

# Animal Tracks



## Flock to the Zoo for a New Flamingo Habitat / WILD about Eagles

The Birmingham Zoo has new improvements for some of our feathered friends.

## + ORANGUTAN CARE FROM AND FOR THE HEART

Educating Through Nature





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

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ZOO WINTER HOURS

9am to 4pm Monday – Sunday



LETTER FROM  
THE DIRECTOR



Dear Members,

We are having an outstanding year! Your Zoo continues to grow our programs, expand our support, and advance new renovation projects. Every day in every step with every goal has been an opportunity to reimagine and create a better Zoo for now and years to come.

In 2019, our amazing Zoo staff and volunteers along with support from our board of directors, junior board, and partners—have been busy planning new habitats, fundraising, upgrading our facilities and preparing the Zoo for the future. We’re grateful for the support that our community has shown us the past 64 years and look forward to what’s in store for the next 64!

Your Zoo strives to inspire the next generation of wildlife conservationists, researchers, biologists and zoologists, animal care professionals, and wildlife advocates. Passion is what fuels our effort and our need to act. As a valued Member of the Birmingham Zoo, you are more than a supporter—you are ensuring that wildlife, wild places and ecosystems survive long-term. Your membership is one way that you show your passion for conserving the natural world—you help make a difference!

In this issue of *Animal Tracks*, we will bring you along on our never-ending journey to protect and care for our animals, educate and inspire our guests, engage and impact our community, and empower the future. You will see what’s new around your Zoo and what we have been diligently working on. Each article has been written by a passionate member of our Zoo staff and takes you up-close from their perspective. I encourage you to share our stories about our Zoo with your family and friends; invite them to experience your Zoo and see first-hand why you are a passionate Member!

Thank you for the continued support of your Zoo as we uphold our mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World!*

Sincerely,  
Chris Pfefferkorn  
*President & CEO*



NEW GIRAFFE  
BEHIND-THE-SCENES ENCOUNTER!

Join us for a unique look at our resident giraffe herd. You will have the chance to visit the giraffe barn, chat with our giraffe ACPs, and get a brand new view of our giraffes Willow, Zuri, and Jalil!

This encounter is available for a limited time!

BOOK  
NOW!





# LASERS ARE EVEN COOLER THAN YOU THINK!

## USING COLD LASER THERAPY TO BENEFIT LION TREATMENT

BY: STEPHANIE MCCAIN, DVM, DIPL ACZM, DIRECTOR OF ANIMAL HEALTH

As a zoo veterinarian, questions like, "What do you do when a lion has a neck ache?" are par for the course, but the solutions for our animal residents sometimes take some creativity and out of the box thinking.

BZI Animal Care Professional, Scott Kayser, performing a routine session of laser therapy.

Last winter Kwanza, the Zoo's 14-year-old male African lion, was limping on his left front leg. Our veterinary team anesthetized him and performed a full physical exam, as well as blood work to recheck his kidneys, which were previously diagnosed with an insufficiency, and radiographs (X-rays) to determine the cause of the lameness. Happily, Kwanza's kidneys appeared to be compensating well, with no evidence of further progression. On radiographs, Kwanza was found to have narrowing of the spaces between some of the vertebral bones in his neck. Narrowing can result in pinching of the nerves and inflammation that result in a limp.

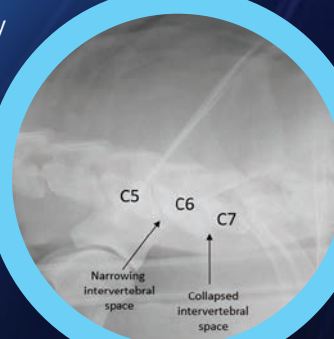
In addition to medications to help with discomfort and inflammation, the veterinary team elected to start Kwanza on cold laser therapy. Cold laser therapy is low-intensity laser therapy that stimulates healing while using low levels of light. The technique is called "cold" laser therapy because the low levels of light aren't enough to heat the body's tissue. This means that Kwanza doesn't feel anything

other than the contact of the laser with his skin.

One of Kwanza's previously trained behaviors was to lay up against the mesh of his bedroom, allowing staff to administer injectable vaccines or other medications, but it took a few weeks of additional training in order to get him to hold this position long enough to receive his full dose of laser therapy, which is 90 seconds each. The biggest challenge was finding a reinforcer (i.e., reward) that would encourage him to stay still but not lose his attention. Spraying dilute goat's milk to him turned out to be more successful than offering him bites of meat. Now that the challenge has been overcome and he is receiving the laser therapy consistently, we are happy to report that the laser therapy alone is sufficient, and Kwanza is no longer on any pain or anti-inflammatory medications.

BZI veterinarian, Dr. Annie Rivas, performing the first dose of laser therapy during Kwanza's exam under anesthesia in February.

X-ray of Kwanza's neck showing narrow spaces between vertebrae in his neck.



# POLLYWOGS AND BABY FROGS

BY: ANDY SCOTT, REPTILES ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL II

We have had successful breeding of our four bumblebee dart frogs! The adult frogs can be found in the Reptile Building next to Rio, the Zoo's green anaconda. When it comes to social behavior, specifically parental care, dart frogs are unique. Unlike other amphibians, adult dart frogs rear (care for) their young, which are called tadpoles.

Their eggs are usually laid on a damp leaf or in a shallow puddle of water, but here at the Birmingham Zoo, a Petri dish is the preferred egg-laying spot! Males will take great care of the eggs, keeping them moist until they're ready to hatch into tadpoles. Once hatched, the tadpoles (also called pollywogs) will ride on the back of the male, who will climb a bromeliad plant and deposit them in a small reservoir of water that collects in the center of the plant. After a few weeks, the tadpoles undergo metamorphosis and transform into froglets that are about 1/4 inch in length. They reach their adult size of 1 1/2 inches in about a year and can live up to 25 years!

Dart frogs have something called aposematic coloration, conspicuous coloring that serves to warn predators of their toxicity. In their native range of Venezuela, Guyana, Brazil, and parts of Colombia, the frogs eat a variety of small insect prey. Through a process called bioaccumulation, the frogs gain their poison by concentrating the toxins of their diet. Scientists aren't completely sure what species of insects create the dart frogs' poison, but most suspect ants or toxic beetles to be responsible. Here at the Zoo, the frogs we raise are offered a complete and diverse diet of flightless fruit flies, springtails, and pinhead crickets. As a result, our frogs lack the components to create poison.

We currently have six froglets in various stages of development living behind-the-scenes in the Reptile Building. Once they are large enough, they will be sent to another zoo to establish a new colony of their own! In the past 2 years, the Birmingham Zoo has sent nearly 40 young dart frogs to other facilities around the country.

Across the globe, reptile and amphibian species are facing the risk of extinction, with 19% of all reptile species and 33% of all amphibian species being endangered – the amphibian decline represents the greatest extinction of a class of animals since the loss of the dinosaurs! The biggest contributing factors are loss of habitat, climate change, pollution, and the illegal pet trade. Here in Alabama, we have several endangered or threatened species of reptiles and amphibians. Our great state ranks third in combined biodiversity of reptiles and amphibians!

What can you do to help? Backyard ponds are a great way to attract native reptiles and amphibians, and here in the Reptile Department, we like to use an app called HerpMapper; it's just like playing Pokémon Go, but in real life! If you see a wild amphibian or reptile, you can take a picture, and using your phone's location, you can help wildlife biologists keep track of populations right in your own backyard!





# AMAZING ANIMAL ADAPTATIONS!

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

Adaptations are everywhere in the animal kingdom. They make every species unique and allow every species to thrive in its ecological niche. So what is an adaptation? An adaptation is a physical or behavioral trait that evolved over time to allow an animal to better survive in its environment. The Birmingham Zoo is home to approximately 200 species of animals that each have their own special adaptations, and it's our job to create habitats and provide enrichment that accommodate each specific animal's abilities. Let's look at a few examples...

Giraffes are arguably one of the most distinctive species, and it's all because of their unique adaptations. Giraffes have evolved to have extremely long necks and legs, allowing them to reach heights far above other African species. This enables them to compete more successfully for food, because they are one of the only species that can reach the tallest trees! To accommodate their extreme heights, the giraffes at the Birmingham Zoo have a barn over 25 feet tall with hay feeders raised up to the level of the giraffes' heads – Animal Care Professionals (ACPs) have to use ladders to place their food! Another giraffe adaptation is their long, purple, prehensile (grasping) tongue. Giraffes use their 1½ foot long tongues to grab leaves from the highest branches, with the purple color being used to protect from sunburn. ACPs frequently provide browse for the giraffes, allowing them to utilize their tongues naturally. A behavioral adaptation that is beneficial for giraffes is that they have one of the lowest sleep requirements of any mammal, sleeping anywhere from 30 minutes to 4 hours a day. A sleeping giraffe is much more vulnerable to predators, so the species has adapted to require less sleep. Because giraffes are awake most of the day, they often spend this time feeding. ACPs provide them with frequent feedings throughout the day and even have the nighttime ACPs give them food after hours to better replicate their natural feeding behavior.

Giant anteaters are another amazing species with very distinct features. Unlike the other three anteater species, which are arboreal (tree dwelling), giant anteaters have adapted to living terrestrially (on the ground). Their long, bushy tail is not only used for camouflage when sleeping (they lay it over their body to better hide themselves) but also for balance when they stand on their hind legs to tear down termite mounds for food. Another adaptation helpful for accessing termite mounds is their long claws on their front feet. At the Birmingham Zoo, our anteater, Carlito, has a habitat with a digging area where ACPs often bury enrichment for him to dig up with his claws. He also receives various enrichment items to rip up and destroy, such as large cardboard boxes and rotted logs. ACPs occasionally hang his food enrichment higher off the ground so he can get up on his hind legs and use his tail for balance, just like anteaters in their native habitat. An interesting giant anteater behavioral adaptation is their habit of urinating and defecating in water, which helps mask their scent from predators. Carlito has a pool in his habitat that he urinates and defecates in every day!

Overall, adaptations are extraordinary features that are important for an animal's survival. Next time you are at the Birmingham Zoo, see if you can spot different adaptations in our diverse animal collection and take a guess as to why they might be beneficial.



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## ORANGUTAN CARE FROM AND FOR THE HEART

BY: DANIELLE WILLIAMS, ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER OF  
SOUTH AMERICA/PRIMATES

During a routine physical examination in November 2015, we discovered that our male Sumatran orangutan, Oliver, had changes to the way his heart was functioning. Our Director of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Stephanie McCain, DMV Dipl ACZM, said he has cardiomyopathy. This is a disease of the heart muscles, so in the course of his daily care, we more commonly refer to it as "heart disease." As with people, Oliver's condition is progressive, which means he will never be cured. We know that he will continue to have additional changes in heart function and symptoms, but as animal care staff, our goal is to adjust his health care program with those changes and help minimize the related symptoms.

One of the first issues we addressed was Oliver's weight, because, as our personal human doctors often tell us, a healthy body condition is important to the management of many illnesses. In October of 2015 he weighed 119kg (261 lbs.), and our veterinary staff assessed his body condition to be a bit heavy for his stature. We re-evaluated both the amount and types of food our Animal Nutrition Center sends and the way in which we feed our orangutan group. We also consulted with the Orangutan Species Survival Plan (SSP) Nutrition Advisor on our changes. Oliver is currently around 98kg (215 lbs.), which is a better weight for him and relieves some of that added stress from his heart.

Additionally, we have worked with Oliver over the last four years on several behaviors to help us monitor his condition better. We have experienced a variety of challenges and outcomes working on voluntary blood

pressure readings, blood draws, and EKGs, but the most success has come from a chest presentation behavior. When asked, Oliver presses his chest against the mesh. We are able to ask for it centered or a specific side, which puts him in the best position for cardiac ultrasounds. It was during an ultrasound session in October 2017 that Dr. McCain first noticed an arrhythmia, or irregular heartbeat. Following the discovery of Oliver's arrhythmia, we placed a small device (approximately the size of a pet microchip) in the muscle near his heart called an implantable loop recorder. This ILR collects data on how Oliver's heart is functioning and stores it until we download it by holding a reader near his chest. His chest present behavior proved to be useful for these downloads as well. Having the ability to see how Oliver's heart is functioning guides our veterinarians in choosing the appropriate medications to help his heart.

This past August, after returning from the annual Orangutan Husbandry Workshop where I was sharing our experience in orangutan cardiac care with other orangutan professionals, we discovered through an ILR download that the occurrence of Oliver's arrhythmia had become more frequent. The ILR allowed us to detect this and adjust his medications early, giving us the best chance at managing his heart disease, rather than waiting for him to become sick from it. We know that good cardiac care for a 39-year-old orangutan is an ever evolving process, but we are proud to say that over the last four years through proactive monitoring, we have seen minimal impact of this illness on Oliver's daily life.





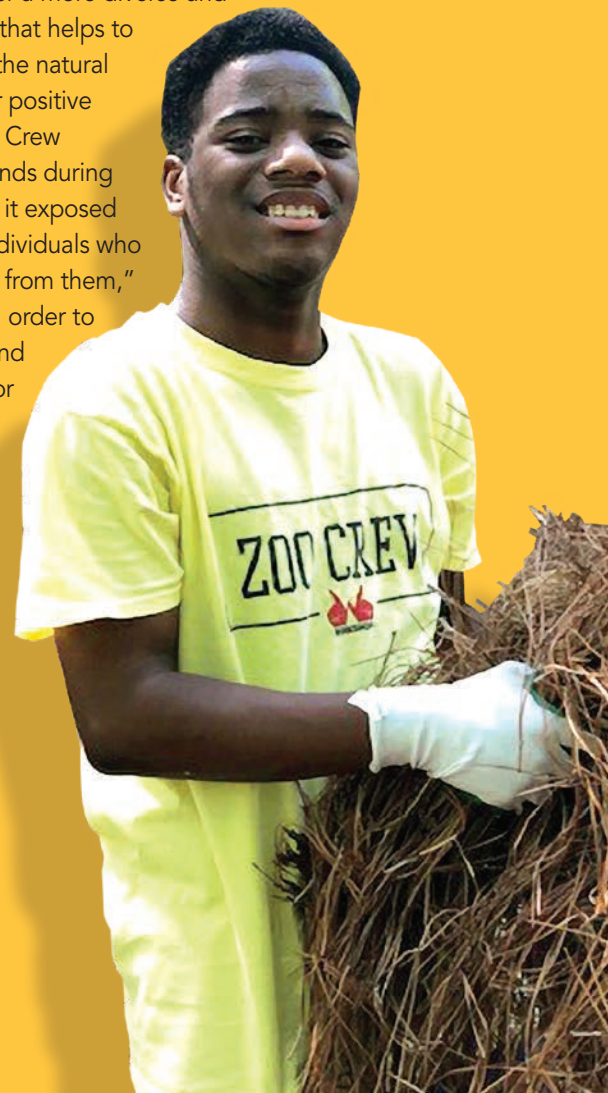
# THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO PARTNERS WITH WORKSHOPS, INC.

This summer, the Birmingham Zoo collaborated with Workshops, Inc. to provide job training for students who are part of their Summer JETS (Job Exploration Training) Program. This six-week program for high school students with disabilities allows them to learn and practice job readiness skills and gain work experience as they prepare to transition from school to work or to post-secondary education. "For most of the students we serve, this will be the first time they have had an opportunity to gain any work experience," said Liz Faris, Transition Coordinator at Workshops, Inc. "While these young people may not have the highest academic abilities, most can be good workers and just want an opportunity to learn how to be good employees and to be better prepared for work. This program provides real skills that will help them be successful in the future."

During their time at the Zoo, JETS students wore bright yellow 'Zoo Crew' shirts to help identify the group. While working at the Zoo, they got hands-on job experience performing such duties as spreading pine straw with the landscape crew, cleaning the windows of animal habitats with Zoo Services staff and clearing tables in the café with food service staff. "The skills they learned go well beyond the physical tasks they completed," said Roger Torbert, Vice President for Education. "The Zoo Crew learned the importance of punctuality, effective communication, time management and paying attention to detail." Zoo staff played a key role in the success of the program and the attitudes of the students. Not only did they take on the extra duties of coordinating the Zoo Crew in their work, they also served as mentors – providing feedback to help them understand the importance of their job. "Hearing Zoo staff tell students they are doing a great job or that they would consider hiring

them for a position is something that these students never hear," said Faris. "One of my students came running in after his shift with a grin from ear to ear, bursting to tell me that a staff member in the café had said he did a 'heck of a job!'" The pride of a job well done was evident on the faces of everyone at the end of each work day.

Workshops, Inc.'s summer JETS program is just one example of partnerships between the Birmingham Zoo and community organizations. One of our Core Values is to strive for excellence in service to our community so that our actions and results make a difference. Our collaborations with these organizations allows us to foster a more diverse and inclusive culture that helps to create value for the natural world. "Another positive result of the Zoo Crew working on grounds during the day was that it exposed Zoo guests to individuals who may be different from them," said Torbert. "In order to build empathy and understanding for someone, you must first have exposure and interaction with them."



# EDUCATING THROUGH NATURE

BY: KATE DAVIS, M.S., CIG, SCHOOL PROGRAMS MANAGER

The water cycle, water chemistry, and water as a basic need; these and other concepts regarding water are taught every year beginning in kindergarten all the way through 12th grade. Students are expected to understand that water is necessary for living things to survive, and should also be able to design solutions for protecting water, our most essential natural resource. The question becomes: how do we teach about something so important, so crucial for our survival, in a way that will make it fun and interesting?

The Birmingham Zoo is thrilled to announce the development of a resource that will provide that very opportunity. In the Alabama Wilds section of the Zoo, we are in the process of building an Outdoor Classroom, which will have access to a freshwater stream and pond area. Imagine learning about stream ecology by looking at the macroinvertebrates living in a stream! This Outdoor Classroom not only will provide the perfect space for water education, but also wildlife biology, botany, ecology, cultural connections to the environment, and so much more.

There are countless articles supporting outdoor learning, with specific emphasis on: increased standardized test scores, enhanced attitude about school, improved in-school behavior, and overall enhanced student achievement when students learn in and about nature. We fully embrace this research as an organization whose mission is to

*Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World,* and all educational programs offered by the Zoo have an outdoor or wildlife component.

When not in use as part of an educational program, the Alabama Wilds Outdoor Classroom will have self-directed nature play activities that will allow families visiting the Zoo to have a hands-on experience with the natural world. These ever changing activities will range from leaf identification to creating pollinator stations – each one providing an opportunity for children and their caregivers to form a deeper connection with nature.

This new classroom space will be opening before year's end and the education staff cannot wait for the lessons we will hold here and the connections students will make to their own backyard while in their backyard!

The Outdoor Classroom was made possible by generous donations from Vulcan Materials Company Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and the William R. Foster Education and Conservation Fund.





# FLOCK TO THE ZOO FOR A NEW FLAMINGO HABITAT!

BY: ALAN YESTER,  
ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER OF BIRDS

On October 3, the Bird Department held a Pink Parade! Zoo staff lined up outside the flamingo habitat and carried all 23 flamingos to a behind-the-scenes area in preparation for their habitat renovation. The flamingo pool, in its previous state, was more than 20 years old and originally redone to house capybaras in the early 1990s. Since the habitat was not originally intended for flamingos, there were some improvements that needed to be made. When I was a young boy visiting the Zoo in the 1980s, the flamingos were actually housed at the front entrance!

The new flamingo-friendly design includes a shallower pool with graded sides, allowing easy access in and out, a filtration system incorporating native plants (donated by our neighbors, Birmingham Botanical Gardens), and a new mud site for nest building. The birds will now have a sunny, natural mud flat surrounded by water, which will be more conducive to natural breeding behaviors. Animal Care Professionals will be able to access the mud area by a rock bridge where they will tend to the mud, especially during breeding season. Having the nest site in the center of the habitat will give visitors multiple viewing areas from which to observe nest building next spring or summer. We are hopeful that the nest mounds will eventually have fluffy chicks on top!

The new habitat design also features a guest interaction area, where guests can mingle with a flamingo! Guests will be able to enter a small section of the flamingo habitat for an up-close encounter with some of the birds, in a unique experience designed to create lasting memories. Meeting a flamingo in person is a special opportunity that will help Zoo guests form stronger connections to our animals and inspire increased passion for their conservation.

The habitat renovation was made possible by funds raised by the Birmingham Zoo Junior Board. Thanks to their dedication and hard work, the Birmingham Zoo will soon have an updated flamingo habitat, one that is sure to be enjoyed by both visitors and flamingos. On your next visit to the Zoo, make sure to stop by and see the progress of the new flamingo habitat!



# WILD ABOUT EAGLES!

BY: AMY TROUSDALE,  
CHILDREN'S ZOO ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL II

Look and see what's new on the Alabama Wilds trail! Work just completed on a new habitat for the Birmingham Zoo's resident golden eagles, Attila and Phoenix. This fall, our eagles will be moving from their current location in the Predator Building to their new home, right across the boardwalk from the sandhill crane habitat!

Why are the eagles moving to the Alabama Wilds trail? Are there even golden eagles in Alabama? Yes! Although they are not common, golden eagles are found in Alabama during the winter months. They are part of an eastern population of golden eagles (separate from the more well-known population in the western states) that migrates from eastern Canada in the summer to the southeastern United States in the winter. Due to the small size of this population of eagles, little is known about their migration, habitat, and behavior. Currently, scientists throughout the southeast and here locally in Alabama are gathering data to learn more about the eastern population of golden eagles. I received a Passion into Conservation Action (PiCA) grant to work on a project that helped the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries determine the number of golden eagles that spend the winter in Alabama, the size of the entire eastern North American population, as well as migratory patterns and habitat preferences. The new golden eagle habitat will include information about this study and the routes our local Alabama golden eagles take to travel between their Canadian and Alabamian homes.

The golden eagle Animal Care Professionals (ACPs) are excited for several features in the new golden eagle habitat! At one end of the habitat, there is a building where each of our eagles will have its own space to take shelter indoors. ACPs will use this building for food preparation, training, and storing animal care supplies. In the habitat, our golden eagles will have a nice large pool in which to cool off and bathe, which helps keep their feathers healthy. The golden eagle ACPs will also have plenty of options to build eagle "stairs" where our eagles can perch both high and low in their habitat. Both of our eagles have called the Birmingham Zoo home after sustaining injuries in the wild, making them unable to fly well and therefore not releasable. They would not have been able to survive in the wild, but here at the Zoo our ACPs can provide them with everything they need to thrive, and serve as perfect ambassadors for their wild-living relatives!

Don't forget to see the Birmingham Zoo's new golden eagle habitat in the Alabama Wilds on your next Zoo visit!

# HAVE YOU HERD?

## Year-End Gifts Make a Difference at YOUR Zoo!

Happy Holidays from all of us at the Birmingham Zoo! Through the support of our community, the Zoo continues to enhance guests' experiences and provide the highest in excellence and care for approximately 700 animals. But, we can't do it without YOU!

Please consider a year-end gift to your Birmingham Zoo. Did you know that your Zoo is a non-profit that is ranked as a 4-Star Charity by Charity Navigator and has an annual operating budget of \$10 million? We need your support to help us care for our animal family and ask that you act now.

We are grateful for your support as a member and commitment to help us Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World, please make your gift by December 31, 2019.

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**or you can mail your check to:**

**Development Office  
Birmingham Zoo  
2630 Cahaba Road  
Birmingham, AL 35223**

The Zoo also welcomes stock gifts. You can contact Karen Carroll at 205.397.3856 for information about making a stock gift, or if you have any other questions related to making a year-end gift.

### Other Ways to Give:

- 1) Work for a company that makes matching gifts? This is a unique way to double or even triple your gift at no cost to you, while excluding these transfers from taxable income.
- 2) Are you 70 ½ years old? A traditional IRA charitable rollover allows you to transfer Individual Retirement Account (IRA) assets up to \$100,000 directly to public charities. Contact your IRA administrator to take advantage of this opportunity.





# ALTEC IS A PROUD CORPORATE PARTNER OF THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO



## ALABAMA POWER AND THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

You can feel the energy at the Birmingham Zoo, thanks to the longtime commitment by Alabama Power and the Alabama Power Foundation to elevate the state.

The Alabama Power Foundation recently contributed to the Asian Passage and Arrival Experience, which has transformed the front entrance into a beautiful complex comprised of a new membership office area, ticket booths, educational space, administrative offices, rental event patios and an expansive plaza with water features. Completion of Asian Passage will bring about a multi-faceted Asian-themed animal habitat and educational facility.

The Alabama Power Foundation's mission "to spread good throughout the state" also includes promoting science education. ZooSchool at the Birmingham Zoo, a weeklong hands-on learning experience for seventh grade students attending Birmingham City Schools, has also benefitted from the Alabama Power Foundation's generosity.

Previously, Alabama Power provided a significant gift to the North American river otter habitat in the Alabama Wilds. The Alabama Wilds is one of the most visited areas at the Zoo, with nearly every school group touring and learning about the native species living there.

Furthermore, Alabama Power CEO Mark Crosswhite continues the tradition of support by serving as a member of the Zoo's Board of Directors.

"Alabama Power and the Alabama Power Foundation are proud to partner with the Birmingham Zoo and support its growth. As one of the state's top cultural attractions and a vital educational resource, the Zoo makes Alabama a better place for residents and visitors alike," Crosswhite said.

"The Birmingham Zoo is thrilled to have such a close relationship with Alabama Power and its Foundation," said Chris Pfefferkorn, President and CEO, Birmingham Zoo. "The Zoo would not be the destination that it is today without the leadership and generous gifts that the company and foundation have provided."



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## AMAZON SMILE AND THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

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# KIDS KORNER

As you read on page 4, giraffes have amazing adaptations to help them survive in the African savannas. Match the words on the picture above with the amazing adaptation listed below. Some of these adaptations were mentioned on page 4, while others may require some extra thinking!

- \_\_\_\_\_ allows a giraffe to grab leaves from the thorny branches of acacia trees. The dark color acts as sunscreen to prevent sunburn while they eat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ can be used to whip around to swat away flies and other pests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ allows a giraffe to defend themselves against predators -- a kick from one of these can serve as a deadly blow to an attacking lion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ allows a giraffe to be camouflaged in the savanna, protecting them from lions and spotted hyenas. It also helps regulate internal temperature, keeping a giraffe cool in the hot African bush.
- \_\_\_\_\_ allows a giraffe to reach leaves from high atop acacia trees and also allows them to see predators approaching from long distances.
- \_\_\_\_\_ allows a giraffe to run at speeds of up to 35 miles per hour allowing them to outrun many predators.

ANSWERS: 1. A 2. D 3. F 4. B 5. C 6. E



## ADOPT-AN-ANIMAL AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

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# THE NEW R'S OF RECYCLING

BY: LINDSEY HERRON, ZOO REGISTRAR

For most of us, when we think of the R's of waste reduction, we think of three: reduce, reuse, and recycle. These are sometimes called the 'waste hierarchy', since they guide consumers into making good choices about their trash. If an option is closer to the front of the list, it's considered to be a better choice for managing your waste stream. However, over the past few years a few new R's have been making their way into the group. If you go online, a search for 'the R's of recycling' will provide links to lists that are five items long, or seven items long, or even a few that are fourteen items long!

So what are the new R's and how can we get started using them? The most popular new R is refuse, and it's easy to implement. There are plenty of small ways to refuse single use items, and the effects can add up quickly. For example, you can refuse a printed receipt and request an emailed one instead or refuse the plastic cutlery when you get take out and use your own silverware instead. Other new R's include repurpose, as in using something for a completely new function like turning plastic banners into tote bags, and repair, since sewing a button back onto a shirt or gluing a broken toy back together is better than throwing the items away. Here at the Birmingham Zoo, we're living our core value of sustainability by offering reusable bags, bottles, and straws in our gift shop and also offering fair-trade gifts like jewelry made from reused telephone wire.

If you're new to managing your waste stream, find the new R that best resonates with you and start there. You might try a glass water bottle for reuse, rather than using a new plastic bottle every day. If you're a seasoned recycler, why not find a new R and try something new? Whether it's refusing a plastic lid for your cup at a fast food restaurant or repairing a broken piece of furniture to save it from the landfill, every little step adds up and every little bit counts.



# VOLUNTEER AT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!

BY: CASEY HOBBS, VOLUNTEER MANAGER

The Volunteer Department is focusing efforts on building up the Docent Program at the Birmingham Zoo. In 2018, 13 docents contributed over 3,000 hours to the Zoo. A docent is a lead volunteer whose primary focus is educating guests as it relates to the Zoo's mission, *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*. Building on our rich history, the Birmingham Zoo has recently restructured the training process, creating a challenging and dynamic pathway for volunteers to become docents around the Zoo.

In addition to offering the Docent Program to experienced adult volunteers, we have also created a Junior Docent Program. All members of our teen leadership group, Zoofari, are eligible to train as junior docents and serve as guides throughout the Zoo, connecting each guest to the animals and our conservation messaging.

We were excited to see the room filled with experienced docents as well as volunteers at our first quarterly training in August. Volunteers at this training ranged from docents with over twenty years of experience at the Birmingham Zoo to teens that had just finished their first year in high school. These trainings serve not only as teaching opportunities for our volunteers, but also as opportunities for diverse cultural and generational connection around care for wildlife and wild places.

This month we would like to recognize new docents Ronnie Chappleau, George Butler Jr., Elizabeth Meagher, and Jennifer Smith. Ronnie became a volunteer in March of this year and has already served nearly 200 hours, while George

has been an active volunteer since 2012, logging over 1,000 hours in that time. Elizabeth came to the Zoo this past year through our internship program. Jennifer has found time, while working full time with SSA, the Zoo's restaurant service, to help out in the Elephant Barn as well as training to be a docent. We are so excited that all four have committed to serving the community as docents!



Are you wondering how to become a docent? Feel free to reach out to the Volunteer Department for more information - [volunteers@birminghamzoo.com](mailto:volunteers@birminghamzoo.com) or 205.397.3863

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