

Animal Tracks

All About the Animals

Ever wonder how and why the Birmingham Zoo gets new animals? Let's find out!

+ NEW ANIMAL ALERT! TRAILS OF AFRICA

Learn what you can do to help reduce the invasion of lionfish.



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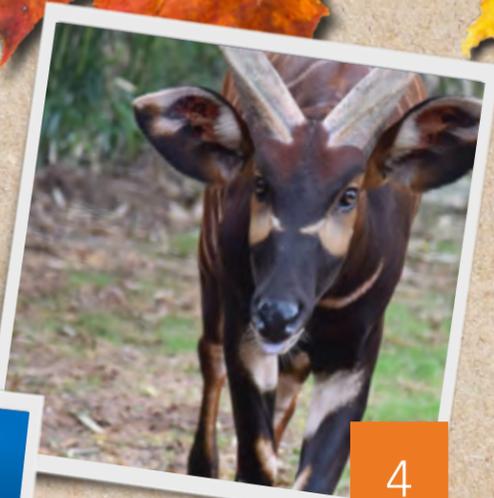
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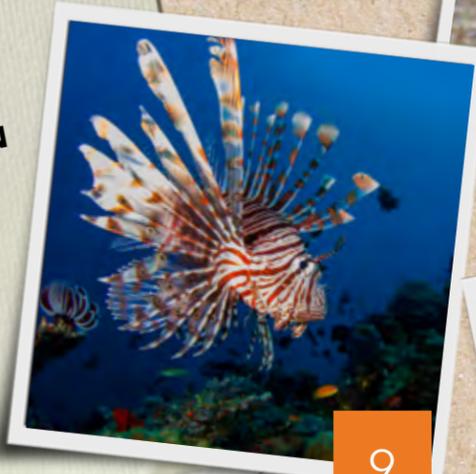
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PHOTO CREDITS: : Ambassador Animal Staff, Paul Floyd, Robert Holt, Scott Kayser, Clark Maxwell, Jason Skelly, and Veterinarian Staff

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LETTER FROM *The President*



Dear Members,

Your Zoo has been carefully and steadily navigating the impact of the pandemic on our beloved cultural institution. The novel coronavirus continues to have a devastating effect on all of us and everything we hold dear—our community, our families, and our lives. As a valued Member of the Birmingham Zoo, we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support during this difficult time.

Our admirable Animal Care Team remains hard at work, ensuring our animals receive the food, veterinary care, and loving attention they need. We are committed to taking necessary precautions and preventive measures to safeguard the health of our staff, volunteers, animals, and guests. Adjusting to create a new normal means assessing priorities, operations, budgets, and making tough decisions while planning for the future.

Despite cost-cutting measures, your Zoo is anticipating a \$2.5 million operating loss by year-end. Decreased funding and revenue is a difficult conversation, but we have been preparing for all possible outcomes and remain focused on rebounding and recovering. As stewards, we are steadfast in keeping your Zoo relevant, accessible, and connected to the community. To offset this loss, we have established the "Feed Your Animals: Give Today to Secure the Future" fundraising campaign with a goal to raise \$780,000 by January 31, 2021. Operating costs for the Zoo amount to \$30,000 a day to provide food and vital care for 550+ animals, including many endangered species.

Our dedicated staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors are vigorously cultivating relationships with many facets of the public to encourage contributions, whether one-time or recurring. Now more than ever, your support is a continued investment in our animal care, programs, and our mission. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, your Birmingham Zoo relies on ticket sales, program income, event proceeds, donations, and memberships to provide operating revenue.

Gifts of all sizes are important and make a tremendous difference. Members can provide critical funds by renewing or upgrading your membership. If you are able to give, please consider stock gifts, IRA distributions, and planned gifts as valuable options. With your assistance, our combined efforts will help cut the anticipated shortfall.

We have a long way to go, but I am confident in our community's generosity and its love for the animals. I ask that as valued Members, supporters, and friends that you please help us in our efforts to continue to offer a memorable experience for generations to come. Together we will ensure your Zoo's future and meet our mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*.

Chris Pfefferkorn

Chris Pfefferkorn
President & CEO

Birmingham Zoo Mission: Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World

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ALL ABOUT *The Animals*

BY: LINDSEY HERRON, ZOO REGISTRAR

Have you ever wondered how the Birmingham Zoo gets new animals?

For some species, it's relatively simple. Our senior animal staff prepare a collection plan for our institution, and if they decide a certain species would be a good fit for our Zoo, we contact other zoos that currently hold the species to see if they have surplus animals they would like to donate or loan to us. In some cases, we may even talk to local farmers to obtain domestic animals, like the goats and chickens in the Children's Zoo.

For many species, though, our staff here at the Zoo work closely with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program. The SSP is an AZA program plan for managing populations of animals in human care to help maintain genetically diverse, stable populations of select species. Along with breeding and transfer plans, SSPs are involved in research, conservation, and educational outreach initiatives, all aimed at supporting the sustainability of the species into the future. Each SSP has a program leader responsible for planning breeding and movement between institutions, and also for maintaining communication between all institutions holding that particular species. The program leaders are all employees of AZA institutions, and are assisted by scientists in the AZA Population Management Center and the Reproductive Management Center.

So how does an SSP move happen? In most cases, the SSP Coordinator will ask institutions

about their needs or wants for a species. They coordinate that information with the data from genetic and demographic analyses to draft a Breeding and Transfer Plan for all the institutions involved in the SSP for review. Once the plan is finalized and agreed to, that's when the gears begin turning! For recommended transfers, the zoos involved must arrange timelines and logistics. All animals heading out to new institutions receive medical checks from veterinarians, to make sure they are in the best health for their trip. After they receive a clean bill of health, it's time to plan how to actually move them. For many small species, like birds or amphibians, we can book a flight to get the animals where they need to be. But for larger animals, like elephants or giraffes, many months of planning are needed to plan an overland trip using large, heavy trucks that can keep the animals safe and comfortable on their road trips.

AZA currently has nearly 500 active SSP programs, all cooperatively working to help conserve endangered and threatened animals from around the world. The Birmingham Zoo currently participates in 104 SSPs, and we are also proud to have four SSPs managed by staff here at our institution, the spotted dikkop, the lion, the orangutan, and the Pallas's cat.

It takes a lot of work from many different people to get new animals at the Birmingham Zoo, but we're always proud to do it, so we can help conserve species and *Inspire Passion to Conserve the Natural World!*



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NEW ANIMAL ALERT!

Trails of Africa

BY: AMY TOMAN, TRAILS OF AFRICA ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER

A bongo is not a new musical instrument at the Zoo, but actually a beautiful forest antelope! We are thrilled to welcome an eastern bongo, a critically endangered species, in cooperation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program. The Birmingham Zoo is home to four critically endangered mammal species: cotton-top tamarins, Sumatran orangutans, a bettong, and now an eastern bongo! It is hard to believe that there are only 60-80 estimated mature bongos left in their native home range in Kenya, Africa.

Bongos can weigh up to 900 pounds! While you might think an animal this large would stand out easily, they are known for their elusive tendencies and their ability to blend into their surroundings using natural camouflage. The white stripes help them to blend into the background of the forests by breaking up the appearance of their body. As a red antelope among the green plants, their coloration actually helps to hide them. Predators, like leopards, cannot distinguish between the colors red and green! The color of their red coats rubs off easily and they can leave behind the pigment to help communicate to other bongos. According to old tales told by native tribes, touching a bongo will lead to illness, which helped to protect the species for many years. Today, we know this to not be true, and many bongos enjoy tactile interactions, like scratches on their forehead, from their Animal Care Professionals (ACPs).

Our bongo is a male named Nakuru and he is 2.5 years old. He moved here to us all the way from the Great Plains Zoo in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Even as a young animal, Nakuru is already over 500 pounds! He thoroughly enjoys eating tree leaves and treats, like apples, from his ACPs. He also enjoys training behaviors, which help him participate in his own healthcare.

We will be working with the SSP to bring in additional bongo in the future. A bongo's gestation is over nine months, and newborn calves weigh around forty pounds. We are happy to grow the Zoo family with our newest antelope addition. Stop by the Trails of Africa and say "hey!" to Nakuru!

NEW ANIMAL ALERT!

Ambassador Animals

BY: AMY OWENS, AMBASSADOR ANIMALS ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER

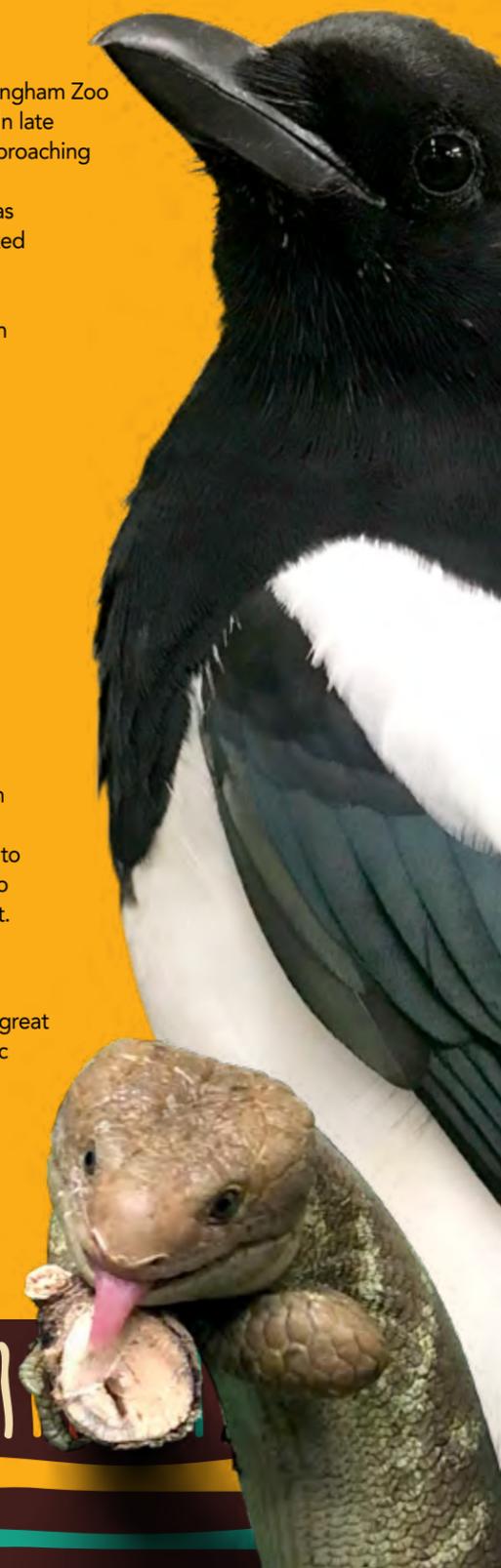
The Ambassador Department recently welcomed new additions!

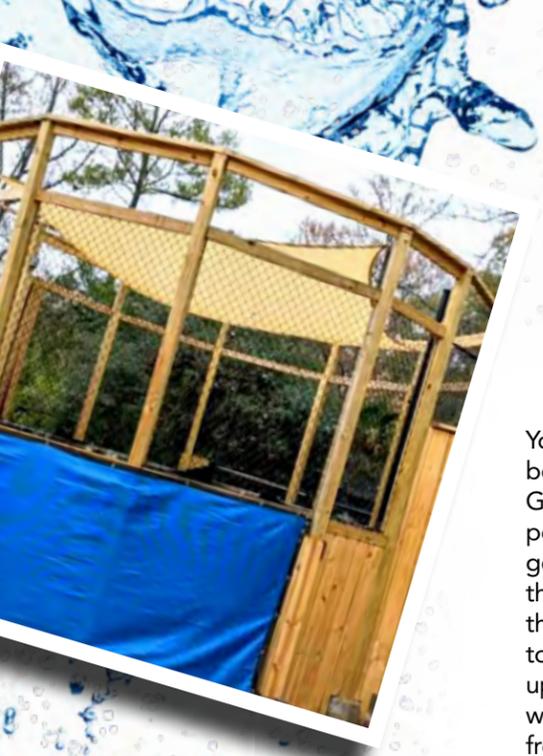
The first addition is a female black-billed magpie named Lakota. Lakota came to the Birmingham Zoo from the wildlife rehabilitation center associated with Bramble Park Zoo in South Dakota. In late summer of 2019, police had several reports outside of Rapid City, SD of a strange bird approaching people and attempting to enter offices. In October of 2019, Rapid City law enforcement contacted animal control. A black-billed magpie had shown up at a local residence and was trying to steal food off of the grill! After successfully getting a piece of meat, the bird walked into the residence and sat at a chair by the dinner table. It wasn't until the magpie started stealing coins and cards off a table while the residents were playing a game that they decided to alert authorities. From this information, it is believed the bird was illegally taken from the wild and raised by someone; it is unclear if the magpie was released or escaped. Typically, when this occurs, birds who have become imprinted on humans rarely thrive in the wild. After living at the rehabilitation center, it was determined that she could not be released, and she was sent to the Birmingham Zoo. The Ambassador team named her Lakota in honor of the Native American tribe located in the area of South Dakota where she was found. The name Lakota means "the allies." When working with such a clever animal, developing an alliance is critical for establishing a strong relationship, so, the name seemed like a great fit for this amazing bird!

Magpies are in the Corvidae (or Corvid) family, which also includes crows and ravens. The corvid family is extremely intelligent, sometimes being referred to as "feathered apes" by scientists. This amount of intellect creates both opportunities and challenges while training. They are able to remember where they have hidden food for nine months, are able to solve puzzles as well as a seven-year-old human, and can even mimic human voices. Currently, Lakota says several phrases including "Hey humans! What are you doing?!" and mimics her favorite character, Peppa Pig, by snorting like a pig. Being so clever, Lakota often tries to outsmart her Animal Care Professionals (ACPs). She likes to hide food above her habitat door, which then falls on the heads of the ACPs when they enter the space. In order to provide the best care for Lakota and encourage her cognitive abilities, our ultimate goal is to continuously work with her to keep her mentally stimulated through training and enrichment.

In addition to Lakota, we welcomed a Solomon Island prehensile-tailed skink named Saul. Saul was born at the Birmingham Zoo on January 25, 2018 in the Reptile Department and came over to the Ambassador Department in July 2020. Saul is full of personality and is a great ambassador to teach guests about endemic species (species only found in one geographic area of the world), as these species are more susceptible to becoming endangered. His name comes from the beginning sound of "Solomon Islands" and was chosen by our remarkable volunteers.

Saul and Lakota can soon be seen at our wildlife stage, education classes, on grounds pop-up demonstrations, and special events. We can't wait to share these incredible additions with our Zoo guests!





NEW POOL? *how cool!*

BY: LAUREN WILSON & ANGIE LAYNG,
ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONALS I - SEA LIONS

You may have heard the hammering and sawing sounds of construction going on behind the sea lion area this summer. By September, our two California sea lions, Giovanni and Farley, were able to go for a swim in their new behind-the-scenes pool for the first time! This 3,000-gallon salt water pool (made possible by the generosity of the Carroll family) gives us an additional area in which to separate the sea lions for their training sessions throughout the day. Upon introduction to the new behind-the-scenes pool, our female sea lion, Giovanni, was quite eager to explore the new area. She readily followed her Animal Care Professional (ACP) up to the pool and jumped right in. Our male sea lion, Farley, on the other hand, was much more hesitant to approach the new pool. After much encouragement from his ACP, and a lot of fish snacks, he joined Giovanni in the pool. Now that they are familiar with the area, Farley seems to be more fond of the new area and immediately heads into the pool when given access to the space. Giovanni enjoys spending time in the dry space so she can be ready for the next training session to begin.

This behind-the-scenes pool has 3,000 gallons of man-made salt water, as well as a life support system that operates much like our main habitat pool. This space gives us an additional area in which to separate the sea lions for their training sessions throughout the day (and longer, if needed). Since we train our sea lions six to eight times a day, this pool will give us the ability to train the sea lions separately or together in a completely new space. It also gives us the ability to add more variety to their day by giving them access to different pools and allowing the sea lions to choose where they want to spend their time. We can now vary the times the sea lions are together and separate to make each day different. This pool also allows us to have a behind-the-scenes area for the sea lions when maintenance work needs to be done on our main habitat pool, such as our yearly pool painting. Overall, we are extremely excited for this new space and we are happy to add more variety to Farley and Giovanni's day!

Next time you are near the sea lion habitat, be sure to keep your eyes peeled behind the main habitat to catch a glimpse of our new behind-the-scenes pool. Visibility is limited from the public area, but be sure to check out the Birmingham Zoo website and Facebook page to stay up-to-date on the opportunity to participate in a behind-the-scenes tour to meet Giovanni and Farley!



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN *You're Expecting at the Zoo*

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

In humans, there is a quick and easy urine test that will tell you if you are pregnant - one line or two? While that test can be used in great apes, like our female orangutan Lipz, it doesn't work for most other animals. So, depending on the species, the Birmingham Zoo utilizes a variety of different tests to evaluate for pregnancy.

Ultrasound is a great tool that allows for early detection, but it takes time to train an animal to allow voluntary ultrasound. We have used ultrasound to diagnose and monitor pregnancy in red panda and orangutan, as two examples. Ultrasound allows us to watch the baby grow and develop, as well as determine the number of offspring. But this method has its limitations when it comes to larger animals or those that are shy and more difficult to train. This is where fecal hormone monitoring comes in handy. Through our partnership with the South-East Zoo Alliance for Reproduction & Conservation (SEZARC) we are able to monitor progesterone, a reproductive hormone, by collecting fecal samples on an animal three times a week. A sustained elevation in progesterone often means an animal is pregnant. We have used this method to diagnose pregnancy in giraffe in the past, as well as our female Pallas's cat, Mischa, among others. Hopefully you have been to the Zoo recently to see Mischa's four adorable kittens!

Interestingly, some animals, including cats and otters, can develop what is called a pseudopregnancy, a condition in which the body "thinks" it is pregnant, progesterone increases, and the animal gains weight but is not actually pregnant. Progesterone doesn't distinguish between pseudopregnancy and true pregnancy. So, staff at the Zoo worked with SEZARC to

determine another metabolite found in feces that could be used to distinguish between true and pseudopregnancies in black-footed cats, and we hope to expand that to other species. We are always learning new things here at the Zoo!

But what if there is an animal that we do not want to breed? Perhaps she has had multiple offspring and her genetics are over-represented, or maybe she is temporarily housed with a sibling. Many zoos choose not to spay or neuter non-domestic animals in case circumstances change and we decide to breed them later on. Reversible methods of contraception are preferred, and some primates can simply take a daily birth control pill, just like people. Lipz, the orangutan, and Fraser, the gibbon, both take one every day! Unfortunately, that doesn't work for animals other than primates, so for other animals, such as our female lion, Akili, we may choose to put a small hormone implant under the skin that prevents pregnancy. This requires anesthesia, so we coordinate it with their routine health exam.

For large animals, such as giraffe, we can either use an oral medication or one of several types of injections that can last from a few months to almost a year. In some cases, we actually contracept the male and not the female. Lastly, we can always separate desired animals during the breeding season, which can be useful in species that have very short breeding seasons, such as Pallas's cats who breed January through March. It is important to know what works well in each different species we care for.

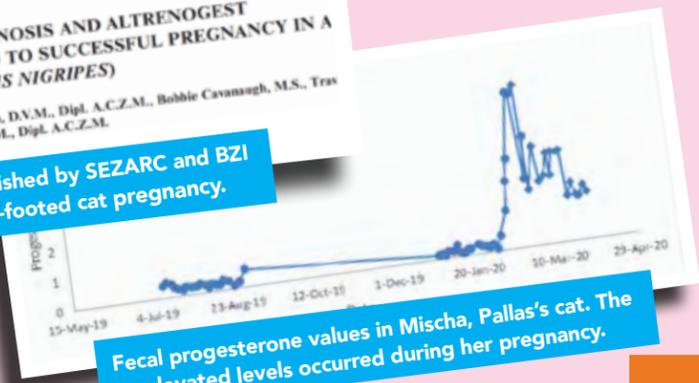
Managing pregnancies here at the Birmingham Zoo is one way we contribute to conservation of the species worldwide.



Mischa and her Pallas's cat kittens from earlier this year.



Manuscript published by SEZARC and BZI staff on black-footed cat pregnancy.



Fecal progesterone values in Mischa, Pallas's cat. The elevated levels occurred during her pregnancy.



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The Birmingham Zoo has been educating our community for more than sixty-five years. That is why Protective is honored to support this important institution as it continues to inspire a passion for conserving the natural world and all its inhabitants.



THE LIONFISH

invasion

BY: JESSE DANIEL, INTERPRETATION &
ONSITE PROGRAMS MANAGER



Lionfish, native to the Indo-Pacific, are a mesmerizing animal - wearing candy cane stripes, long, flowing fins, and deadly spines. However, as eye-catching as they may be, they are now one of the biggest threats to coral reefs and other marine ecosystems in the Western Hemisphere. The first Atlantic lionfish was recorded off the coast of Dania Beach, FL, in the late 1980s and now their ever-expanding range spans from Boston to Belize.

There are several theories as to how the invasion began. Because of their showy nature, lionfish became popular with aquarists in the mid-80s. Accidental release by hurricanes or intentional release by hobbyists are the most probable causes for their introduction into western seas. Fish being dumped from ballast water (water held in the ballast tanks and cargo holds of ships) is another possibility. However, survival during the trip across the world is low, making this a less likely means of introduction.

So, what do we know? Genetic tests show that the current population came from just a few animals – maybe as few as three. Lionfish have not only expanded their geographical range, they've also expanded the range of temperatures and depths at which they can survive. Normally found in shallow, warm water habitats, lionfish are now being found in the colder waters of the

northeastern United States and in depths of up to 300 feet. In the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico, adult lionfish have no known predators. Their venomous spines protect them from even the largest predatory fish. As a predator themselves, lionfish eat over 50 different species of fish and invertebrates throughout their introduced range. Some of their prey items, like juvenile parrotfish and small reef fish, are vital to the health of coral reefs. Recreationally important species like snappers and groupers are also food for lionfish. Unfortunately, these stocks of fish are already suffering from over-fishing in most of the Gulf of Mexico.

What can we do? Most scientists agree that we cannot completely extirpate lionfish from their introduced range. However, we can take steps to reduce local populations. Many coastal communities hold yearly lionfish tournaments to remove as many individuals as possible, and restaurants are encouraged to serve lionfish as part of their year-round menu. So, eat up! If you see lionfish or any of their other names on the menu - devil firefish, butterfly cod, ornate butterfly cod, peacock lionfish, red firefish, turkeyfish, and zebrafish – give it a try! The fish are tasty, and you'll feel both full and satisfied that you've played a part in protecting our coral reefs and native fish!



ANIMAL AREA VOLUNTEERS

BY: COLLIN HOWELL, VOLUNTEER SERVICES COORDINATOR

Volunteers have returned to the Birmingham Zoo in full force, and there's a lot of work to catch up on around your Zoo! On your next visit to the Zoo, you will see volunteers stationed all around to make sure that you have a safe, fun, and educational experience. There are also volunteers you don't see that help us accomplish our mission every day, in a huge way. Animal area volunteers are responsible for helping our Animal Care Professionals provide the best possible welfare for the animals. For Elephant Crew Volunteers, this is a BIG job. Volunteers in this area start their day by cleaning our elephant barn after a long night of our 3 boys doing what they do best ... making a mess! After cleaning, Elephant Crew Volunteers then move on to preparing some daily snacks for the bachelor herd. Meanwhile, in the Children's Zoo Barn, volunteers help hose down all of the stalls and replace the bedding for our goats and sheep. Our volunteers even help with washing the dishes that our animals eat their meals out of each day! On the other side of the Zoo, our Giraffe Crew Volunteers start the morning cleaning the hoof stock yards in preparation for animals to start their day. These animal area volunteers truly help us carry out our mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*. If you are looking for a way to get involved with volunteering at your Birmingham Zoo, head on over to www.birminghamzoo.com/get-involved and see how you can make a difference!



RECYCLE YOUR *Electronics*

BY: LINDSEY HERRON, ZOO REGISTRAR

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

Everyone loves to upgrade their electronics, right? A new computer can make all the difference for schoolwork, and a new TV makes the new seasons of your favorite shows even more riveting. But have you ever wondered what happens to the old electronics that you throw out? If these items are tossed in the garbage, they may go to landfills where they corrode over time, releasing toxic chemicals into groundwater. In other cases, they are incinerated, releasing the same toxins into the air. These toxins can build up over time, harming local species of plants and animals, and even harming people.

The easiest way to make sure that these toxins never make it out of the electronics is easy: instead of tossing your old electronics, recycle them!

This past March, the Birmingham Zoo partnered with the Jefferson County Commission and other local groups for our first-ever electronics recycling day. Volunteers from different agencies and groups, including Ramsay High School, were stationed in the main parking lot and helped unload electronic items brought in by the public. The event was a success, with over 120 vehicles representing 233 households in attendance, and 6.5 tons of electronics! All of the donations were sent to a recycling facility to make sure that dangerous chemicals, such as lead, were disposed of properly, and also to extract useable components, like gold. Information on proper grease recycling, littering, and how to report illegal dumping was also handed out to the public, in an effort to help educate about other environmental issues in the greater Birmingham area.

The Zoo hopes to hold another electronics recycling day in the future, to help keep even more items out of landfills. This is just one way that we're living our core value of sustainability, and we would love for you to join us. Keep an eye on our social media pages to see when the next event is scheduled, and in the meantime, check with your local city centers for other electronics and hazardous waste recycling events.

Remember: every little bit counts!



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THE WILD SIDE OF LEARNING

The Birmingham Zoo's Homeschool at the Zoo program has been running long enough to see kindergarteners grow into young adults, join our Teen Volunteer program, and go off to college. While this program has been long-established, this year it became apparent just how necessary it was going to be for the entire community. As students moved to virtual learning, safe, in-person socialization opportunities with their peers became thin on the ground.

Families who historically have homeschooled their children have already cracked this code – joining up in scheduled educational co-ops where their students can mingle and get to know each other. For parents who have sent their children to traditional school, they suddenly found themselves looking for a chance to supplement their student's virtual learning in the same way. This year, the Birmingham Zoo rose to the challenge by doubling (and in some cases tripling) the number of classes we offer.

In order to accommodate social distancing within a safe learning space, the Zoo reduced overall class size, which led to the decision to add extra sessions. "We've consistently filled up classes before when the class size was higher, so we knew with additional students learning from home this year, we were going to have to

increase our capacity in a way that was safe in the current circumstances" said Kate Davis, Birmingham Zoo School Programs Manager.

These classes meet for 2 hours once a month from September-April. "It's one of our most unique educational experiences" said Davis. "We see the students regularly over the year, which allows us to build upon themes and create engaging experiences." Some of these experiences include behind-the-scenes tours through the elephant barn, training demonstrations, and private sea lion shows. "Farley (the male sea lion) kissed one of my students on the mouth a few years ago; it was the fishy highlight of her day."

When asked if the Homeschool at the Zoo program factored into her decision to become a teen volunteer, former student MK said "Definitely. This Zoo is the reason I got interested in animals in the first place. I really enjoyed seeing the animal encounters at the end of class – I especially remember one time when they brought in a roadrunner!"

This year, with the additional classes to ensure appropriate social distancing, there are over 100 students enrolled, making it the highest homeschool enrollment in the Zoo's history. "It's a secret goal of ours that all of them become zoologists and come back and work for us" joked Davis, "but really, we are focused on encouraging them to explore their curiosity as it relates to animals and the natural world, while having a good time in a safe space."



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SM



THE MIGHTY Maintenance Team

BY: PAUL FLOYD, MAINTENANCE MANAGER

“Call Maintenance” are two words that don’t usually have good connotations. If you have to say those words, then you are probably having problems or there is a maintenance emergency. Those are certainly words that a maintenance technician may not like to hear, either, but then again, it’s our job. It’s what we do. We fix things, we make things better, and we are the backbone to keeping the Zoo running properly.

Imagine a Zoo without a Maintenance Department and you can envision images of unhappy visitors because air conditioning and heating units aren’t working, drainage and sewage are backing up and flooding floors, electrical wiring goes unrepaired or bulbs and ballasts aren’t replaced, animal habitats have broken shift doors or safety issues that relate to their care and well-being ... The list would go on and on, and our Zoo would be a mess very quickly without constant maintenance. These are all duties that your Maintenance Department performs on a daily basis.

I view our maintenance team as superheroes! When you work in maintenance, you have to be a Jack (or Jill) of all trades. You have to be willing to do some pretty unappealing jobs like dealing with sewage, cleaning out animal filtration units and, most of the time, this team does jobs that nobody wants to do. Our maintenance technicians come from different backgrounds, but they all have specialties and that’s what makes them superheroes. In addition to doing anything and everything that is asked of them here at the Zoo, our superheroes are:

Jimmy Johnston, Assistant Maintenance Manager “The Wood Worker”

Daniel Fuller, Maintenance Technician “HVAC Man”

Sheri Hazen, Maintenance Technician “Water Quality Woman”

Randall Duncan, Maintenance Technician “Welding Man”

Zach Clark, Maintenance Technician “Mechanic Man”

We are the behind-the-scenes group of people that have the responsibility to complete tasks that help other Zoo teams provide vital care for animals and enhance our guest’s experience. Our motto is a simple, “We’ll Do It!”

The next time you are at the Zoo enjoying the day and learning about the animals, think about how much work goes into providing a great experience for our guests. It truly is a daily, minute by minute, never ending function to keep a Zoo running and we do it all so that everyone can enjoy the company of our animals and learn about the Zoo’s important local and global conservation efforts. Our animals teach us things every day. We are always learning new ways to make things happen and we do whatever we can to help make adjustments or enhancements for the benefit of the animals you know and love.

I am truly proud of our maintenance team! Knowing that your experience was a great one makes us happy, because we know we had something to do with it. Next time you’re at the Zoo and you see us in our khaki uniform, stop and say “Hello!”

*SELECT PICTURES WERE TAKEN PRE-COVID



A CELEBRATION OF THE Operations

BY: ROBERT HOLT, OPERATIONS MANAGER

The Birmingham Zoo’s Operations Department includes several critical areas that affect not only you, our guests, but our employees and animals as well.

The Park Quality Team strives to raise our cleanliness standard each day so we can present a comfortable setting for you and your family. We work tirelessly to ensure that the Zoo grounds are clean, while also utilizing proper recycling and waste management tactics. Our team separates waste and recycling, which includes items ranging from printer cartridges to plastic bottles and yes, even animal waste.

The Rides Team evaluates all of our rides through daily multi-point inspection checklists. We enhance these daily inspections with additional weekly, monthly, and annual inspections to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for each guest, on every visit.

The Zoo Services Team facilitates event set-up and break down for everything from one-day meetings to months-long holiday events. This team also manages inventory and coordinates deliveries of supplies and equipment to various departments around the Zoo. These supplies help to ensure every area has the items needed to maintain their workspaces.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Zoo and our community with tough challenges. However, during these times, we continue to adapt and learn. Back in March, when the Zoo temporarily closed, the Operations Department switched our focus to re-opening in the safest way possible. We started evaluating our guest experience down to each individual touchpoint, including ATMs, benches, door handles, etc. We continued to update and enhance our cleaning practices as new CDC guidelines were issued, to consistently keep guests and Zoo staff safe. Operating procedures for our rides were also updated to include cleaning between ride operations, maintenance of appropriate social distancing, and limited capacities. Additionally, the one-way path and social distance reminders through the Zoo were implemented by our Operations Department to help keep you and the animals safe. In addition to guest safety and cleanliness, our teams developed contactless deliveries between departments internally to limit the employee-to-employee exposure across the Zoo. We continually work to keep our Animal Care Professionals safe while they care for the animals you know and love.

Think of the Operations Department as the heartbeat of your Zoo! You may not always think about your heart beating or how it is functioning, but you depend on it every day to keep you going. Similarly, while you don’t always see these team members around the Zoo, they are always there, striving to provide an experience that is safe, clean, and exciting for you and your families, which is truly something to celebrate. Whether you are gazing at Magdalena, the cotton-top tamarin, or recycling your empty water bottle, the Operations Department has played a part in your journey. Day in and day out, the Operations Department (and all of the Zoo) works hard to live through our mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*.



TEENS FOR 2020 Fundraising Campaign

This summer, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Birmingham Zoo's Teen Volunteers were unable to volunteer on grounds at the Zoo. In response, 12 dedicated students agreed to participate in the Teens for 2020 fundraising pilot program. Guided by the Development Department, the Teen Volunteers created their own fundraising videos to post to social media. They invited family and friends to join them in supporting the Birmingham Zoo's Emergency Animal Fund, which helps to provide food, healthcare, and wellbeing to the animals. Each volunteer's goal was \$50, which they quickly surpassed, raising a total of over \$1,000 in the first week!

We encouraged the Teens for 2020 to continue their efforts. These diligent students met weekly with the Zoo staff over video chat, gave updates, and discussed ideas for their next videos. After spending hours developing their video appeal, students emailed or posted to their favorite social media sites. All in all, the group raised over \$4,000 in four weeks' time. What an amazing feat! Thank you, Teen Volunteers, for helping the Birmingham Zoo.

If you are interested in becoming a teen volunteer, please visit the Birmingham Zoo [website](#).



Left to Right: Collin Howell, Volunteer Coordinator, Miriam Norman, Sophia Ruckman, Rebecca Howard, Maya Lundy, McCoy Ward, and Volunteer Manager Casey Hobbs.
Not pictured: Libby Brennan, Jackson Herron, and Morgan Scaife.

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Jump in a leaf pile

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Make an animal

Decorate with sticks and stones

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM THE ZOO!

The Birmingham Zoo is here to make your birthday one to remember! With a Virtual Birthday Greeting, you can meet your favorite animal from the comfort of your own home. For your special day, you can choose from pre-recorded or live options.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION, CLICK HERE!](#)



Birmingham Zoo Launches *Feed Your Animals* Fundraising Campaign

The Birmingham Zoo has announced the "Feed Your Animals: Give Today to Secure the Future" fundraising campaign with a goal to raise \$780,000 by January 31. Protective Life Corporation (Protective) jump-started the campaign by awarding a \$250,000 grant that will be combined with other matching gifts from businesses and leaders. These matching gifts are meant to encourage contributions to offset the Zoo's projected \$2.5 million operating loss at year-end. Gifts made by the public will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$390,000.

"In these challenging times, we must invest in what makes Birmingham great. The Birmingham Zoo is a beloved asset in our city and offers a place where families can spend time outdoors, even during the pandemic," said Rich Bielen, President and Chief Executive Officer, Protective. "As a community, it is important that we come together to protect and advance the Zoo's future, and we hope our contribution will inspire the gifts of other Birmingham residents."

Joining forces to kick off the Zoo's Feed Your Animals campaign are Alabama Power Foundation and Phyllis and Larry Wojciechowski contributing \$50,000 each with additional funding from Daniel Foundation of Alabama, James Milton and Sallie R. Johnson Foundation, Altec, Inc., and Larry and Mike Kondel.

"The Zoo is the home for these animals. They must be cared for and cannot wait patiently until this crisis is over," Chris Pfefferkorn, President & CEO emphasized. "We are asking the public to help provide critical support through the purchase of Zoo Memberships and now by making a campaign gift that will be matched with the \$250,000 grant from Protective Life Foundation and the additional matching funds."

Operating costs for the Zoo amount to \$30,000 a day to provide food and vital care for its 550+ animals, including many endangered species. Even with a Payroll Protection Program loan that was received earlier this year, some employees had to be laid off, and the number of days the Zoo is open to the public was reduced to cut expenses." Pfefferkorn says, "We are extremely grateful for the support of our community." He adds, "Please consider signing up for or renewing your Zoo Membership and making a one-time or recurring donation to the 'Feed Your Animals' campaign at birminghamzoo.com/donate. All of these efforts will help the Zoo cut the anticipated shortfall."

Vice President of Development Karen Carroll adds, "With this campaign, your gift of \$5 becomes \$10 and \$100 becomes \$200. Gifts of all sizes are important and make a tremendous difference. Stock gifts, IRA distributions, and planned gifts are also valuable options. We have a long way to go, but I feel confident because I believe in our community's generosity and its love for the animals."

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