

Animal Tracks

Education and the Birmingham Zoo

Learn what the Birmingham Zoo's Education Department is doing globally and locally to further our mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World.*



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
TADPOLE!**

A Day in the Life of an Animal Care
Professional in the Primate Department



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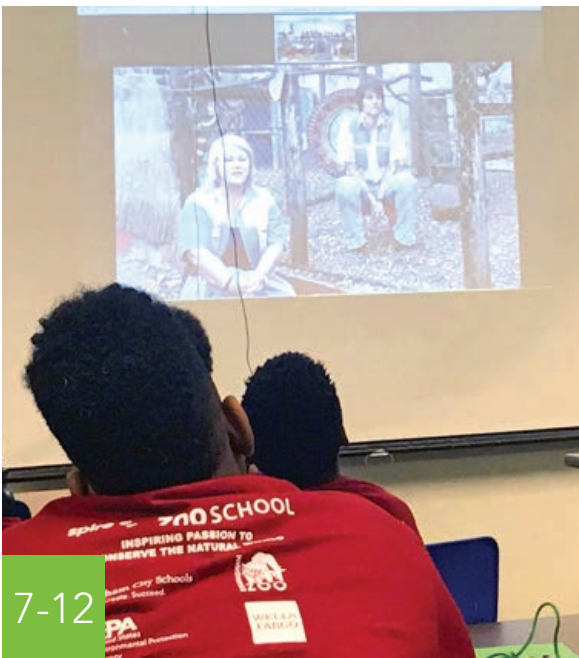
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COVER PHOTO: UNA Study Abroad student, Michelle Veach, working with students at Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage in Zimbabwe.

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Birmingham Zoo Mission: Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World.

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The Birmingham Zoo is an independent, not for profit, 501 (c) (3) organization and is the only AZA accredited zoo in the state of Alabama.

ZOO HOURS

9am to 5pm Monday – Sunday



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Members,

I am honored to have been chosen to lead the Birmingham Zoo as the new President and CEO. Our Zoo is a tremendous cultural and educational asset to Birmingham, surrounding communities and Alabama, as the only Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoo in the state. I look forward to the growth and development ahead as we work together to Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World.

I want to especially thank Dr. Foster for his 14 years of service to the Birmingham Zoo. His leadership moved us forward to becoming a national leader in the care and conservation of over 900 animals of 230 species that call our 122-acre Zoo home.

The Birmingham Zoo has grown into a renowned cultural destination for education and engagement where people value wildlife and wild places. My commitment is to enhance our mission and increase the Zoo's visibility through conservation and research, dynamic educational programming, financial viability and exceptional guest experience.

We are currently undergoing construction to the second phase of the Zoo's Capital Campaign, the Zoo's new front entrance and arrival experience (set to open in spring of 2019). This exciting project will greatly enhance your visit to the Zoo, making it easier and safer to access the Zoo. We have begun preliminary design on the third phase, Asian Passage. I look forward to sharing this exciting change to your Zoo. As we look forward to the future, the Birmingham Zoo will continue to be a place for families to gather, have fun and learn more about the natural world around them.

On Friday, September 14, 2018 the Zoo hosted our annual ZooGala presented by IBERIABANK. ZooGala is the Zoo's annual fundraiser to benefit the Zoo's animals, conservation and education programs. This year's Honorary Chairs were Janice and Roddy McKinney, with Amanda Davis, Leigh Davis and Sumner Rives serving as Chairs. ZooGala Advisor for 2018 was Britt Redden and Candice McKinney was Chair of the VIP Pre-Party. I can't thank these folks enough for all of their time and effort to make this event a phenomenal success. We exceeded goals in attendance with approximately 500 guests and increased our fundraising efforts with an estimated \$450,000 in sponsorships and donations, combined with our online auction and ticket sales. In the end, ZooGala 2018 could not have been done without our extraordinary Birmingham Zoo staff, gala chairs and committee members.

With Boo at the Zoo presented by Wells Fargo in full swing during the month of October, and ZooLight Safari presented by Wells Fargo following in December, we hope you and your family join us here at the Birmingham Zoo to celebrate the holiday season.

In this issue, we are highlighting the Zoo's partnership with the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage. This is an organization that is dear to me, having spent over 18 years working on conservation and education initiatives in Zimbabwe.

I want to thank you for all of your support and I look forward to working with the Board, staff and community to continue to make the Birmingham Zoo something everyone can be proud of and Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World. I look forward to seeing you at your Zoo.

Sincerely,

Chris Pfefferkorn
President & CEO

You can support Dr. Foster's Zoo legacy with a gift to the William R. Foster Conservation and Education Fund. For details, visit www.birminghamzoo.com/get-involved/william-r-foster-conservation-and-education-fund/



GIRAFFE PLASMA BANKING

BY: AMY TOMAN, LEAD ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL
OF TRAILS OF AFRICA & BRIDGET WEIDNER, LICENSED
VETERINARY TECHNICIAN

If you ever donated blood, you may have learned about the fascinating ways that blood can be used to help other people. Did you know that a giraffe plasma bank exists for the same reason? Plasma is essentially liquid gold for giraffe calves in need and can provide a wide array of benefits, like sharing antibodies to help build a healthy immune system or playing a vital role in saving their life. This new stride in giraffe care and welfare is part of a nationwide collaboration with other AZA facilities across the United States, setup by the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo and the Columbus Zoo & Aquarium. Together, by having a giraffe plasma bank, we can assist newborn giraffe calves all over the country.

Our male reticulated giraffe, Jalil, is trained for voluntary blood collection so we can collect plasma here at the Birmingham Zoo! Jalil's outgoing personality made him the perfect candidate for plasma collection. He is always eager to work with our Animal Care Professionals and was already trained for regular blood draws to regularly monitor his health and wellbeing.

With some additional training, we were able to start collecting bags of plasma. Jalil's regular blood draw typically lasted fifteen seconds, but can now last for up to ten minutes! Once a month, with the assistance of our licensed veterinary technician, Bridget Weidner, we collect 450mL of blood from Jalil. After the collection, the blood is driven to Montgomery, AL to be spun down and separated into plasma and red blood cells.

The plasma is then stored in a -80°F freezer for up to a year. We don't have the equipment to spin down these large blood collection bags in our Animal Health Center, so we have collaborated with a plasma bank in Montgomery. Each time we collect blood with the intention of banking the plasma, we make the roughly 200 mile roundtrip; a small price to pay when you think about all of the good that the one single bag of plasma can provide.

By having these reserves frozen and ready to go, the Birmingham Zoo is prepared if we ever get the call that a giraffe calf is in need. Our Animal Health Center staff can ship the plasma, overnight, to ensure it arrives at the destination quickly.

Thanks to Jalil and our dedicated team of Animal Care Professionals and Animal Health Center staff, we can reach new heights in the care and welfare of giraffe.



BIRMINGHAM ZOO LEARNS ABOUT GOPHER FROG IVF FROM PARTNER ZOO

BY: DR. RICHARD SIM, DVM, DIPL. ACZM, ASSOCIATE VETERINARIAN

Frogs and their amphibian brethren are disappearing from the Earth at an alarming rate. Habitat destruction and disease are predominantly responsible for their losses, and AZA-accredited institutions, like the Birmingham Zoo, are trying to do something about it.

The Birmingham Zoo, in a behind-the-scenes area of the Reptile building, has been housing and caring for Dusky Gopher frogs since 2011 in response to their Critically Endangered status. Historically, this species was found on the coastal plain of the southern US from eastern Louisiana and southern Mississippi to the Mobile River delta, here in Alabama. With less than 250 left in the wild in the mid-2000s, they were on the brink of extinction, and can now only be found in two Mississippi counties.

This summer, staff from the Birmingham Zoo partnered with Memphis Zoo to learn Assisted Reproductive Techniques, so we could help them to breed better in human care. Many species of amphibians in human care have trouble breeding on their own because it's tricky to replicate all the environmental triggers, like rainfall or temperature changes, that lead to success. By learning to do in vitro fertilization (IVF) from Memphis Zoo staff, the Birmingham Zoo hopes to contribute to thousands of froglets being released to the wild.

Fertility treatment starts with male and female frog exams with ultrasound to establish how reproductively healthy they might be. After identifying which females might be good candidates for IVF, already developing eggs in their ovaries can be synchronized with hormone therapies, so ovulation and fertilization from the males happens at the same time. Fertilized frog eggs then develop in dishes, tadpoles hatch, and metamorphosis to tiny froglets is the end goal at the Zoo. By releasing froglets to the wild rather than tadpoles, they have a better chance for survival.

Ultimately, Birmingham Zoo's IVF program was attempted but not successful this year. Ultrasound revealed early on that the Zoo's geriatric females had minimal egg development to boost and synchronize. However, the Dusky Gopher frog partnership, consisting of Memphis, Detroit, Omaha, Dallas, and St. Paul zoos, will be releasing close to 2,000 froglets at a site in Mississippi. With younger frogs coming to the Birmingham Zoo in the future, we plan on trying again and being a part of this success, and, potentially, we'll be a part of returning frogs to the landscape of Alabama someday.



Birmingham Zoo staff ultrasounding
a Dusky Gopher frog to determine frog ovary health.

A PLACE FOR POLLINATORS AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

BY: CINDY PINGER, CURATOR OF BIRDS, REPTILES, AND CHILDREN'S ZOO

In the early spring of 2018, with funds from the Zoo's Passion into Conservation Action grant program (PiCA), Birmingham Zoo staff created a Monarch waystation at the EcoGarden on Zoo grounds. We had help from college students on their spring break to clear the raised beds and plant four varieties of milkweed - swamp milkweed, spider milkweed, butterfly milkweed and whorled milkweed. Monarchs must have milkweed to lay their eggs on and feed the caterpillars. They can't use any other plant. Even though the name "weed" is in their name, they are beautiful plants and are very easy to care for. We also planted several native nectar plants like Seashore Mallow, Stoke's Aster, Anise Hyssop and Zinnia. As these pictures show, the plants performed beautifully in their very first year.

During the fall, hundreds of millions of monarchs migrate from the US and Canada to California and Mexico. This migration is threatened by habitat loss in North America and the overwintering areas. Monarch waystations provide resources for monarchs to breed and fuel along the way. They need host plants and nectar plants. Planting multiple varieties of plants with different bloom times extends the time that the monarchs can use the waystation. Milkweed is declining due to

land development of land and changing farming practices. In the US, 6,000 acres of land a day is developed. To offset the loss of Monarch habitat, schools, parks, zoos, homeowners and business are creating Monarch waystations all over North America. While one waystation may not seem like it will make a big impact, the collective efforts of waystations all of the country can make a big difference. For information on plant choice and an interactive map of all of the monarch waystations, visit www.monarchwatch.org. This site will give you directions on how you can create a waystation at your home and get it registered. Together we can make a difference for the beautiful Monarch butterfly!



WHAT IS BUZZING AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

BY: CINDY PINGER, CURATOR OF BIRDS, REPTILES, AND CHILDREN'S ZOO

In April of 2017, Lead Night Animal Care Professional, Nikki Strain, set up two beehives on the EcoGarden area at the Zoo. With help from our bee mentors in the Alabama Beekeeper Association, we learned how to set our bees up for success. Fortunately, our hives have been thriving and our honey harvests for 2017 and 2018 have resulted in almost 60 pounds of golden-sweet honey! The night Animal Care Professional team learned how to harvest/prepare the honey and jarred it up for Zoo employees. Due to the low volume of honey produced, the Birmingham Zoo honey is not available for public purchase. During the warm months, our bees feed on clover and other wildflowers in the area. During the cold months, we have a team of Zoo employees that volunteer to feed the bees sugar water.

Honeybees live in a colony or a hive and there are three types of hive members. The queen directs the entire hive and lays all of the eggs. She can live for five years and lay up to 2,500 eggs a day! The workers are all females. They are the only bees seen outside of the hive. They forage for food and protect the hive. The average worker bee lives about six weeks and she will produce a twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime. Male bees are called drones and mate with the queen.

So far, we have been lucky and our hives are healthy. Sadly, many populations of honeybees are in steep decline. In 2017, one-third of the nation's honeybee colonies died. These die-offs are related to parasites, pesticides, and poor nutrition and disease. Bees pollinate one out of every three bites of American food

and \$15 billion of crops annually. There are several things you can do to help honeybees – (1) Buy local honey and support your local beekeeping group, (2) plant native plants (check out the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation at www.xerces.org for the best native plants to plant in your area), (3) set out a shallow container of water for bees, so they can drink and regulate their body temperature, and (4) limit or eliminate your pesticide and herbicide use. Try spraying insects off of your plants with a stream of water instead of using chemicals. If you would like to get involved in local beekeeping, check out the Jefferson County Beekeepers Association at www.jeffcobees.org. The Birmingham Zoo's bees are not available for public viewing, but visit our social media sites for various updates throughout the year!



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BIRMINGHAM ZOO STRATEGIC PLAN EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Be a leading resource in conservation education that promotes meaningful connections to the natural world and encourages conservation action.

Objectives:

- (Interpretative Messaging) Increase the level of impact our interpretive messages have on both Zoo guests and the greater community.
- (Educational Programs - Onsite) Deliver high-quality conservation education programming as well as establish the Zoo as a user-friendly resource that meets the needs of area educators and is on-trend with current educational best practices.
- (Outreach - Offsite) Expand the Zoo's educational outreach programming to reach new audiences.
- (Impact) Regularly evaluate and assess our educational impact on Zoo guests and the community.
- (Volunteers) Continue to develop and expand our volunteer base to support the mission of the Zoo.
- (Educators) Foster partnerships with educators and other educational organizations.

Inspiring Passion to
Conserve the Natural World





THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO PARTNERS WITH CHIPANGALI WILDLIFE ORPHANAGE FOR UNIQUE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

BY: KATE DAVIS, M.S., CIG, ZOO EDUCATOR

It's 5:00pm in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The light is beginning to darken as evening falls. It's summer there, so everyone is wearing shorts and short sleeves. Nicky Wilson sits next to a Vervet monkey habitat and in front of a laptop. She looks at the webcam and asks, "So, who can tell me something they know about primates?" Halfway across the world, separated by seven time zones, and in the middle of winter, a 7th grade Spire ZooSchool student answers from Birmingham, Alabama.

Spire ZooSchool is a week long program with inner-city 7th graders held at the Birmingham Zoo in partnership with Birmingham City Schools. It runs 21 weeks out of the school year and aligns with 7th grade curriculum standards. One of the goals is to bring real world examples to the science concepts covered in the 7th grade curriculum. A few examples of the things we do at Spire ZooSchool include hands on S.T.E.M. based activities covering subjects such as animal adaptations, water conservation and human impacts on the natural world.

Three years ago, we incorporated a weekly web chat with wildlife conservationists at the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage as an innovative way to connect students to global conservation efforts. Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage was started over 40 years ago by Vivian Wilson and his wife, Paddy, and is currently run by their son and daughter-in-law, Kevin and Nicky Wilson. Chipangali exists as a refuge for animals, which have little hope for survival in the wild, animals that have been orphaned, abandoned, injured or were former pets. These animals are rehabilitated and, if possible, released back to their native home ranges. These weekly presentations are done over web conference with audio and visual available on both sides so the stream is live and in real time.

In addition to learning about some of the great work being done at Chipangali to protect native African

species, the students also are exposed to a community on the other side of the world. Before our chat, we find Zimbabwe on a map and outline some of the similarities and differences between our two locations. They have wild African ground squirrels, we have wild Eastern grey squirrels; they have wild water buck, we have wild deer; they have wild lions and leopards, we... don't. Their seasons are opposite ours and there is a 7-8 hour time change, depending on daylight savings.

We often ask the students, "Knowing that these people we are going to be talking to are from Zimbabwe, what do you think they might look like?" The common response is "African!" When asked to clarify, the students suggest that they will be wearing tribal gear and have dark skin. They are always shocked to learn that no, they dress just like you and I, and actually, their skin is white. Being able to break down these pre-conceived notions of what it means to be "African" allows room to expand on the notion of conservation. Whether saving species on the brink of extinction or ensuring species never reach such a precarious state, conservation takes place at all different places, ranging from the Birmingham Zoo to the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage.

We believe this partnership has enriched the Spire ZooSchool program and the feedback from the students and teachers regarding their week with us have been overwhelmingly positive. With the Spire ZooSchool program and the partnership with Chipangali, we are making global connections to meet our end objective. "Our goal is to teach the students to think differently about their own environment, because they are a part of nature. Nature is everywhere; all they have to do is go outside and see it right there," says Kathy Fournier, Manager of School Programs. "Once they do that, their attitude changes. They take on a completely different attitude about wildlife and the environment around them."

CHIPANGALI RESEARCH STATION AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

BY: JESSE DANIEL, ONSITE PROGRAMS AND INTERPRETATION MANAGER

The Birmingham Zoo has always been a place of discovery and wonder. But now, there are more places at the Zoo for you to discover the work we do that ensures both wild animals and wild places are safe from extinction. One of those locations is the newly updated Chipangali Research Station.

The idea of a Research Station began over 10 years ago in the early design phase for the replacement of our elephant habitat. During the interpretive planning process, Zoo staff worked together to develop themes that could be used with a variety of different animals. We also wanted to ensure that the stories of our animals would be interwoven with those of the people they live alongside and the researchers fighting for conservation in Africa. Through this work, the Trails of Africa were born - the Researcher Trail, the Villager Trail and the Elephant Trail. Each tells a distinct piece of the story, with the Researcher becoming the facilitator for conservation by helping bridge the gap between people and wildlife. The Research Station would become the hub of this story.

Education staff spearheaded making the Research Station a reality in 2015 by converting an underutilized pavilion into an outdoor classroom. We wanted this space to become an interactive area that our staff and volunteers could use to tell the stories of the Trails of Africa. But also, we needed additional classroom space for camps, school programs and special events. The Research Station was renamed "Chipangali Research Station" to better highlight the Birmingham Zoo's partnership with the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Now, with additional themed elements, lighting and fans, the Chipangali Research Station is an area that can be used by guests at any time. Over the last several years of working with Chipangali, the Birmingham Zoo acquired several radio collars and wire snares from the orphanage. These objects are now the highlight of the Research Station and are on display alongside interpretive graphics that tell the story of each object. Through the work of our interpretive volunteers, these stories come to life with other objects that range from hair shed by our resident elephants to a trail camera partially eaten by a wild hyena.

The Chipangali Research Station will hopefully be the first of several projects that bring you a better view of our

animals and our conservation efforts. The Birmingham Zoo will be working to activate more of our smaller spaces as we continue to enhance the guest experience over the next few years as part of our Strategic Plan. To learn more, please visit the mission section of the Zoo's website at www.birminghamzoo.com/about-us/mission/.



VOLUNTEER AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

BY: ALONIA DIAZ, VOLUNTEER MANAGER

The Birmingham Zoo prides itself on being an institution that utilizes volunteers for the day to day activities and beyond! Each year, we plug in individuals from the community to assist with large events, such as Boo at the Zoo, ZooLight Safari and so many more. We also have year-round volunteers that are assigned locations where they are able to enhance the overall guest experience. Over the last few years, we have looked at areas in which we utilize Zoo volunteers and have revamped our training to support new positions and new programming.

One of our most recently developed programs is the Volunteer Zoo Guide position. What is a Zoo Guide, you ask? These volunteers are responsible for staffing specific areas at the Zoo as determined by the Education and Animal Departments. These locations are chosen based on high interaction opportunities, which are determined through guest traffic and feedback. These volunteers are responsible for interpreting the animal habitats and utilizing themes set forth by the Strategic Plan and Birmingham Zoo Program Content Standards.

We offer Zoo Guide training monthly with the exception of October and December. At this time, we are offering three separate Zoo Guide sessions: Trails of Africa, Waterways, and Primates of the World/Giants of the Amazon.

In order for a volunteer to be eligible to become a Zoo Guide, they must be an active Zoo Volunteer, be familiar with the Zoo, participate in a full session of orientation and be in good standing.

The original Zoo Guide Training that marked the program's inception was the Trails of Africa session, where volunteers have spent over two hundred hours learning the Zoo's interpretive themes and messages. This training also prepares our volunteers to connect our guests with our global partnership with Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage, located in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Several Birmingham Zoo staff have travelled to Chipangali in Bulawayo to assist with the tracking of large carnivores. During training, volunteers also get to hear from Erin Miller, a Predator Animal Care Professional from the Birmingham Zoo who has travelled to Zimbabwe to assist in conservation work through the Birmingham Zoo's PiCA Program.

Through these trainings, we are working to eventually have a consistent presence of interpretive volunteers and interns stationed at the Chipangali Research Station at the Birmingham Zoo. We have made leaps and bounds toward this goal, and in the last year, were able to have a consistent presence during spring and summer break! Although we have volunteers and interns assigned at the Research Station during the Zoo's peak times, we still have so much room to grow before we have year round consistent coverage.

This is where you come in; you can be a Zoo Guide too! Help us reach our goal of consistently having volunteers stationed at the Research Station. Visit our website for information about our volunteer programs and help us to continue our efforts to provide excellent guest service. Do you feel like you would be comfortable teaching our guests about how researchers use a variety of tools to monitor the health and well-being of animals in the wild at our Chipangali Research Station? Do you feel like you could make it relevant, make it fun, share your passion and empower action with the thousands of guests that visit the Birmingham Zoo? We offer the training, but we need you to get involved! Visit www.birminghamzoo.com/get-involved/volunteer/ for more information on becoming a Birmingham Zoo volunteer.

BIRMINGHAM ZOO PARTNERS WITH UNA FOR EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY

As part of the Birmingham Zoo's Strategic Plan to *Foster Partnerships with Educators and other Educational Organizations*, the Education Department has collaborated with the University of North Alabama (UNA) to create a unique study abroad program for education majors. In July of 2018, Roger Torbert, Vice President for Education, traveled with UNA students and professors to the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Throughout the three week program, students took an active role in each of Chipangali's major conservation programs for real world experience on the front lines of African wildlife conservation.

Students got an up-close look at the workings of an animal rescue and rehabilitation center as they worked alongside the staff and volunteers at Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage. They assisted in everything from feeding and cleaning habitats of the resident animals to building a wooden platform for a leopard habitat and cleaning the muck from the duck pond. This experience allowed them to become intimately familiar with the animals that live at the orphanage, such as Andre, a young baboon that came to the orphanage when he was just a few weeks old after his mother was electrocuted. In learning the stories of these animals, they obtained a deeper understanding of the unfortunate consequences that come from human-animal conflict.

Students also spent two days in the Motobo Hills region of Zimbabwe, assisting with the Carnivore Conservation Project. While in the field, they learned track and sign methods used by researchers to locate animals in the wild. These future classroom teachers had hands on experience setting game cameras used by the field researchers to learn more about the range and behavior of leopard and hyena, the major carnivores in the area. "Working side-by-side with real life researchers, these preservice teachers have gained valuable hands on experience that will be passionately referred to time and time again as they instruct their future students throughout their careers," says Torbert.

The primary focus of their study abroad experience was Chipangali's Environmental Programs Involving Children (EPIC) Kids Outreach Program. UNA students went into classrooms to teach conservation based lessons to the local children. The lessons focused on dispelling misconceptions about native animals, such as the python, chameleon, hedgehog and tortoise. In addition to the classroom experience, the students also served as educators at Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage as school groups visited for field trips, telling the visitors about the resident animals using skulls, pelts and other biofacts. The students initially approached this teaching experience with uncertainty. For some of them, teaching in a foreign country to children from a different culture in an underequipped classroom would be their first classroom experience of their careers. Future high school biology teacher, Kaylin Owens says, "Those kids were impressive, and it helped me realize that I would be doing any student a disservice if I didn't give them the opportunity to reach high expectations when given the proper support and resources. There's an important difference between seeing with pity and seeing with potential."

In preparation for the trip, the UNA students worked closely with the staff in the Birmingham Zoo's Education Department to learn more about the Zoo's partnership with Chipangali and the work that we do. They also learned the finer points of conservation interpretation and were introduced to several species that they would encounter in the wild on their visit to Zimbabwe.

This study abroad opportunity is a wonderful example of meaningful collaboration between zoos, universities and conservation organizations. The program is now in its second year at the University of North Alabama. The University of Mississippi's School of Education is currently working to participate in the program in the coming year.



ZOO MEMBERS: OUR MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATORS

BY: ROGER TORBERT, VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION

The primary goal of the Birmingham Zoo's Education Department is to fulfill the Zoo's mission – *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*. We make every effort to ensure that each program we develop in some way moves us forward in achieving this mission. The youngest children who attend our Stroller Safari classes can explore the natural world through animal interactions and nature play. Elementary school students learn about the wonders of the natural world by going on a Field Experience through the Trails of Africa, discovering unique adaptations that animals use to survive in the wild. High school students become real life researchers of the natural world when they participate in a Zoo University class about the Role of Genetics in the modern zoo. Adults explore the beauty of the natural world in our Wildlife Photography Classes by getting up close and personal with some of our most interesting animals in order to get the perfect shot.

All of us at the Birmingham Zoo are educators, in a sense, as it is everyone's responsibility to carry out our mission. Whether it is the Animal Care Professionals telling guests about lions as part of the Predator Zone, the staff member at Wild Burger who explains the reasoning behind the restaurant not providing disposable lids and straws for soft drink cups, the staff member who posts information about our Earth Day celebration on the Zoo's social media accounts, we all seek to *Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World*.

We also seek to inspire that passion by sharing the story of the Zoo's conservation efforts through our partner organizations around the world and in our own backyard. On your next visit to the Zoo, stop by the jaguar habitat to learn more about our Passion into Conservation Action Grant Program (PiCA). The huge world map highlights over 40 conservation

projects conducted throughout the world by Zoo staff members. The graphics surrounding the map spotlight the projects of the current year's PiCA grant recipients. Just past the map, you can also learn about jaguar research conducted in Belize. The graphics, video monitor and biofacts in the space tell the story of the work done by Dr. Michael Dobbins, former Birmingham Zoo employee, to chart wildlife corridors in the Central American country.

One of the most important educators on the Birmingham Zoo's education team is YOU, the Zoo Member. A portion of your annual membership fee goes to support the Zoo's conservation and education efforts. Our members are passionate about the Birmingham Zoo and the work that we do to conserve the natural world. By learning more about the Zoo's conservation efforts and sharing that information with others, you help us achieve our mission. Thank you for being a valued Member at the Birmingham Zoo. It is because of you that the Zoo continues to thrive as an educational institution for the people of today and tomorrow. Your support of the Zoo and your passion for conserving the natural world can make a big difference!



GO GREEN WITH THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

BY: LINDSEY HERRON, REGISTRAR

Looking for more ways to 'go green'? The Birmingham Zoo Green team is here to help!

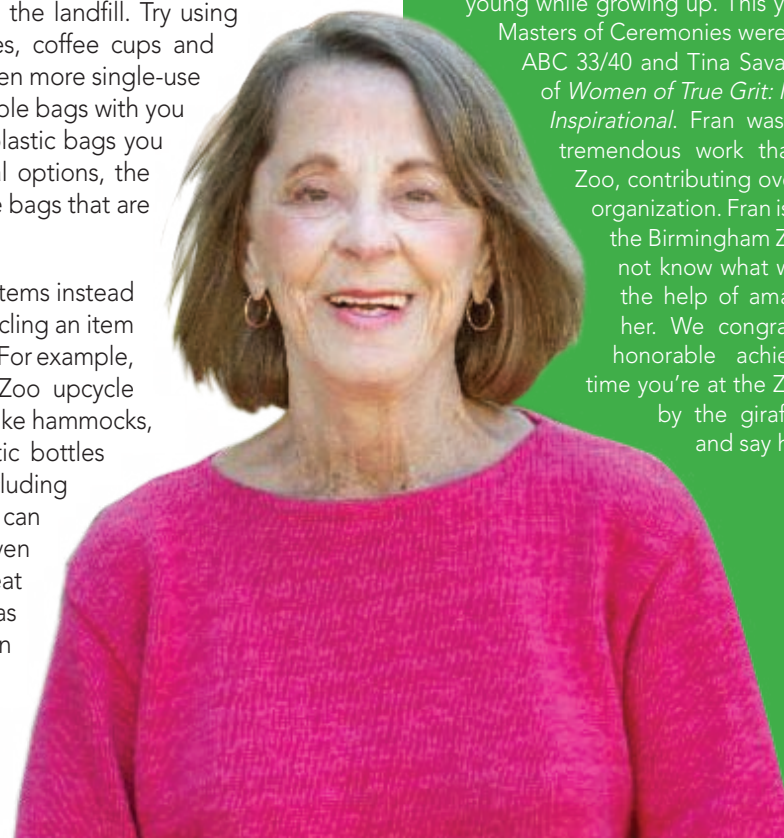
As the seasons change, it's the perfect time to look around your house and see what small adjustments you can take to make a big impact. Green changes to your home and lifestyle don't have to be expensive to make a difference!

Start by thinking about household waste. Did you know that the average American generates 4.4 pounds of waste every day? Added up, that means that every year, Americans generate over 250 million tons of garbage! Check with your city public works department to see if they offer curbside recycling pickup, or find a local recycling center with drop-off times. Some stores even offer recycling bins for items like glass and Styrofoam, so you can take items there on your shopping trips. Donating items instead of throwing them away is another great way to minimize your trash. You can donate gently-used items to local charities, extending their life and keeping them out of landfills. The Birmingham Zoo recycles paper, plastic and aluminum, plus, we have employee-led programs that recycle lightbulbs, batteries and other electronics.

Next, think about reducing the amount of single-use or limited-use items you use. Instead of using plastic containers for your leftovers, try using glass. It's much more durable and easier to clean, meaning a longer life in your kitchen and not in the landfill. Try using other reusable items, like water bottles, coffee cups and even sandwich wraps to cut down on even more single-use item waste. When shopping, take reusable bags with you to minimize the amount of single-use plastic bags you bring home. If you're looking for local options, the Birmingham Zoo gift shop sells reusable bags that are great for any type of shopping.

Finally, consider reusing or "upcycling" items instead of throwing them away. Upcycling is recycling an item into something better than it was before. For example, the Animal Care Professionals at the Zoo upcycle unused firehose into enrichment items, like hammocks, for our animals. At home, empty plastic bottles can be turned into a variety of things, including bird feeders or planters, while glass jars can become candle holders, vases, or even terrariums. The internet is full of great resources that are full of upcycling ideas for almost any household item you can think of, so the sky is the limit!

Remember: every little bit counts!



VENERABLE VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

BY: COLLIN HOWELL,
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Venerable is a word we use often at the Zoo. Meaning worthy of a great deal of respect, especially due to wisdom or character, we find ourselves describing our volunteers in this way. Birmingham Zoo volunteers help us achieve our mission of Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World. One volunteer in particular who helps us achieve this every day is Frances Gilroy. Fran has been volunteering at the Zoo for 7 years, dedicating countless hours to the wellbeing of our animals, as well as educating the public about the Zoo. You can typically find Fran helping out at our Kiwanis Giraffe Encounter and teaching guests about our giraffe. Fran also works with our Ambassador Animals Department, where she has the opportunity to participate in animal greetings. Staff love to see Fran's smiling face as they walk through the Zoo. "Her passion for the animal world is contagious. She is always happy to share information about her animal friends here at the Zoo," says Christine Lewis, one of our Onsite Program Coordinators in the Education Department.

Recently, Fran was nominated for a Top 50 Over 50 award, which was introduced in 2014 by Positive Maturity to show that while growing older is unavoidable, growing up is optional. This ceremony celebrates members of our community who know how to dream, laugh, contribute and achieve on many levels, which are all key elements of staying young while growing up. This year's Top 50 Over 50 Masters of Ceremonies were, Brenda Ladun from ABC 33/40 and Tina Savas, bestselling author of *Women of True Grit: Intimate, Informative, Inspirational*. Fran was recognized for the tremendous work that she does at the Zoo, contributing over 2,313 hours to our organization. Fran is truly a great asset to the Birmingham Zoo family, and we do not know what we would do without the help of amazing volunteers like her. We congratulate Fran on this honorable achievement, and next time you're at the Zoo, be sure to swing by the giraffe feeding platform and say hello to Fran!



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EXPLORING THE HIDDEN ANIMAL WORLD THROUGH GAME CAMERAS

BY: ANNA TURKETT, ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL, BIRDS

Due to a generous gift by Moultrie, the Animal Care Professionals at the Birmingham Zoo have recently been able to observe our animals around the clock – without even having to be there. Game cameras are rugged outdoor cameras that can record high-quality photos and videos. They are often used with motion-sensing technology that records even the slightest movement by an animal. These cameras are truly a window into a hidden world.

Animal Care Professionals spend much of our days doing observations and taking notes of our animals' normal behavior, their body language, their health and overall characteristics. Sometimes, the most important things – an animal being born, an animal eating their diet or an animal exploring their habitat – happen when no one is there to see it. Recording our animals gives us a chance to observe without having to be stationed at a habitat for hours on end. There are also some animals that aren't comfortable with humans being too close to them, and observing can make them nervous. A small camera is much less obtrusive than a human with a clipboard.

Here in the Bird Department, we have used the game cameras to observe many kinds of important behavior. The first of these has been medical observations – checking on an animal after medical procedures or minor injuries. We set up these cameras to observe a Kori Bustard after it had its leg professionally splinted. We were able to watch him take his first aided steps from a distance. We can also set up a game camera right in front of food dishes to make sure birds are eating after medical procedures.

One of the most notable ways we've used these cameras was to observe American flamingo breeding behavior. The Bird Department was overjoyed this year to find our flamingos had laid eggs in the large mud nests they built for themselves – a first at the Birmingham Zoo. We set up two game cameras to observe the flamingos' nesting behaviors overnight. We pulled the camera footage in the morning and were excited to check up on our birds. Unfortunately, this footage revealed that around 8:00pm the flamingos had abandoned their nesting site, and didn't return until nearly 6:00am. This timing coincided almost exactly to Animal Care Professional activity at the Zoo – our Evening animal care staff leaves at 8:00pm and our Animal Nutrition Center staff arrives at 6:30am. Without these game cameras, there would not have been animal staff to observe the flamingos' nesting activity.

We promptly pulled the eggs for artificial incubation that morning – but we still had a mystery to solve. If the flamingos weren't on their nests overnight, where did they go? We asked for a third camera and, thanks to Moultrie, there were

plenty of cameras to provide us with an extra. Two cameras stayed focused on the nesting site at the back of the habitat and another faced the front of the habitat. Guests may have noticed that the flamingos often spend time at the front, and our guess was that the flamingos were returning there at night to sleep. The next morning we checked the cameras again... and all three had no activity.

Finally, we turned the third camera toward the pond in the habitat. The next morning we finally solved our mystery. The flamingos were spending their entire night in the water! They were seen feeding, bathing and walking through the pond all night. This may explain their many long naps throughout the day! Flamingos are often thought of as a diurnal species – being active during the day – but wild flamingos, who are not breeding, often feed late at night and sleep through the hottest part of the day.

Overall, these game cameras have given us plenty of insight into the behavior and activity of the Birmingham Zoo's resident animals. These observations have been instrumental in caring for our animals. Having multiple cameras in every area means we don't have to choose between animals and can always observe any behavior we need to. We're so thankful for the opportunity to use new and exciting tools to better our animal care every day.



Flamingo mud nests



16 JUL 2018 0 15



UPCOMING EVENTS

UPCOMING EVENTS

October

11-14 & 18-31 Boo at the Zoo
presented by Wells Fargo

November

11-12 Veterans Day - FREE admission
to veterans, active and retired military
and their dependents (with valid ID).

December

7-9, 14-23, & 26-31 ZooLight Safari
presented by Wells Fargo

15 Breakfast with Santa

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL IN THE PRIMATE DEPARTMENT

BY: RENEE DEMATEI, ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL, SOUTH AMERICA/PRIMATES

The Primate/South America building has 13 habitats which are home to 16 different species. Each day, every Animal Care Professional in the building is assigned to take care of a specific group of habitats and animals.

Every morning, the first thing I do is check on my assigned animals and their habitats to make sure everyone is healthy and safe, with continued checks on the animals throughout the day. I then shift the animals into their indoor rooms, where I feed them their morning diet. While they are secure in their indoor areas and busy eating, I can safely enter their habitat to clean. There are very few species in the building with which we enter the same space – this ensures the safety of the Animal Care Professionals, as well as the animals. While many animals may appear non-aggressive, there is always the potential that they could cause harm, and the best way to minimize risk is to not enter in the same space as the animal. Furthermore, we are often using cleaning tools and hoses in the habitats, which may be harmful for the animals to interact with. Once the habitat is clean, I then pick out some enrichment to add, along with some food (usually different types of greens for the primates). Enrichment is something that stimulates an animal, occupies its time, and/or promotes natural behaviors. Enrichment is especially important for primates, and I work really hard to come up with creative enrichment that is time consuming while also requiring a bit of problem solving. When picking out our enrichment, it is important to keep in mind what species will be receiving it. For example, adding hanging firehose in the spider monkey

habitat is great because they are arboreal (tree-dwelling) and they can climb, swing and sit on the firehose like they would normally do on branches. Adding hanging firehose in the giant anteater exhibit would not be very beneficial and would most likely be ignored. Once the habitat is all set up, I shift the animals back out into their habitats. Each animal group gets 2-3 shifts a day. This allows me to “restock” their habitat enrichment with food, so the animals are foraging throughout the day. Once the animals are out on habitat, I can then clean their indoor rooms.

In the afternoon, we prepare diets for the next day. Staff from the Animal Nutrition Center measure, cut up and separate the diets for each species in the building. They then pass those diets onto us, where we do some further work based on the needs of each species. For example, some species need certain foods separated and prepared in a specific way for training purposes. Another daily task is cleaning used enrichment items. We go through a lot of enrichment, and before it can be used with another species, it first must be cleaned and disinfected to prevent any cross-species contamination. I also frequently cut browse for the primates. Fortunately, the Zoo is surrounded by an abundance of trees for us to choose from, and we have learned which ones are safe for the animals to eat. Browse is great, natural enrichment for primates. If there is any additional time, I spend it working on various projects such as modifying and improving habitats, building new enrichment items or deep cleaning areas.

Working in the Primate/South America Building is very rewarding, but it is also a lot of hard work. Be sure to stop by and see all of our great animals!



Our African Cape Porcupines, Spud and Mork, are using their burrowing log enrichment in different ways! This keeps the porcupines active, while also promoting natural behaviors like burrowing.



Here is Carlito, the giant anteater, eating insectivore chow out of a Kong Wobble enrichment item.

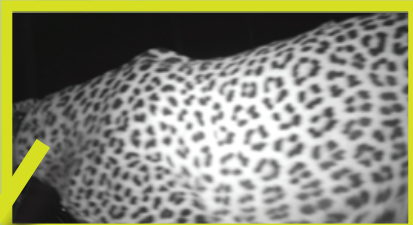


Sara, the spider monkey, taking a nap on firehose hung in their habitat. If you look closely, you can see she is using her prehensile (grasping) tail to keep herself from falling!

KIDS KORNER

Researchers from the Carnivore Conservation Project use game cameras to learn which species of animals are active in the Motobo Hills region of Zimbabwe. Since the cameras automatically snap a picture each time the motion sensor is activated, some of the images may show a small portion of the animal that activated them.

Use your observation skills to match the image of the full animal on the left with the partial image on the right.



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is **WILD ABOUT**
THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TADPOLE!

BY: TESSA WOODS, ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL II, TRAILS OF AFRICA

Hey! I'm Tessa Woods and I've been an Animal Care Professional in the Trails of Africa Department for about 2.5 years. I came to Birmingham Zoo to work with all of the amazing large African animals who call the Birmingham Zoo home. One of my favorite animals to interact with is Tadpole the hippopotamus because of his unique and big personality.

Tadpole moved here from Houston in 1979, when he was just a year and a half old. Throughout Tadpole's years here, he was the father of five calves with his long-time mate, Mama Petite. Now, Tadpole is happily retired, surrounded by a loving Zoo staff and community!

Nile hippos are herbivores, meaning they eat plant material consisting of grass, fruits and vegetables. To mimic their natural diet, we feed Tadpole grass-based hay, a wild herbivore grazing diet and a large bucket filled with a variety of produce. I like to mix his favorite fruits into a smoothie, which I use to reward him during his training sessions.

My current focus for Tadpole's training is to trim his large lower tusk/canine. Having multiple staff members participate in his training sessions is important and helpful. While one person, the trainer of the session, asks him for different behaviors (rest his chin on a bar, hold his mouth open, etc.) the other Animal Care Professionals can touch his body, mouth and teeth to make sure he is in good health.

Along with hippos' natural diet, we use our knowledge of Nile hippo natural behavior patterns to our advantage when training Tadpole. Hippos are nocturnal animals, which means they are most active throughout the night, especially in the early mornings and late evenings, sleeping throughout the day. We want our training sessions to be most beneficial for Tadpole, so, on a typical day, we train him on his habitat near the end of the day, around 3:30pm. I have found Tadpole to be the most focused and motivated at this time, giving us the best opportunity for a productive training session.

This is also around the time where we, the Africa team, give Tadpole access to the Boma habitat and Main Elephant Habitat. This is a great way to get Tadpole some exercise and mental stimulation, so we try to give him this option about once a week. He enjoys using this as an adventure opportunity, trekking quickly (at least, quickly for Tadpole) from his outdoor pool and walking all around the entire elephant habitat; a very long walk for his little legs! Of course, Tadpole makes rest stops to swim, splash and push logs around the large pools at the front of the habitat. He makes quite the spectacle!

TADPOLE IS TURNING 40 THIS YEAR!

To celebrate his many years, we are having a big hippo-sized party for him! "On Saturday, October 20 from 10am - 1pm, the Birmingham Zoo will be hosting numerous birthday activities in Trails of Africa, including a birthday card station, how to draw a hippo activity, a special watermelon and banana "cake" enrichment and much more!" - Star Bullock of the Animal Nutrition Center, Tadpole's biggest fan. We encourage you all to come out and celebrate our favorite big purple personality with us!



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