

Animal Tracks

**Meet Karina,
the Giant Otter
Who Changed
Her Keeper's Life**



**TRAVEL THE WORLD
WITH BZI**

**NORTH AMERICA'S BIGGEST
CAT IS COMING BACK TO THE
BIRMINGHAM ZOO!**

Partnership Between University
of Alabama at Birmingham and
the Birmingham Zoo



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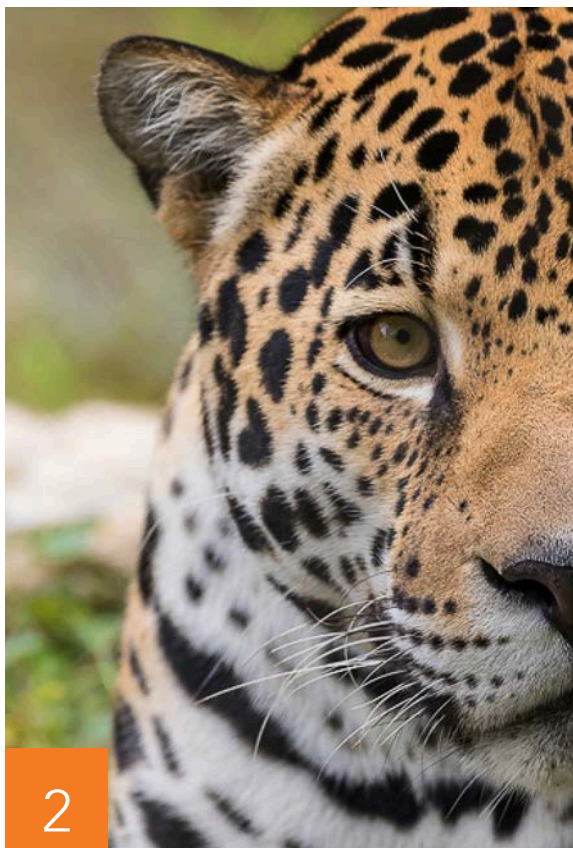
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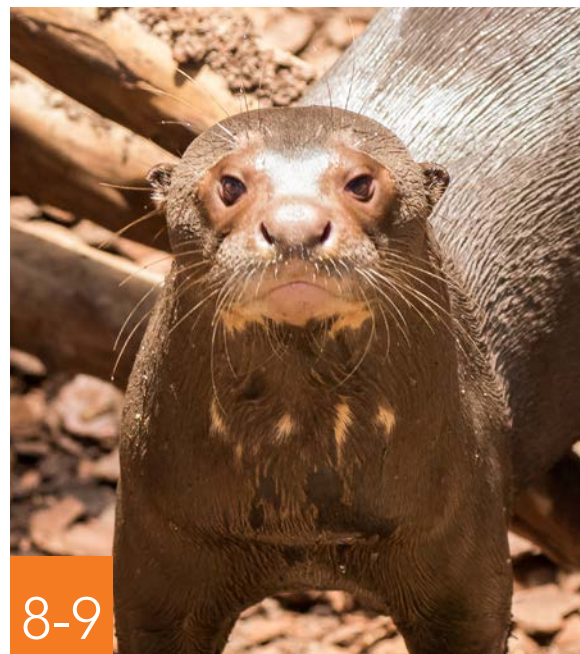
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The Birmingham Zoo is the only AZA accredited zoo in the state of Alabama.

ZOO HOURS:

Open daily, Monday
through Sunday:
9am–5pm



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

It is with great joy that I get to start off by thanking you for helping the Birmingham Zoo set an all-time attendance record for the 2016 year with well over 600,000 guests in attendance. This shows that the Zoo continues to be a trusted resource to the Birmingham community, and I cannot thank you enough for your continued support.



Throughout 2016, the Zoo realized several accomplishments. In the spring, the Veterinary and Africa staff worked diligently with doctors and researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham to perform an innovative tusk wrap on Bulwagi, the Zoo's dominant African elephant. This was a tremendous example of how the staff support the Zoo's mission on a daily basis.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Birmingham Zoo received a 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency by America's largest independent charity evaluator, Charity Navigator. With an overall score of 95.76 out of 100, the Zoo was one of only five nonprofits in the Birmingham area to receive this highly-coveted distinction, and one of only ten in Alabama to receive this honor.

Throughout the year, we had several temporary visitors, including giant animatronic dinosaurs and bugs. These exhibits were a wonderful educational and recreational resource for the Zoo.

As we concluded the year, we began the next phase of construction on the Zoo's new front entrance, event lawn, and Asian Passage exhibit. You will more than likely notice something new and different on each upcoming visit to the Zoo as we work to open these new additions.

With such a wonderful and productive year behind us, we are excited to begin another year serving you and the Birmingham community. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Zoo staff and the hundreds of animals that enrich the lives of our guests every day, thank you for your support. We look forward to seeing you soon and often.

Sincerely,

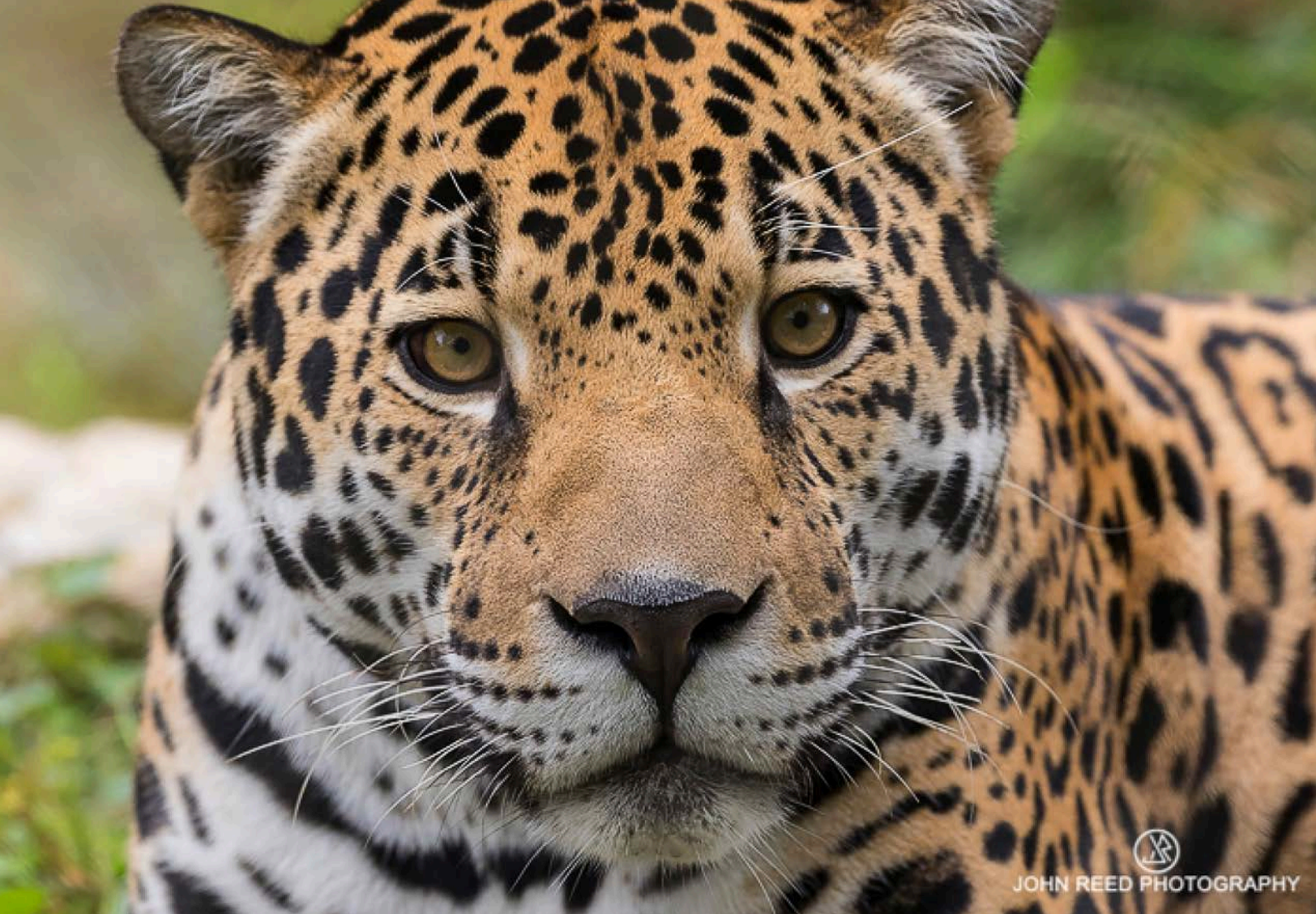
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wm. R. Foster".

William R. Foster, D.V.M.
President & CEO

COMING SUMMER 2017 — NEW EVENT LAWN!

Have you seen the recent changes to the Birmingham Zoo? We are excited about the upcoming completion of the first phase of construction projects, and the opening of the new event lawn this summer! Equipped with a stage area, lighting, and thousands of layout opportunities, take advantage of this new venue to host your weddings, corporate events and parties. Call 205.397.3859 to book your event now for this exciting new event lawn.





NORTH AMERICA'S BIGGEST CAT **IS** **COMING BACK** TO THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

We have an exciting new addition to the Birmingham Zoo. An all-new jaguar exhibit is coming to the Zoo and will open this spring! The exhibit will be home to Khan, a three year old male jaguar, that was born at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. Jaguars can reach a length of 8 feet and can weigh up to 250 pounds, making them the largest cat in the Americas and the third largest cat in the world behind tigers and lions. Unlike most cats, jaguars enjoy being in the water and Khan is no exception! This elusive cat is rarely seen in the United States, so you'll have a truly unique experience at the Birmingham Zoo. There are only an estimated 15,000 jaguars left in the world and you'll have the opportunity to learn through

educational messaging how you can help this amazing species survive. "The Birmingham Zoo is excited to be a key player in the conservation efforts of this charismatic animal," says Marcia Riedmiller, Mammal Curator.

Birmingham Zoo members and guests are invited to see the construction of the exhibit going on now, and to visit this spring to see Khan in his new home. Leading up to the grand opening, Birmingham Zoo Members will enjoy special Member Preview Days of the new jaguar exhibit. Don't miss out on being the first to see the new exhibit this spring! Follow the Birmingham Zoo on social media for updates on the grand opening date of this exciting new exhibit.

ZOOGALA 2016 MAKES HISTORY AT THE ZOO

BY: KRISTIN MARTIN

On Friday, September 16, 2016, the Birmingham Zoo hosted its largest fundraising event of the year, ZooGala 2016, in the Junior League of Birmingham – Hugh Kaul Children's Zoo. The event was sponsored by IBERIABANK, a partner of the Birmingham Zoo for 12 years. Net proceeds benefit the Birmingham Zoo's mission of "Inspiring Passion for the Natural World," its operational efforts, educational programs and conservation research in the field. Honorary Chairs of this event were Mr. and Mrs. F. Dixon Brooke, Jr. and Chairs were Jennifer Ard, Lindsey Lacey, Colin Mitchell and Kathleen Roth. Lynn Cassady served as the ZooGala Advisor. With more than 400 guests at the Asian-themed event, ZooGala 2016 was the highest grossing in Zoo history, raising approximately \$400,000. The event showcased an elaborate display of origami, parasols, bamboo and orchids, as the A-Town A-List, a band from Atlanta, entertained the guests. To kick off the evening, guests were greeted by Zoo animals, such as a cockatoo, ball python and opossum. A highlight of the event was a dragon dance performed by members of the Confucius Institute at Auburn University at Montgomery.

This year's silent auction was a success and featured a new online auction platform that grossed over \$37,000. Approximately 80 items were available for purchase and included exciting dining packages, original artwork, exquisitely designed jewelry, relaxing getaways and fine wine.

Looking ahead to ZooGala 2017, Kelly Aland, Myla Calhoun and Britt Redden have agreed to serve as Chairs and Jennifer Ard will be ZooGala Advisor. Mark your calendars for next year's event, which is scheduled for Friday, September 15, 2017.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As of December 2016, the Birmingham Zoo's Capital Campaign has less than 5% left to raise for the \$18 million goal! Shovels hit the ground in November to begin the first phase of construction on the new Arrival Experience. The new event lawn will be able to host a myriad of Zoo events, including performances, movies, and the ever-popular Zoo, Brews, and Full Moon Bar-B-Que event. This innovative multi-purpose space will also be available for weddings, events, and corporate gatherings and is due to be completed by the summer of 2017.

The second phase of construction, which includes the Zoo's new front entrance, is due to be completed in 2018. Guests will be greeted by water features, colorful botanicals and animal-themed experiences as they enter the Zoo.

This new arrival experience will provide enhanced features to allow Zoo members easy entrance into the Zoo, self-service kiosks, concierge services and a new 2,500 square-foot gift shop expansion. Other Zoo amenities include a new expansive restroom facility, which will include family rooms and nursing rooms, as well as stroller rentals and other unique rental opportunities. The design of the new arrival experience is being handled by the architecture and engineering firm Goodwyn, Mills and Cawood.

The third phase, which will feature the Asian Passage exhibit, is currently being designed, and is scheduled to be completed in 2018. This exhibit will be home to the Zoo's Sumatran orangutans, Komodo dragon, red pandas, white-handed gibbons, Malayan tiger and other Asian species. The majority of the species that will call the Asian Passage home are listed as endangered or critically endangered by the International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

The Birmingham Zoo has several naming opportunities still available, including a donor wall for gifts of \$1,000 or more. If you would like to Renew your Zoo and support the Zoo's capital campaign, please visit birminghamzoo.com or call the Development office at 205-397-3856 for more information.



TASTE THE FEELING™

TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH BZI

The Birmingham Zoo is thrilled to announce an exciting new program that will allow you to travel the world with us! The Zoo is currently offering trips to destinations afar including Botswana, Cuba and India. By traveling with the Birmingham Zoo you are helping support the Zoo's mission of conservation and education.

The first trip hosted by the Birmingham Zoo is from June 7 to 15, 2017 and will take participants to explore beautiful Cuba. This trip, led by Birmingham Zoo President and CEO, Dr. William Foster, will explore Havana, Las Terrazas National Park, a paradise for nature lovers, Cienaga de Zapata Natural Reserve, the largest swamp in the Caribbean area, the Escambray Mountain range and El Cubano Park, to take part in a river walk, and more. This trip is ideal for nature lovers with ample opportunities to see more than 60 local animal species and 245 plant species.

For those looking to experience two of the most incredible destinations in Africa, the trip to South Africa and Botswana is perfect. Brimming with wild experience and luxury accommodation, this trip will start in charming, elegant and mysterious South Africa, where travelers will come face to face with Africa's Big 5 in the incredible MalaMala Game Reserve. In Botswana, you'll fly from camp to camp on small planes, taking in spectacular aerial views of the Africa vista below, soaring low enough to make out elephant, giraffe and more. This trip from November 5 to 18, 2017 will be led by Dr. Foster. The next trip hosted by the Zoo is to India and will also be led by Dr. Foster. The trip will begin by visiting the amazing sights in Delhi, including the Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque built in 1644. From here, travel to Pench National Park, Kanha National Park and the Vindhyan Mountain Range. This trip departs on January 11, 2018 and returns on January 27, 2018.

For more information on these amazing travel opportunities, to download the full itineraries and more, visit www.birminghamzoo.com.





Volunteers at the Zoo's annual event: Teacher's Night.

MAKE A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION THAT YOU ARE ACTUALLY EXCITED TO KEEP!

BY: ALONIA DIAZ

Have you ever made a New Year's resolution but didn't follow through? We are all guilty of having the best intentions when resolutions are made but sometimes life happens, another year passes and we find ourselves writing the same resolutions with hopes of making them stick this time!

The Birmingham Zoo has good news for you! The Zoo can help you make a fun and exciting resolution this year and will even help you keep it. This opportunity will challenge you, teach you, and if we do our part, it will inspire you so that you can inspire others. All of this and more can be achieved by joining the Birmingham Zoo Volunteer Team!

Volunteers play a vital role in Zoo operations! At the Zoo, guests can feed a giraffe, explore the lorikeet aviary, or try being a researcher at the Chipangali's Research Station - all of which are programs that utilize Zoo volunteers. This past year, the Kiwanis Giraffe Encounter volunteers logged over 2,000 hours to help make it run smoothly and efficiently. The Zoo also utilizes teen and adult volunteers to help with Summer Camp Programs. In the last summer season we had almost 10,000 hours of volunteer time donated to help the Zoo make these programs happen!

The Zoo offers several volunteer programs to provide ways for teens and adults to give back to their community. The Camp Crew Teen Volunteer Program is a program designed for teens in the community to gain experience through a summer full of hands-on opportunities. These volunteers work directly with Zoo camp staff as junior camp counselors. This is a competitive volunteer program with a limited time open application in the beginning of the year. If you are a teen or know a teen that is interested, please encourage them to visit our website for more information.

The Birmingham Zoo also has an Adult Volunteer Program, for those over 18 who would like to give back to their community and inspire others along the way! The Adult Program has several opportunities for participation, including working in the Kiwanis Giraffe Encounter*, Lorikeet Aviary, Chipangali Research Station* and many more! This year the Zoo will be offering monthly orientations beginning in January to help you reach and keep your New Year's Resolution.

Are you interested in joining a team of dedicated, passionate and loyal volunteers who strive to inspire others? If you can see yourself at the Zoo and would like to get involved, please contact our Volunteer Department below.

***Additional training required.**

Alonia Diaz, Volunteer Manager 205.397.3863
volunteers@birminghamzoo.com

ADULT VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION DATES

- Sunday, February 5th, 2017
- Saturday, March 4th, 2017

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: FULL MOON BAR-B-QUE

For 30 years, Full Moon Bar-B-Que has been satisfying appetites and serving the Birmingham community as a partner and friend. Nominated by the Birmingham Zoo, Full Moon was recognized in November 2016 as the Outstanding Corporate Citizen during the National Philanthropy Day Awards ceremony presented by the Alabama chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Dr. William Foster stated, "We wanted everyone in Birmingham to know what the Zoo has known for years. David and Joe Maluff and their families are so very generous. The Zoo wanted to recognize and honor the Maluffs and what they do for the Zoo, our community and other nonprofits."

Not only has Full Moon provided delicious meals for events such as Tails in the Trails and Zoo, Brews and Full Moon Bar-B-Que, but they have also donated products, promotional t-shirts, gift certificates for silent auctions, assisted in marketing support by purchasing outdoor advertisements, and displayed posters at all Full Moon Bar-B-Que restaurants. To celebrate Full Moon Bar-B-Que's 30th anniversary in 2016, the company proudly partnered with the Zoo through 2019 as the exclusive sponsor of the Full Moon Bar-B-Que Wild Slide attraction.

In researching the Maluff family in the Birmingham archives, the Birmingham Zoo staff discovered a long partnership with the Zoo. The Zoo staff found a Birmingham News article from the 1950s about Ed Maluff, David and Joe Maluff's uncle, who owned The Kopper Kettle restaurant. In 1957, Ed joined with the Birmingham Zoo to sell take home meals for \$1 to visitors on the Fourth of July. It seems the apple does not fall far from the tree.

The Birmingham Zoo congratulates Full Moon Bar-B-Que for the Outstanding Corporate Citizen Award and it looks forward to the future successful partnerships smothered in bar-b-que sauce and dipped in chocolate.





MEET KARINA,

THE GIANT OTTER WHO CHANGED HER KEEPER'S LIFE

BY: LAUREN HELMER

Dane Jorgensen, lead keeper of the Birmingham Zoo's Primate Department, never expected one inquisitive and playful giant otter to come along and change the trajectory of his career. But that is exactly what Karina the giant otter did, changing the game not only for Dane, but for other animal species in the Birmingham Zoo — and beyond.

"I love the way that our relationship came to be," says Dane, primary caretaker and trainer of the giant otter Karina and her sister Lara. The giant otters came to the zoo from Miami three years ago at the ages of 2 and 3. "I was there when she arrived, and I've been with her almost every day since," says Dane. "Karina and I just kind of clicked." Dane says it is important to establish a relationship with the animals outside

of food, so he'd go into the exhibit to simply hang out and get to know the otters. "Karina would lay in the corner, and I'd sit beside her and toss a pebble toward her, and she'd nuzzle it back to me. It wasn't training in a conventional way; we just had this little game between us that had nothing to do with food. Then, I put it under stimulus control with cues to tell her to do it and then reward her for doing it."

Dane immediately took note of Karina's openness, curiosity and willingness to engage. "The dominant animals like her sister Lara are pretty straightforward and food-motivated. Karina had this little spark and looked at things differently," says Dane. "She kind of wanted to figure us out. When we enter the exhibit, even without food, Karina always runs over

As seen in the article from styleblueprint.com

SB StyleBlueprint

to greet us. Also, when you give them enrichment items to motivate them, Karina tries to figure everything out about the item, investigating it and going through all the motions, because she enjoys exploring and playing with new things, and I love that about Karina.”

workshops and conferences and was recently awarded a conservation grant that allowed him to research wild otters in Guyana. This beautiful little local relationship between an otter and her keeper is reaching well beyond the gates of the Birmingham Zoo, as Dane shares his groundbreaking work —

“She’s been a big, big impact on my life. I’m very grateful for her.”

Using a whistle, small treats, repeated encouragement with the word “good,” Dane and Karina can now perform about 70 different behaviors. Dane explains that doing these tasks mimics hunting in the wild, which is usually followed by healthy natural behaviors, such as swimming, digging and interacting with each other, which Karina and Lara both do in their zoo habitat since Dane began working with them. “I can see the difference this training has had, compared to when they first came here,” says Dane. “The biggest thing is that the training gives the animals confidence.”

A few months ago, Karina hurt her wrist and was limping. The keepers were trying to figure out if it was serious or if they should let it work itself out. Dane was able to train Karina to put her hand out, so the technician could X-ray the injury. He’s also been able to train her to let him brush her teeth and to submit to a voluntary heart ultrasound by a veterinary technician. “We’ve done things like injection training and blood draw, which is not very common. Because of this work with Karina, we’ve been able to translate these behaviors across to other species. We did blood draws on the male monkey. I would have never felt confident enough to pursue that before. But because of her, I am trying to do the same core things I do here across all of the different species. She set the stage for what I want to do with any animal I work with for the rest of my career.”

Whenever the otters separate, they always come back together and have a little reunion and embrace. Dane and Karina have accomplished things that no other zoos have with their giant otters. Not only has Dane given this curious and lovable giant otter great confidence, but she has been the biggest game-changer in his career and confidence as well. Being that this dynamic duo is setting the standard for giant otter health and behavioral care, in October 2016, Dane was an instructor at the Otter Keeper Workshop in Buffalo, New York, alongside other well-respected national otter representatives. A member of the Otter Specialist Group, Dane continues to share his training practices with several institutions,

and the fact that it can translate to benefit other species — with diverse groups of animal specialists from cities all over the United States.

“Everyone likes being successful at their job. That’s the great thing. I look forward to seeing her and working with her. But, she has made me look at things differently. From the training standpoint, I view my job and my role differently. I view it more as a responsibility than as just a love of working with animals,” explains Dane. “I feel responsible for her health and well-being. I really try to get her to help herself, to participate in the medical stuff, so she can take care of herself. And that makes me feel better about my work. She’s been a big, big impact on my life. I’m very grateful for her.”

When you’re exploring the Birmingham Zoo, visit Karina in the primate building. And as you watch her swimming, digging and cuddling with her sister — or if you’re lucky enough to catch her training with Dane — it’s impossible not to be inspired by the thought that this one inquisitive and trusting otter in Birmingham has not only changed her caretaker’s life, but she’s breaking new ground for other animal species far beyond Alabama.



UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

16 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Bring any canned or non-perishable food item and receive half-price admission. Limit one per guest.

FEBRUARY

2 Groundhog Day

14 Woo at the Zoo

**18 Audubon Tom Imhof
Zoo Bird Walk**

**18 Great Backyard Bird
Count 2016**

MARCH

15 Member Appreciation Morning

25 World Water Day

25-4/2 Spring Break - Schaeffer Eye Center Wildlife Shows, Behind the Scenes with Educational Animals and much more occur all week!

27-31 Spring Break Camp

APRIL

8 Farm Day

15-16 Easter Egg Hunts

28 Tails in the Trails



RETENTION POND CLEAN UP

BY: LINDSEY HERRON

Trying to think of more ways to go green? The Birmingham Zoo Green Team is here to help!

Sometimes the best place to go green is in your own backyard, or in the Zoo's case, behind the scenes! Last fall, the Zoo's Green Team held a clean-up event on Zoo grounds, pulling litter out of one of our retention ponds behind the Children's Zoo. Because the pond is on the edge of Zoo property, wind and rainwater carry bottles, paper and other types of trash into the pond, where it collects and can harm wildlife. During the clean-up, employees from all departments came together and collected 12 bags full of trash, plus some larger pieces of debris. This is the second clean-up event the Green Team has held in this location, with a grand total of 30 bags of

trash removed from the area. Future clean-up events are planned for the picnic areas and parking lots, as the Birmingham Zoo works to live out its mission of Inspiring Passion for the Natural World.

Want to do something similar? Look around where you live or work for a park, waterway, or even a stretch of road, then gather your friends and family. Make sure everyone has proper protective gear, like gloves, long sleeved shirts, pants and bug spray, then hand out trash bags and start cleaning. Don't forget to have a plan for how to dispose of the garbage you collect. Go the extra mile and recycle the plastic bags and bottles you collect!

Remember, every little bit counts!

WHAT DO ZOO ANIMALS DO IN THE WINTER?

BY: KIKI NOLEN-SCHMIDT

During a typical Alabama July afternoon, many of the Birmingham Zoo's animals native to Africa, Central and South America will be enjoying temperatures similar to their natural habitats. However, in the winter, these animals may experience temperatures that they would not normally encounter in their native climate.

These species, including giraffes and African crested porcupines, can be as sensitive to extreme cold as we are and must have protection throughout the winter. Since the Zoo houses species from every climate, their treatment during the winter depends on the natural history of the particular animal.

You may not realize that most animals you see exhibited outdoors have indoor areas that are not visible to the public. These areas are sometimes referred to as night houses, barns, or stalls. Animals that are not suited for the cold retreat to the same places they go for shade or to sleep during the summer – areas beyond the public eye. These spaces are equipped with all of the comforts needed in inclement weather including bedding, water, and heat. For the Zoo's reticulated giraffe, the Trails of Africa staff bring them into their private barn and turn on the heaters.

In the Reptile Building, the temperature and humidity can be set in each individual habitat to the animals' specific needs. The Animal Care Professionals monitor the animals closely, and also keep records of the animals' diets to adjust for seasonal changes in produce availability.

Another way the Zoo helps the animals live comfortably through the colder months is by monitoring their weight closely. Animals such as certain bird species,

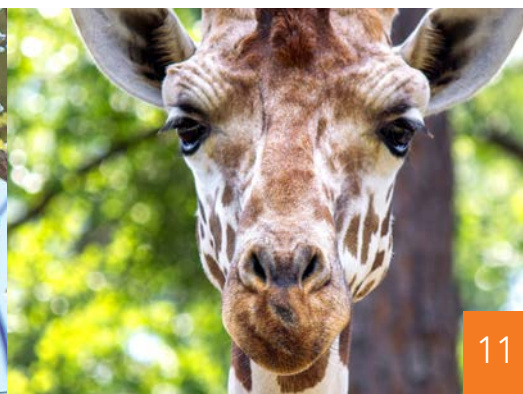
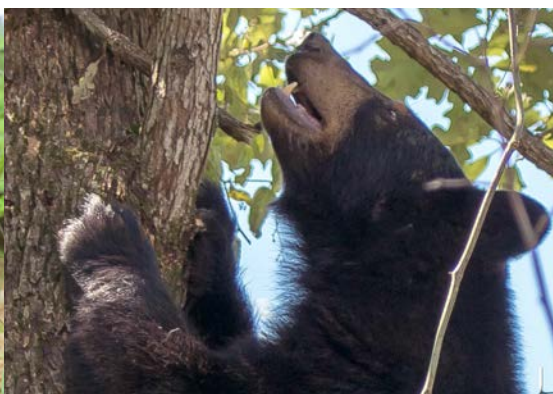
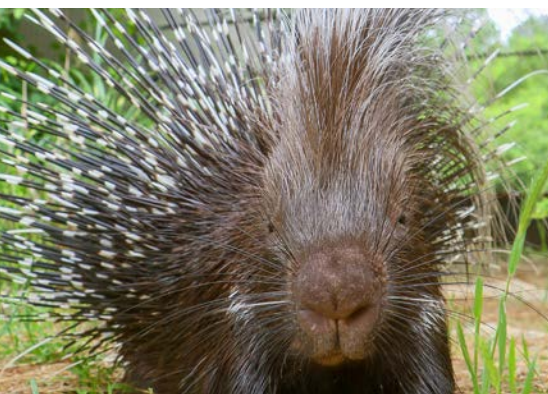
sea lions and other animals have increased diets to allow them to put on extra weight during the winter for warmth. Just as the Animal Care Professionals wear extra clothing during the cold months, this weight serves as extra insulation for the animals.

Even though it is winter, there is still plenty to see and do at the Zoo during the cold season! Unless conditions are extreme, most of the Zoo's animals are given a choice of whether they prefer to be indoors or outdoors. Many of the animals who are not native to colder climates seem to enjoy the cold weather! Even without a thick coat, animals with large bodies lose heat more slowly, so animals such as the elephants are still very active in their yard throughout the winter.

Many guests often ask if certain animals such as the bears will be out on exhibit during the winter. Black bears are known for hibernating during the winter, and our bears are no exception. While our bears may not hibernate as long as wild bears because they have continuous access to food, they will still exhibit this natural behavior.

When the weather turns severe and the animals need to be kept inside for their safety, the Zoo staff take measures to ensure that the animals have ways to keep them mentally and physically stimulated. By giving the animals enrichment, such as items to interact with, special foods for their diets, or sensory stimulation, the animals are able to exhibit their natural behaviors regardless of their location.

Be sure to visit the Zoo this winter and see first-hand some of the ways the Zoo works to keep the animals cozy!





RUNNING THROUGH THE TRAILS - NEW EXERCISE INITIATIVE WITH GOATS

BY: TYLER EADS AND KARLA FARISH

The Zoo's Dwarf Nigerian goat herd began a training program when they became part of the barn animal collection. Most ranged from 3-4 months of age upon their arrival. An early start helps build an important bond between trainer and goat. Training challenges the animals both physically and mentally. Initial behaviors taught to the goats included walking onto a stanchion for hoof trimming and medical check-ups. After some research and successful initial training, the goats started using an agility course, which then became the Goat Show in spring of 2013. At that time, the Dwarf Nigerian goats began learning more behaviors such as balance beam, weave poles, wave, and hoop jump. Knowing the goat's natural history played an important role in deciding what to train as their natural abilities were enhanced by keying into their intelligence and playfulness.

A recent addition to the training program has been the daily goat walk. The walks provide enrichment as well as exercise, which is part of weight management and overall medical care. The process began by taking small groups of the goats out on leashes to walk the Alabama Wilds Trail. The leashes encouraged the goats to move away from the barn, which they are very homed to. Once progress was seen, the leashes were removed and the natural herd behavior took over as the group size grew to include all 11 goats. These playful animals seem to enjoy training and working with their keepers. Be sure to stop by the Hugh Kaul Children's Zoo barn to watch the goat walk, which currently happens every day at 1:30pm. It's a lot of fun to see the goats out and about!



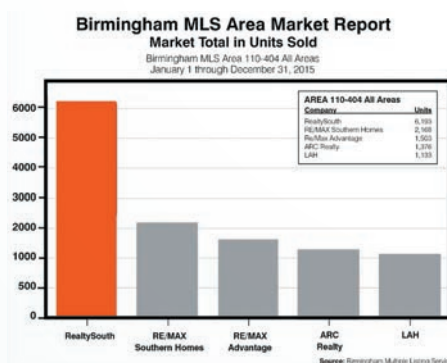
ADOPT A BIRMINGHAM ZOO ANIMAL

The world is filled with an amazing diversity of wildlife. Some species are beautiful, others bizarre, and some are scary – but they all are important and deserve our protection. Unfortunately, many species are declining at a rapid pace due to human activity. Habitat destruction, climate change, pollution and illegal hunting are just some of the threats to our fellow creatures. It is up to us to protect them. The Birmingham Zoo has an animal adoption program where you can symbolically adopt a species and support the conservation and research efforts of the Birmingham Zoo. Adoptions start at only \$25 and come with a variety of perks and benefits. To find out more and to adopt today, visit www.birminghamzoo.com.



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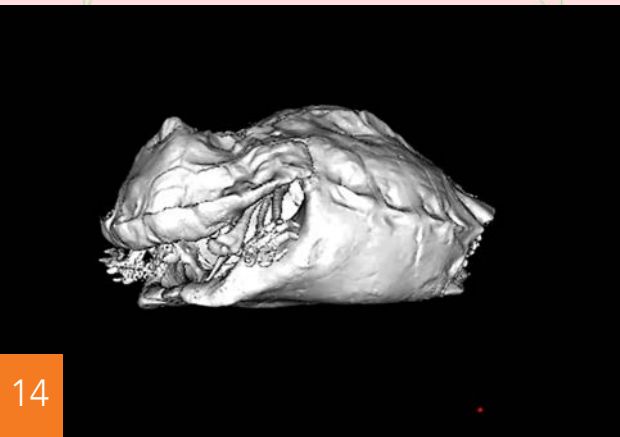
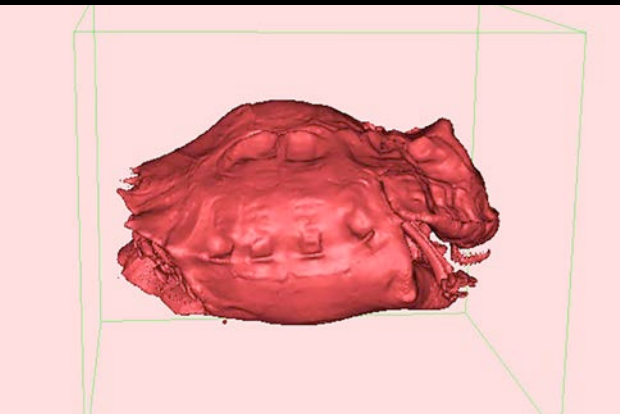
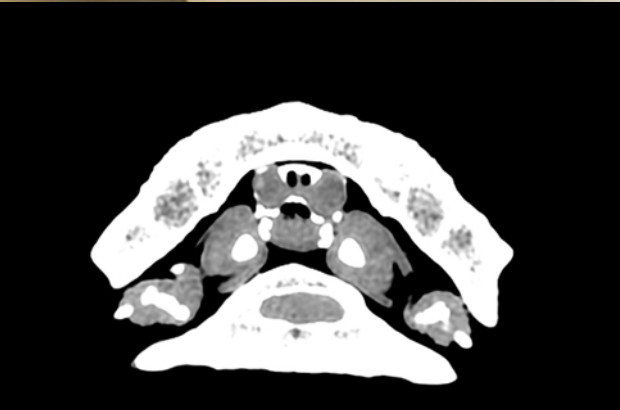
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PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM AND THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

BY: DR. RICHARD SIM

The Birmingham Zoo has partnered with University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine's Department of Radiology to provide CT and MRI scans to the Zoo's animals. When the Birmingham Zoo animals are sick or injured, these scans help our veterinarians to diagnose their ailments when on-site x-rays and ultrasounds are not enough. In the past, Zoo veterinarians have had to travel much further when advanced imaging has been required, including taking the Zoo's male red panda, Shifu, to Auburn University's veterinary school and the Zoo's male lion, Kwanza, to the University of Tennessee-Knoxville's veterinary school to be scanned. Now, such long drives will no longer be needed. With this partnership, the high level of care provided to the Birmingham Zoo animals will be augmented locally.

To inaugurate this new partnership, two Home's hingeback tortoises were scanned in October. The tortoises had infected shells, and the Zoo veterinarians needed to know how deep the infections went. Based on these scans, it was found that the bone was affected as well. With this knowledge, Zoo veterinarians knew that a much longer treatment period was going to be needed to fully heal the tortoises. Through this sort of analysis, the Birmingham Zoo's new partnership with the UAB School of Medicine's Department of Radiology will greatly benefit the Zoo's animals.

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SPECIES SURVIVAL PLANS AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

BY LINDSEY HERRON

As part of the Birmingham Zoo's vision to be a leading zoological and botanical conservation, education, and scientific study resource within the U.S. and the family attraction of choice throughout the entire region, the Zoo is proud to participate in over 95 Species Survival Plans, or SSPs. SSPs are programs in which institutions accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Conservation Partners, and Certified Related Facilities work together to both oversee the managed population of a given species and boost conservation efforts for the species in their native habitats. A SSP coordinator is designated by the AZA for each species, and this person works with all institutions that currently hold individuals of that species in order to maintain a genetically diverse population. The SSP coordinator does this by guiding institutions on actions that can be taken to enhance the population, including breeding, importing, exporting, transferring animals between facilities, and even reintroduction of animals into the wild.

For the Birmingham Zoo, participating in an SSP means taking a variety of actions. Many of the species at the Birmingham Zoo are under active breeding recommendations. The Zoo's animal staff work hard, ensuring these animals have the right conditions to further their species, such as monitoring their nutrition and environment to optimize their reproductive capabilities. One example of this is the Zoo's black-footed cats, which are endangered in Africa. The Zoo's animal staff have been successful in breeding this species before, so the current pair of cats came to the Birmingham Zoo to see if our success can be replicated with this pair. If they produce offspring, the kittens will be sent to other institutions to help grow the population further.

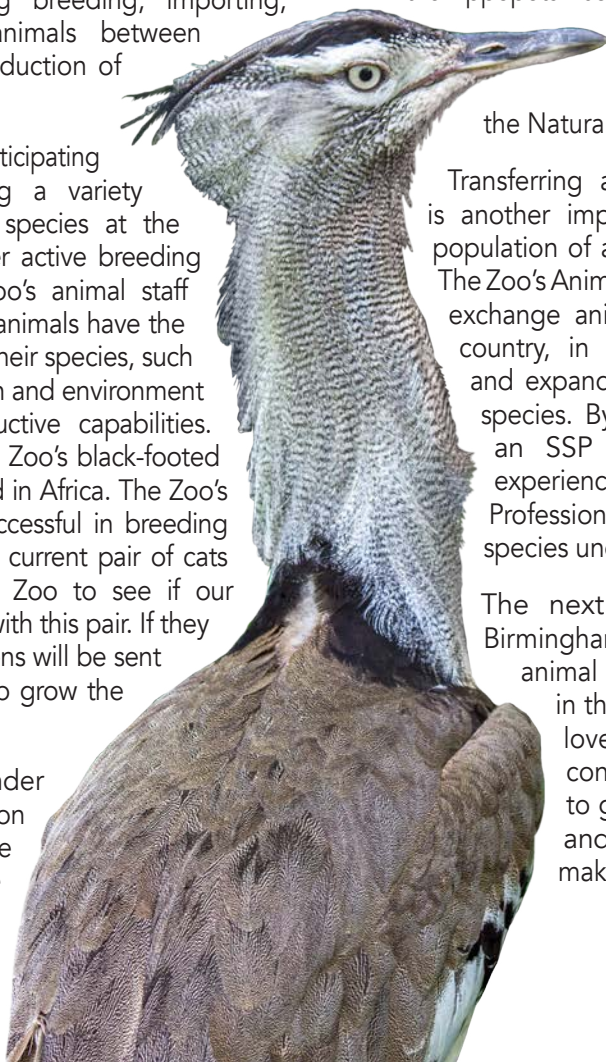
Another species under breeding recommendation here in Birmingham is the Kori Bustard. These large

African birds are highly endangered due to the popularity of their feathers in fly fishing. The Zoo is one of a few institutions to successfully hatch Kori Bustards, and currently holds eight individual birds in one of the largest flocks in North America. The Zoo's hope is that even more of these beautiful birds can be hatched to help the population expand.

While breeding recommendations may be a significant portion of the work the Zoo does toward SSPs, holding SSP animals plays an important part as well. The Birmingham Zoo's Komodo dragon is not under a breeding recommendation, because his genetic line is well-represented with many siblings and half-siblings. His role here is to act as an animal ambassador, educating the public on his species and the challenges they face. Some of the Zoo's other SSP animal ambassadors include the hippopotamus and red pandas. All of the Zoo's animal ambassadors play an important part in the Zoo's mission to Inspire Passion for the Natural World.

Transferring animals between institutions is another important part of growing the population of a species in an SSP program. The Zoo's Animal Care Professionals routinely exchange animals with zoos all over the country, in an effort to both maintain and expand the genetic diversity of the species. By involving many institutions, an SSP harnesses the combined experience of hundreds of Animal Care Professionals and better maintains the species under their care.

The next time you come to the Birmingham Zoo, ask the dedicated animal staff about the SSP animals in their departments. They would love to share their passion for conservation and ways for you to get involved, both at the Zoo and at home. Together we can make a difference!



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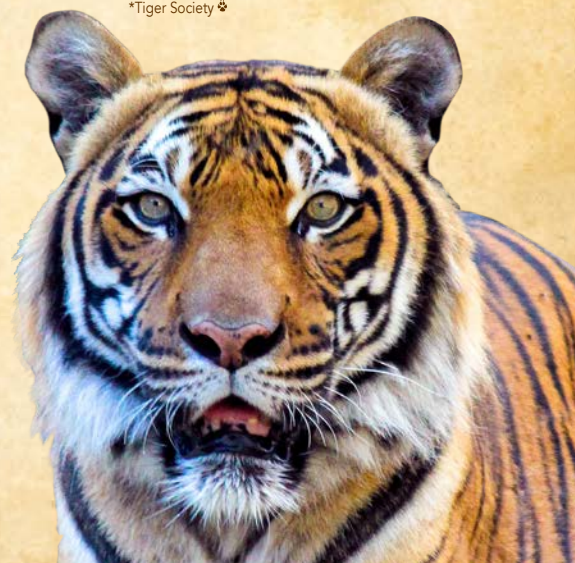
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