

# Sir David Attenborough backs designers' plan to help save endangered lemurs



Sir David Attenborough has given his support to a vital project for a new field station in Madagascar to help save critically endangered lemurs.

The plan has been drawn up by conservationists from [Bristol Zoological Society](#) alongside landscape architect [Grant Associates](#), architect [Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios](#) (FCBStudios) and [BuroHappold Engineering](#).

Sir David gave his backing to the £110,000 scheme for the Ankarafa field station in Sahamalaza-Iles Radama National Park at an event in London.

The 92-year-old broadcaster first alerted the world to the plight of lemurs in his book *Zoo Quest to Madagascar* back in 1961. Since then the situation has got worse with 95 per cent of lemur species now at risk of extinction.

*“This is a visionary project that can help to conserve the lemurs and their forest habitat as well as helping the Madagascan people. This field station has the potential to provide a centre for conservation shared by scientists from all over the world.”*

— Sir David Attenborough, presenter of Planet Earth and Blue Planet

The plan is for a research centre and a tourist camp. At present, scientists and research students working at the centre use open-sided shelters with tin roofs.

The station will include a laboratory, accommodation for researchers, a manager’s office, dining and living areas and a kitchen. Plans also include a tourist camp nearby with a classroom and accommodation for eco-tourists.

The team behind the scheme has already surveyed the site and unveiled detailed plans before an invited audience at FCBStudios’ offices in Fitzrovia.

The design team has looked at the space available on the site as well as assessing the difficulties of transporting materials there, as it lies more than four hours’ drive along a poor road.

In the long term the aim is for this centre to become internationally renowned for developing solutions to conservation problems and become a destination for PhD and masters students. The centre could also provide work for local people as guides, managers and field researchers.

Bristol Zoological Society is one of 30 European zoos involved in the Association Européenne pour l’Etude et la Conservation des Lemuriens (AEECL) which aims to safeguard the future of Madagascar’s lemur population.

*“This project goes right to the heart of what we need to be doing to conserve the vulnerable parts of our planet. We are thrilled to play our part in helping it come to life.”*

— Andrew Grant, director of Grant Associates

*“It’s a fantastic opportunity for us to be involved in a building which we hope will set new standards for how to build without encouraging deforestation. “So much wood is cut down for firing bricks and we are trying to develop technologies which are forest-friendly.”*

— Peter Clegg, senior partner of Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios

*“The new field station will provide an internationally recognised research base and high-quality environment for students and researchers. “It will also increase opportunities for local people whilst connecting and inspiring audiences in the UK and around the world.”*

— Dr Christoph Schwitzer, director of conservation at Bristol Zoological Society, who built the current basic camp on the site 15 years ago.

- To make a donation to the Ankarafa Field Station project, please click [here](#).





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Grant Associates has experience in all scales and types of ecological and landscape development including strategic landscape planning, master planning, urban design and regeneration and landscapes for parks, housing, education, sport, recreation, visitor attractions and commerce.

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