center 'First Private Hedgehogery'
23. Homeless Little One Animal Shelter
24. House of Cats (Dim Kotiv) Animal Shelter
25. House of Hope Animal Shelter
26. Innovative Solutions for Animals
27. Konotop Animal Protection Society 'Animals' Friends'
28. Kotofei Animal Shelter
29. Kovcheg Animal Shelter
30. Krashchyi Drug (Best Friend) Animal Shelter
31. Kremenchuk Khvostyky Animal Shelter
32. Kyiv Animal Rescue Group (KARG)
33. Levitsky Veterinary Centre
34. Mezhyhirya Swan Shelter
35. Mykolaiv Red Cross
36. Nikopol Animal Shelter
37. Nova Ukraine
38. Pegasus Animal Shelter
39. Ray of Hope Animal Shelter
40. Regional Association of Territorial Communities
41. Save Wild/White Rock Bear Shelter
42. Sirius Animal Shelter
43. Sotnitskoe Animal Shelter
44. St Michael Monastery's Cat Shelter
45. Step to Pets
46. Striiski Khvosty Animal Shelter
47. SVORA
48. UAnimals
49. Ukraine Nature Conservation Group
50. Ukrainian Bat Rehabilitation Center - Ukrainian Independent Ecology Institute
51. Ukrainian Equestrian Charity Federation
52. Urgent Animal Help - Dnipro
53. URSA: Public organisation of protection of animal rights in Ukraine
54. USAVA - Ukraine Small Animal Veterinary Association
55. Veterinary clinic 'Dobra Laska'
56. Vinrist Animal Shelter
57. We stand for the right to live
58. Wild Animal Rescue Center (operated by Natalia Popova)
59. Without Borders 'City of Dogs'
60. XII Months Park
61. ZooFamily

Organisations in Ukraine – Donetsk region

1. A Dog and a Cat Animal Shelter, Gorlivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine
2. PIF Animal Shelter, Donetsk, Ukraine

During the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, between 27 February and 4 March 2022, IFAW provided emergency grants (approximately USD 20,000) to two shelters in the Donetsk region so that our partners in Ukraine could continue to feed and care for the animals under their protection. Since the grant funds were provided within the first 11 days after President Biden signed Executive

Order 14065 on 21 February 2022 (EO 14965 prohibits the exports of services or funds to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine, except as authorized by an OFAC license), IFAW has voluntarily self disclosed to the US Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), US Department of Treasury, on 1 April 2022. The case was formally closed by OFAC in April 2023 with no penalty issued.



Organisations abroad

1. Arcturos Sanctuary (Greece)
2. ARKA Animal Protection Association (Poland)
3. Colegiul Medicilor Veterinari (Moldova)
4. EAZA - European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (Netherlands)
5. Fleet of Angels (USA)
6. Fundacja Centaurus (Poland)
7. Krakow Society for the Protection of Animals (Poland)
8. Natuurhulpcentrum VZW (Belgium)
9. Nederlandse Vereniging tot Bescherming van Dieren (Netherlands)
10. Poznań Zoo (Poland)
11. Red Panda Association (Romania)
12. Sava's Safe Haven (Romania)
13. Save the Dogs and Other Animals (Romania)
14. The Wildcat Sanctuary (USA)
15. U-Hearts Foundation (Lithuania)
16. World Central Kitchen (USA)
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Endnotes

Endnotes

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International Fund for Animal Welfare

Protecting and rescuing animals
during wartime

Case study: *Ukraine*,
February 2022–June 2024

June 2024

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Government authorities and animal
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from IFAW during disasters via
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Cover photo: Volodymyr Burdyak / © Eco-Halych
Red deer rescued and cared for by Eco-Halych and
partners, before being released in a newly established
nature reserve in the Kasova Hora area in western Ukraine.

Back cover photo: © The Big Cat Sanctuary
Mir the male tiger in care at Wild Animal Rescue in Ukraine.

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