

MEET THE SCIENTIST:

DR. KATHERINE MERTES

Hi friends! I'm Dr. Katherine, I'm research ecologist at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. I study the endangered scimitar-horned oryx!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

During my PhD research we were trying to track a very large bird called a kori bustard. They mostly walk instead of fly and you usually capture large walking birds by herding them into a tall net. We got so close to getting one to walk into our net - but he saw the net at the very last second and took off! We found out that even though kori bustards are one of the biggest birds in the world, they can take off from a standstill!



CONSERVATION PASSION

Biodiversity loss. As more and more species are driven to extinction by human actions, the closer we get to ecosystems that can't provide the resources humans need, like clean air and water. We need to conserve species not just to protect ecosystems, but also to protect the planet!

MEET THE SCIENTIST:

DR. MELISSA SONGER



Hi there, I'm Mel Songer, and I'm a conservation biologist at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZCBI).

FIELD NOTES

One time I was doing a survey and caught an elephant shrew. It's huge for a shrew! It had a very strong jaw and clamped down on my thumb while I was holding it. Ouch! I felt like I was in a cartoon with this giant shrew dangling off my thumb, trying not to yell or look silly in front of a group I was training. Eventually I was able to get it off me without hurting it, but it was embarrassing. The team was kind enough not to laugh at me but have to laugh at myself when I think about that scene.

FURRY FRIENDS

We have an Australian cattle herding dog named Ollie. He had many adventures before he made it to our family, but loves everyone - animals and people alike! We also have two cats, Tallulah and Fitz, that I call "Conservation Kitties" because they were part of NZCBI's cat colony research program to improve reproduction for endangered cat species.



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BECAUSE OF HER STORY

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earth
OPTIMISM