

# Animal Tracks

**What Does It Take To  
Transport a Rhino?**

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## **+ ANIMAL ARTISTS**

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### **It Takes a Village**

An inside look at large animal  
health care procedures with help  
from across the globe





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

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## LETTER FROM The Director

Dear Members,

We hope you have enjoyed your Zoo as we have begun to recover from the pandemic in 2022. What a fantastic year this has been welcoming back members, visitors, and events on a greater scale! Your Zoo continues to grow our programs and advance the well-being of the animals that reside at the Zoo. Beginning this year, our amazing Zoo staff and volunteers along with support from our board of directors, junior board, and partners—have been working hard to improve your Zoo so that everyone has an enjoyable and safe time. Through their efforts, we are working to ensure your Zoo is a place where memories are made for generations to come.

We are grateful for the amazing support YOU, our members, and the community have shown. 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*, you will some of the amazing things that have been happening around your Zoo and meet some of your Zoo's new animal family members. I encourage you to invite your friends to experience your Zoo and see first-hand why you are a passionate Member! Thank you for the continued support of your Zoo and I look forward to welcoming you to your Zoo in 2023!

*Chris Pfefferkorn*

Chris Pfefferkorn  
President & CEO



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# What does it take TRANSPORT A RHINO?

BY: ANNIE KASPAR, ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER, TRAILS OF AFRICA

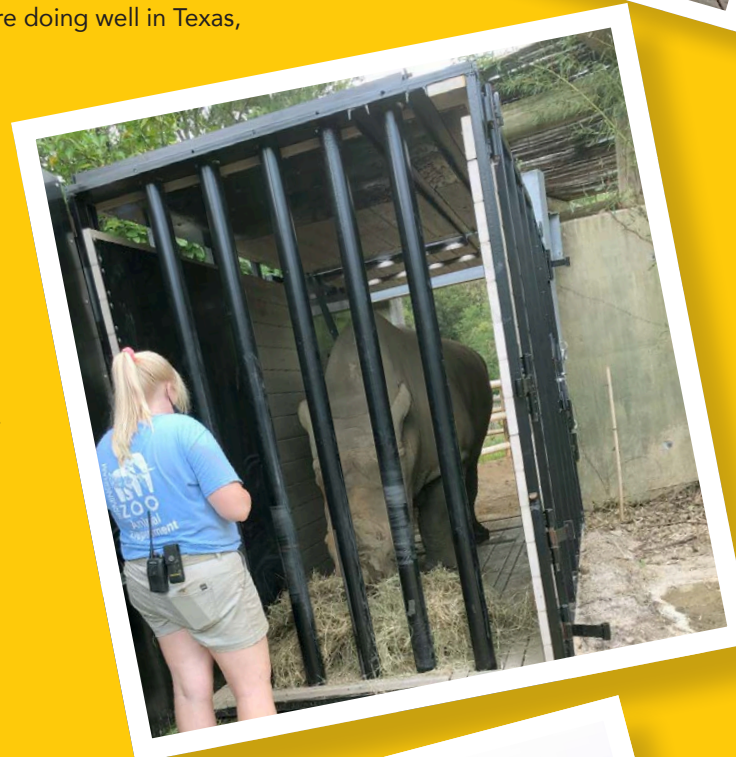


If you visited the Birmingham Zoo before the fall of 2021, you may remember our crash of white rhinoceros. The Birmingham Zoo was home to three white rhinoceros – Max, Laptop, and Ajabu – for close to 9 years. They were here with a breeding recommendation with the hopes of one day reproducing. Unfortunately, our white rhinoceros were never successful at their breeding attempts. Recently, studies have shown that white rhinoceros are more successful at breeding when housed in large herds versus smaller herds. Knowing this information and evaluating our space, we determined that we may be a better fit for housing black rhinoceros, a different species of African rhinoceros. Black rhinos are mostly solitary in the wild, and usually only come together for breeding. With large gates between each habitat, we can manage black rhinos and put them together for breeding – how they would live in the wild.

Through the Species Survival Plan (SSP), the white rhinoceros were given a new home. All three of them were able to move to a facility in Texas, and are doing well living in pastures that are hundreds of acres in size. You might be wondering how an animal that weighs 4,500 pounds would be able to safely move across the country? The Trails of Africa team worked with each rhino for several months before their transport to get them ready for the big day!

Since Max, Laptop, and Ajabu had lived at the Birmingham Zoo for 13 years, they were used to their daily routines, and we knew a move across the country would be a big change for them. We wanted to set them up for success and do the best we could to get them ready for their move. We borrowed specially built rhinoceros crates from other facilities and placed them by a large sliding gate on their habitat. Each morning, the team shifted the rhinoceros onto the habitat next to the large sliding gate. The trainer called the rhinoceros over to the big sliding gate and offer them hay, one of their favorite diet items. The trainer stationed the rhinoceros by the gate and another Animal Care Professional would open the gate. The team started by opening the gate and offering the rhinoceros food at the very front of the crate. This way, the rhinoceros could see the crate and get comfortable being next to it. We made slow approximations each day, and moved the hay pile a little further into the crate as the rhinoceros became more comfortable. In a few short weeks, the rhinoceros were loading all the way into the crate and eating their entire breakfast in there! Our main goal was to get the rhinoceros comfortable in the smaller space, that way when moving day arrived, it would be a normal part of their daily routine. When moving day arrived, each rhinoceros loaded into the crate voluntarily and had a safe trip to Texas. We miss having the white rhinoceros at the Birmingham Zoo, but we know they are doing well in Texas, and hope they will successfully breed in the future!

Since the white rhinoceros left in December 2021, we have been hard at work preparing to welcome a male and female black rhino to the Birmingham Zoo! With the opportunity of having an empty barn after their departure, we took full advantage of it and worked to make renovations for the arrival of the black rhinoceros. Some of our renovations include painting the barn, adding rubberized flooring to the indoor stalls, improving our perimeter fences for better guest viewing, and converting the previous hippopotamus habitat into an additional rhinoceros yard with a clay wallow for the rhinoceros to use on hot summer days. We are all excited to welcome a new species of rhinoceros into our collection, and we can't wait for everyone to meet them once they are here and acclimated to their new routine!





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# A Tale of Alabama's Hidden Treasure THROUGH Q & A

BY: ANNE KRICHTEN, MANAGER OF LEARNING

**Q: You went on one of the first PiCA grant trips this year. What can you share about the research grant program and your trip?**

The Zoo uses endowed funds from donors Phyllis and Larry Wojciechowski to support employee PiCA projects - a two-to-three-week paid opportunity for employees to turn Passion into Conservation Action locally, regionally, or internationally. Since 2013, the Zoo awarded over 60 PiCA grants to Zoo employees to travel the world in pursuit of their passions. The opportunity is available to any full-time employee who has been at the Zoo for at least one year. As a result, employees are left more fulfilled, inspired in their work, and able to support Zoo operations in a new way. I supported repopulation efforts of freshwater species such as mussels and snails from the start of our state's river system, through the state, and also studied estuaries, wetlands, and bogs at the coast with particular attention to the soil, water, and other conditions needed to support the balance of aquatic life that gives our state such value.

**Q: You chose to stay in Alabama rather than travel the world. Why?**

I chose to stay because I wanted to celebrate the amazing biodiversity we have right here. Alabama is the most biologically diverse state east of the Mississippi, boasting 3.6 and 0.5 million acres of wetlands and freshwater systems respectively. It is ranked first for diversity of freshwater mussels, fishes, snails, crayfish, and turtles. Despite this, it also has 73, 13, and 19 federally listed species of freshwater mussels, snails, and fishes respectively; over two dozen formal petitions to list more species of gastropods, mussels, and fish in the next 4-5 years; and it has been historically underfunded in related conservation. Not to mention, the geologic and oceanic history of our state promoted huge diversity within our fossil record too! We have so much to learn here. Our aquatic biodiversity is what I am most proud of when I think of living here, but it also needs our support, so that is why I focused my research here.



**Q: When did you feel the most awe during your funded time?**

I took a trip with the Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center to the very beginning of our Mobile and Coosa watersheds. (The Mobile Bay Watershed covers two-thirds of Alabama – roughly 45,000 square miles.) We were returning mussels to their home after helping to repopulate the species. They were some of the rarest species on the planet, only living in an 8-mile section of one river. Around the most pristine landscape were bald eagles, muskrats, more snails than I could count, and a huge variety of crawfish. I can't describe how special the place felt or how lucky I felt just to be there. While this was the start of the watershed, it was also the start of such important work. The mussels themselves went back, some with trackers on their shells, placed ever so carefully where the substrate was just right to become a home.

**Q: You mentioned repopulating species. How does that work?**

It starts with those momma mussels. Scientists snorkel in search of up to 6 females (because they are so rare) old enough that have gills enlarged with eggs. They will gently open the shell to check, and back in the lab, use water to flush out tens of thousands of eggs from each female. The eggs look like grains of sand in the water or like quinoa or little jellyfish under the microscope. Each mussel has a specific fish that it pairs up with in the wild. Naturally, the female mussels can stick out a lure or an appendage that looks like a smaller fish to attract a larger one. Once close, the mussel will release its eggs or even clamp onto the fish to do so. In the lab, the water filled with mussel eggs is poured into a system with fish in individual chambers. The eggs attach to the gills of the fish, and after a few weeks, when the baby mussels are developed more, they fall off and get collected by scientists. Those mussels could spend years at the facility growing in one of the ponds until they are ready to be tagged and released back into the very specific place their mothers came from. Most of the mussels being raised can only be returned to one or up to three locations, because that is all they are naturally found in. When there is success, it's celebrated. Recently, one restocked population was found breeding on its own.

**Q: What are some stories you can share about the species or places being protected?**

One of the species of mussel being raised is only found in one area of one river in Alabama. It switched to a host fish that lives in the banks and grassy areas where water may only be an inch deep. This makes them incredibly hard to find. They change from purple to brown to yellow as they grow and are an example of how important it is to continue to study species for changes in behavior and to protect habitat and stream banks as much as we protect the species themselves. Another mussel group being raised is from a mother with a special orange lure. Exactly half of her offspring had her orange lure and the others had a fish lure, so new babies are being studied to understand genetic inheritance of traits and behaviors.





# KIDS KORNER

We can celebrate all of the plants and animals that live in special estuaries, wetlands, and bogs in Alabama any time!

**Think you can identify which plants would like to live in a drier bog and not a wet marsh or swamp?**

Gulf Coast pitcher plant bogs are among the most diverse habitats for flowering plants in North America. The plants that live there enjoy the acidity and minimal moisture in the soil and thrive with very few nutrients immediately available. To keep an area sunny, scientists will carefully allow fire to burn any taller plants away. Learn more about fire management and see pitcher plants up close at your next visit to the Birmingham Zoo and in the ponds at the Zoos entrance.

**A - Bog Button    B - Cattail**

**C - Cord Grass    D - Duckweed**

**E - Milkwort    F - Pitcher**

**G - Sundew    H - Swamp Lily**

Answers: A, E, F, G



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# ANIMAL ARTISTS

BY: AMY TOMAN – ASSISTANT CURATOR OF ALABAMA WILDS & TRAILS OF AFRICA, AMANADA POLSEN – ZOOLOGICAL MANAGER OF ALABAMA WILDS AND PRIMARY BEAR TRAINER

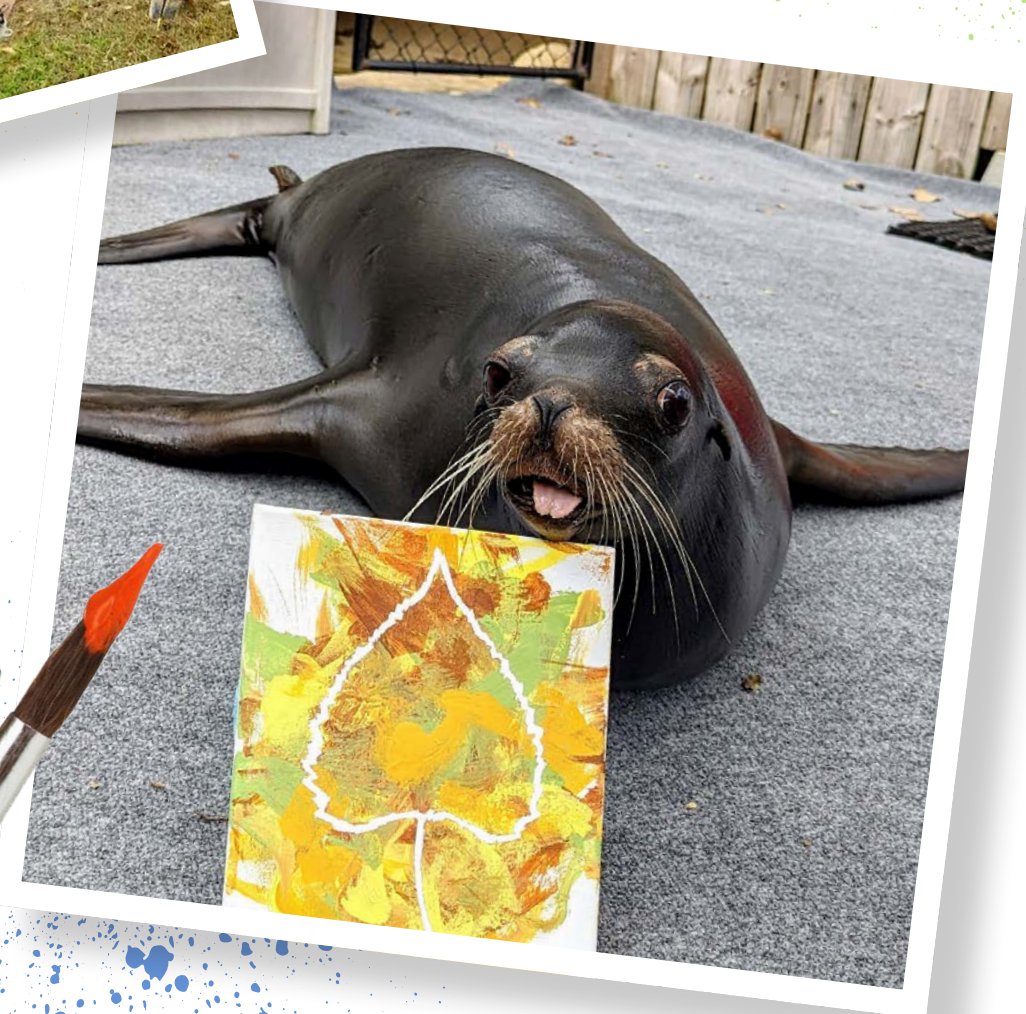
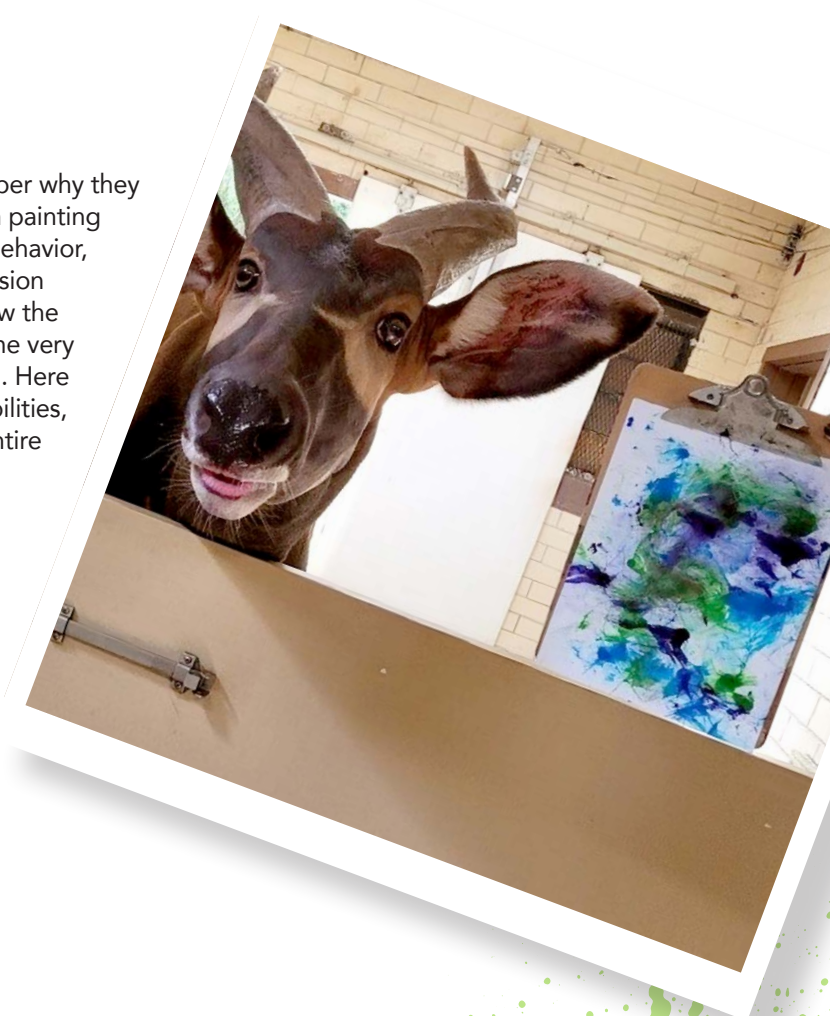
Did you know that some of our resident animals have artistic talents? Many of our animals at the Birmingham Zoo participate in painting sessions. They can paint in various ways such as holding the paint brush themselves, by blowing into a tube that has paint inside, or even licking the canvas! Don't worry though – all paint is animal safe and approved by our veterinarians here at the Zoo. We use paints such as child friendly non-toxic tempera paint or food coloring.

Painting is an exceptionally fun activity, for both the animals and their caretakers that allow us to incorporate ways that the animals can voluntarily participate in their own health care. The variety of colors, textures, and sessions help to enrich the animals' cognitive function. Mental stimulation is a very important part of caring for our animals' wellbeing. Many of the animals have trained behaviors that assist us in the process such as cues for picking up an item, holding an item, moving their body in a certain direction, and allowing physical touch from caretakers. These same behaviors may help them to participate in a physical exam with a veterinarian during their annual health assessments like when we visit a doctor.

One of our favorite artists are the bears! They are a highly intelligent species who ace all new training goals... but how did we help them learn to paint? Bety and Sassy have a special apparatus that attaches to the mesh of their holding or habitat, one ½ of the apparatus sticks through the mesh so the bears have access to it, the other ½ sticks out on the keeper side of the mesh and

is designed to hold a paint brush. The bears are always up for a training session and tend to get particularly excited when they see the painting apparatus. When the apparatus is being attached to the mesh, another trainer will have the bear in training lie down and hold there until they are cued to paint. This helps support the bears' keeping their attention on the trainer no matter the distraction which can be helpful for procedures or even if there is just work going on in the area and trainers need to get the bears attention. Once the apparatus is attached with the paint brush in place with paint on it, the trainer will cue the bear to paint. Using their mouth, the bear will manipulate the apparatus which will cause paint to hit the canvas that a Animal Care Professional is holding on the outside of the mesh. The trainer will then bridge and recall the bear back to the original start location and reward for doing the correct behavior.

This helps support a recall behavior, where the bears should remember why they were previously rewarded. The bears tend to get very focused when painting and sometimes that recall can be difficult. By working through this behavior, the bears are encouraged and heavily rewarded for making the decision to change their mind and leave what they are so focused on to follow the direction of the trainer. Painting with the bears helps encourage some very important skills and has the added perk of a nice take away painting. Here at Your Birmingham Zoo, Bety and Sassy have very unique artistic abilities, Bety tends to make a lot of circles with longer lines and cover the entire canvas in her paintings and Sassy tends to have shorter lines in all directions and only covers some of the canvas.







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# UNTAMED SUPPORTERS OF THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

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Bulwagi



Dr. Steenkamp  
evaluating the tusk



The Veterinary team  
placing IV catheters and  
hooking up monitoring  
equipment



Equipment setup for  
Bulwagi's procedure



Oliver



Drs. Vaughn and  
Dismukes starting  
surgery on Oliver

# IT TAKES a Village

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

Performing veterinary procedures on large animals often requires help from many individuals. In one busy week earlier this year our veterinary team requested the help of folks from literally around the globe.

If you are familiar with Bulwagi, our African elephant and oldest bull, you may recall that his single tusk had a crack in it that progressed despite efforts to stop the crack from growing. When it seemed to cause him some discomfort (he began packing it with mud and touching it with his trunk), we made the decision to extract it. Drs. Gerhard Steenkamp and Adrian Tordiffe, from the University of Pretoria in South Africa, made the trip across the ocean for the procedure. They have worked together on numerous tusk extractions, with Dr. Tordiffe ensuring the elephant is maintained at a good level of anesthesia while Dr. Steenkamp has the physical job of the actual tusk extraction.

Preparations for this procedure started months in advance to be certain everything went smoothly. It was very important that when we anesthetized Bulwagi he laid down on his right side, with the broken left tusk up. It is not easy to reposition a 12,000 pound elephant! Our Elephant Animal Care Professionals worked with Bulwagi regularly so that he was comfortable having ropes placed on him that helped us guide him down onto the correct side as the anesthetic drugs took effect.

Our veterinary team made certain we had all of the supplies we could need for the anesthesia and organized it all based on function. We had totes for intubation, so we could breathe for him if needed, totes for placement of IV catheters in veins in both the ear (for giving anesthetic and blood pressure drugs as well as monitoring blood pressure) and the leg (for giving intravenous fluids), and totes for monitors to measure vital signs, among others.

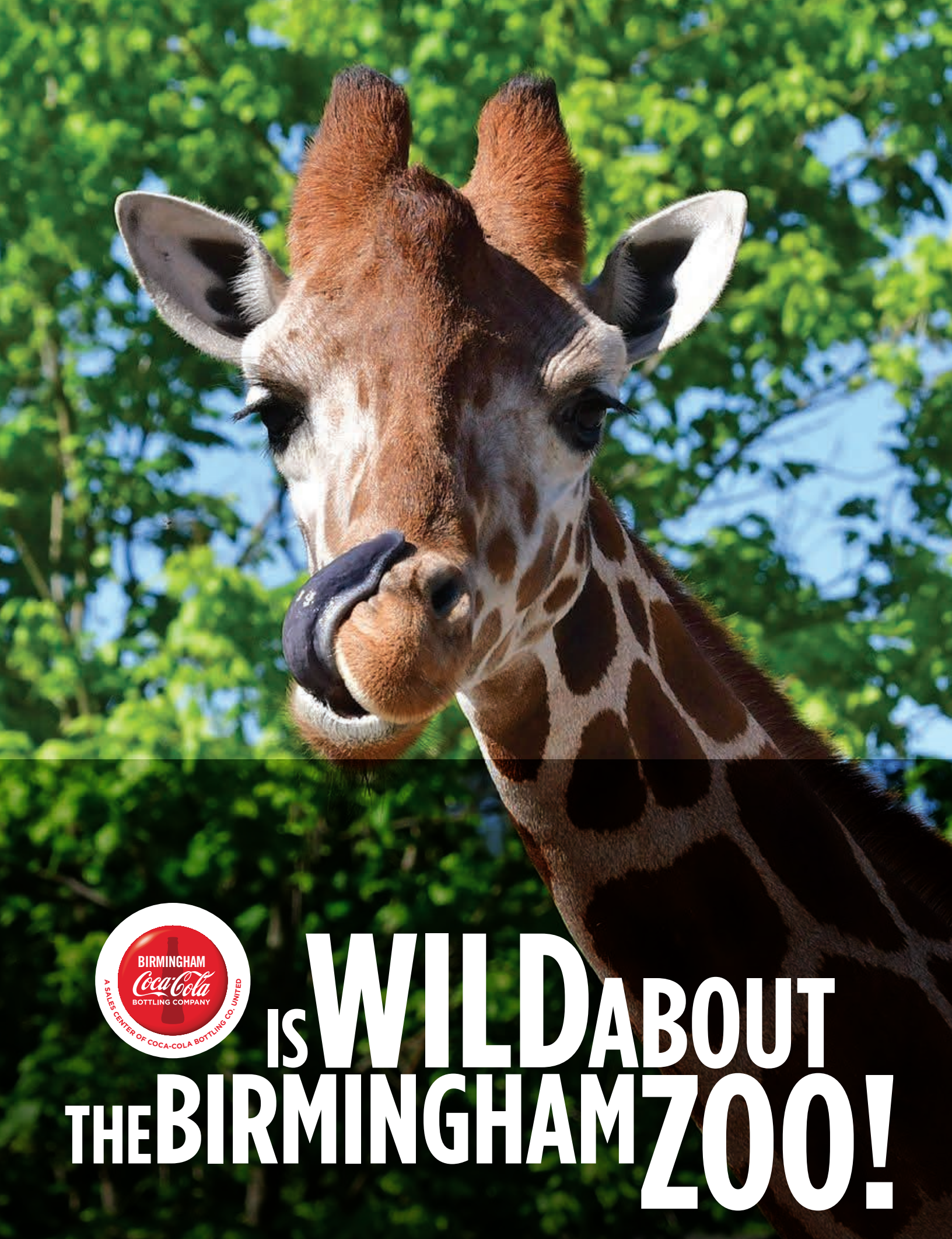
Despite all of the preparation, we knew we could use more hands. We invited both Veterinary and Animal Care Professionals from other AZA institutions around the country. Everyone that came was assigned a task, and the cooperative effort led to a smooth anesthesia and successful extraction, with the total procedure time being just over 3 hours. Once the tusk was removed and anesthetic reversal agents were given, Bulwagi was standing and eating within minutes, like nothing happened!

Just 4 days later we moved on to a slightly smaller, though equally challenging animal to anesthetize, Oliver, our male orangutan. A few days before Bulwagi's procedure our Primate/South America Animal Care Professionals noticed a swelling on the right side of Oliver's scrotum. During a training session, we were able to ultrasound it and found what appeared to be a testicular tumor. Oliver is the second oldest male Sumatran orangutan in the AZA population and is on several medications for heart disease. Our veterinary team wanted to be able to focus on the anesthesia, knowing it could be risky, so we reached out to veterinary surgeons at Veterinary Specialists of Birmingham. Drs. Paul Vaughn and David Dismukes volunteered to come to the Zoo and perform the surgery to remove the tumor.

Oliver is trained to accept injections, so his primary trainer was able to administer an injection of anesthetics and then, similar to with Bulwagi, our veterinary team intubated him, placed multiple intravenous catheters, and hooked up monitoring equipment. Once he was at a good level of anesthesia, Drs. Vaughn and Dismukes removed a large mass, later found to be a benign tumor. Oliver recovered well and continues to do great!

These procedures are a great example of how important the teamwork between our Veterinary and Animal Care teams is, as well as between the Zoo and our amazing colleagues around the world!

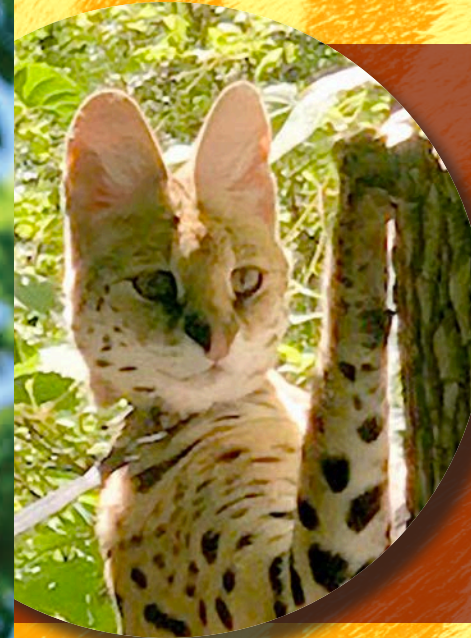




is **WILD ABOUT**  
**THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO!**

# CREATURE FEATURES

BY: BECKY DUENOW, ANIMAL CARE PROFESSIONAL, AMBASSADOR ANIMALS



## Sarabi

If you have been to an event or a Wildlife show at the Birmingham Zoo, chances are you have seen our African serval Sarabi. Sarabi has been at the Birmingham Zoo since she was 3 days old and was hand raised by Ambassador Staff. Even though she has been around humans her whole life, don't let that fool you, she is most definitely not a pet! **African servals are a small species of African wild cat** that have awesome adaptations that allow them to be very successful predators. Believe it or not, Servals are more successful hunters than lions! Lions only have around a 30% success rate when hunting prey, but a serval has 50% success. African servals are the second fastest cat, second to the Cheetah with an average speed of 45 mph for short distances. They have longest legs compared to their body length of any cat. They can jump 10 feet straight up in the air and pounce on something 13 feet away. With these adaptations no wonder they are such great hunters! She has called the Zoo her home for 10 years now and is an excellent ambassador to her wild counterparts.

## Muerto

Meet our newest member of the Ambassador department! **Muerto is a black vulture** which is a bird species native to Alabama. He came to us from the Southeastern Raptor Center, an education and rehabilitation center for birds of prey. Black vultures are incredibly intelligent, social creatures. Despite the center's best efforts to take every precaution to ensure he could be released, Muerto saw through the protective clothing and was too habituated to humans for a successful life in nature. Muerto is a fast learner and has been working with his animal care staff so he can come out to see everyone.



## Woma

Even though his name isn't the most creative, **Woma the Woma python is one awesome snake!!** Woma pythons are from Australia and live in burrows. They are ambush predators that use their skinny tail as a lure to attract prey. Once they have successfully lured their prey, they use constriction to subdue their food, which they utilize to hunt a wide variety of prey including venomous snakes. At the Birmingham Zoo all of our animals have the best veterinary care possible, including our reptiles. Woma had a chronic condition in his eye that was causing discomfort. The veterinary staff along with a specialist removed his eye and it healed quickly. Because of his eyebrows it's hard to tell the eye is missing and he is able to go about his life pain free! Snakes all over the world and right here in Alabama are a very important form of pest control. The Ambassador animal staff loves taking Woma out to programs to teach the importance of all snakes!



# LOOKING FOR MORE WAYS TO 'GO GREEN'?

The Birmingham Zoo Green Team is here to help!

Cooler weather is here and that's perfect for pumpkin patches and leaf peeping. With the change in seasons, it's also a great time to think about energy efficiency as the temperatures begin to drop.

One of the first steps to take for fall energy efficiency is to think about how to keep your living spaces warm while keeping your energy use low. One of the easiest ways to do this is to put the sun to work for you! This is the perfect time to leave your blinds and curtains open to catch the warmth of the sun, and heat up your rooms naturally. But don't forget to close those same blinds and curtains when the sun goes down. You'll want to keep that daytime heat trapped in your house to warm you through the cool fall nights. Also, if you have ceiling fans in your rooms, don't forget to switch their direction to clockwise. This way, your fan will push the warm air that's risen to ceiling height back down to your level, helping you keep your heating system from running too often.

If you enjoy putting up holiday decorations, don't forget to use LED lights. These bulbs use up to 90 percent less power than traditional bulbs, plus they can last three times longer than regular incandescent bulbs. That's a huge savings, plus it means you can have even more decorations for less energy!

While you're planning your energy-efficient season, don't forget to come to your Zoo to enjoy Glow Wild 2022. "Tea", our electric Red Diamond Express train, would love to take you on an energy-efficient ride!

**Remember: every little bit counts!**



## A FAMILY'S LIFETIME OF LOVE FOR THEIR BIRMINGHAM ZOO

The Collat and Goedecke Families exemplify those who have, over a lifetime, deepened their true love and adoration for their Birmingham Zoo. This is what made them the perfect Honorary Chairs for your Zoo's new 2022 signature gala, *Wild at Heart: Rhino's Crash\**, held Thursday, September 8. Thanks to their leadership, along with event co-chairs Rosemary Alexander, Stephanie Cooper and Dr. Anthony C. Hood, the Zoo's largest annual fundraising event (a re-visioning of past ZooGalas and ZooRendezvous) was THE event of the season!

*\*Did you know a group of rhinos is called a "crash"?*

Nancy Collat Goedecke, the Zoo's Board of Directors Chair, recalls visiting the Zoo with her parents and siblings every weekend as a youngster. They would ride the train with its familiar whistle and see the monkeys at Monkey Island. "I have had the gift of seeing our Zoo through the eyes of a child, a parent, and now a grandparent – all the while making lifelong memories. And now, seeing my family's ongoing involvement and support of our Zoo (Nancy's daughter-in-law, Jayna, served as an impactful Jr. Board Member and past Gala Co-Chair) is equally rewarding. It is a wonderful gift!"

"Our Zoo offers a unique way of getting up close to wildlife. And it does such a wonderful job of teaching our guests about the important roles these animals play in our world. The Zoo continually strives to educate how each of us can support the Zoo's mission of *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*. This is critical work and everyone should be given the opportunity to learn more about how they can personally make a positive difference in saving wild species and wild places."

When looking to the future, Nancy hopes that our community leaders and elected officials will continue to see the value their Birmingham Zoo brings to the region and commit to supporting their Zoo so it continues to be a special place for generations to come. Goedecke said, "It is my hope that we will see greater levels of financial support from the municipalities whose residents benefit so greatly."

The Zoo Nancy remembers from her childhood has matured into an amazingly beautiful venue with extensive green space, emphasis on conservation, and educational interactive opportunities throughout. "The Zoo is so well done; it's truly a gem for the city and the state," she adds. "The Zoo's current staff and leadership are fantastic! They are constantly thinking of the Zoo's future, focusing on continued improvements, education programs, and conservation efforts, all with the main priority of animal welfare. It is an honor to work with this team," Goedecke shared, adding, "We are not done yet. Our Birmingham Zoo is a work in progress. There are many great things to come!"

Please mark your calendars for Friday, September 22, 2023 and plan to attend our ZooGala *Wild at Heart* fundraiser (formerly ZooGala/ZooRendezvous). All proceeds will benefit the Support your Zoo's Animals fund.



The Collat/Goedecke Families



L to R: Presenting Partner First Horizon Area President Alex Morton, Co-Chair Rosemary Alexander, Zoo President/CEO Chris Pfefferkorn, Mayor Randall Woodfin, Co-Chair Stephanie Cooper, Honorary Chair Nancy Goedecke, Co-Chair Anthony C. Hood



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# CHOO-CHOO AROUND THE ZOO!

Take a ride around the Birmingham Zoo on the newest Red Diamond Express train, "Tea". The new Red Diamond Express is one-of-a-kind and now features an integrated audiovisual program that presents educational messages, conservation information, and animal facts for the duration of your ride. The train is also powered by a lithium-ion battery and zero emissions and eco-friendly operations.

The Red Diamond Express was made in Wichita, Kansas by Chance Rides and took 32 weeks to build, resulting in a family-friendly adventure for your next visit to the Birmingham Zoo. From Trails of Africa to the Children's Zoo and everything in between the Birmingham Zoo features animals from all over the world, with educational signage highlighting the Zoo's amazing animal care, conservation initiatives, and Species Survival Plans. Guests from around the Southeast are invited to see the many animals at the Birmingham Zoo, play at the splash pad, ride the Red Diamond Express Trains "Coffee" and "Tea", and so much more.

Chris Pfefferkorn, Birmingham Zoo President & CEO, emphasized, "We couldn't do what we do without partners like Red Diamond Coffee & Tea. As a non-profit, we count on investments like this from our community to ensure our guests have the most enjoyable and impactful experiences possible relating to wild animals and wild places. We're especially eager to continue enhancing our Zoo with environmentally-friendly additions like this beautiful, new train, helping us live out our Mission: Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World."

The Birmingham Zoo welcomes visitors year-round to come to enjoy a day with family and friends making great memories with our amazing animals, welcoming staff and exciting rides like the Red Diamond Express.





# WILD ABOUT ART!

BY: CHANAH FALLIN, SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Home not only to various amazing animals, the Birmingham Zoo also features larger-than-life murals by Birmingham local, Shawn Fitzwater (Fitz), the artist and founder of Fitz Signs and Murals. Shawn got his start as one of Birmingham's most well-known muralists when he decided to post a progression video of his work painting a mural in his children's bedroom.

From there, it caught the attention of a local business owner, and word spread through the community. "Since starting my business I've always taken on anything and everything so that I can learn and experience many different styles and mediums in art. I always say I started out as a business owner before an actual artist, sure I had some natural skills and talent but learning most of it along the way. Pretty much everything that I do is commissioned so I hardly know what's coming next week to week which keeps my job interesting, challenging at times, and fresh." Now his work can be seen throughout the Magic City, giving that magic touch to visitors and Birmingham Community alike!

Our Zoo features a unique style of a mural by Mr. Fitzwater. "The 'low-poly' style was actually developed by video game designers. The idea derived from there was to turn regular images into geometric art. Since creating a few I've been told that there are programs that will actually automatically create the shapes for you however I choose to pick my lines and shapes myself which is more organic and you're actually seeing something my mind created and the decisions I made to complete the piece." Fitz's animal murals create both a family-friendly and eye-catching design that makes the Birmingham Zoo a wildly wonderful place to visit. The vibrant colors draw a viewer's eye, creating a whimsical and intriguing representation of the animals who call the Birmingham Zoo their home.

You can catch a glimpse of our larger-than-life turtle on the reptiles building, our lovable red panda on the predators building, and our majestic secretary bird over in the aviary! Ready to catch a ride on our Red Diamond Express? Be sure to snap a pic of his latest creation, the Red Diamond Express mural on your way to take a ride!

When not at the Zoo, you can find more of Fitz Signs and Murals all through the city. Be sure to follow him @FitzSigns&Murals on Instagram and swing by the Birmingham Zoo to see some of these outstanding creations!





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Here are some “wild animals” in their natural habitat, enjoying the Birmingham Zoo!

## LEARNING HAS A WILD SIDE AT THE ZOO!

BY AMY RUTHERFORD, VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION

When people think of education, books, pencils, and desks may come to mind. Here at the Birmingham Zoo education means using all your senses to explore the natural world with our trained educators touring the Zoo, doing lab experiments, and meeting our resident animals. Let's take a look at some of the ways we help students and teachers learn here at the Zoo:

### ZOO SCHOOL

Zoo School is the Zoo's signature, award-winning education program. In partnership with Birmingham City Schools, each year we welcome around one-third of district seventh graders for a week-long learning experience. Led by Zoo educators, students learn all about wildlife, both locally and around the world, and actions they can take to conserve biodiversity. From meeting one of the Zoo's ambassador snakes to video chatting live with conservationists working in Zimbabwe, Zoo School gives students an opportunity to connect with nature and learn about Zoo and conservation careers. With generous support from sponsors, we are working to expand the reach of Zoo School over the next few years.

### VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Sometimes it's not possible for schools or other groups to visit the Zoo, but that's not a barrier to learning! We offer Digital Discovery and Digital Field Trip programs where a Zoo educator comes to you live on Zoom. Digital Discovery programs include pre and post-materials to get the most out of your program. Live from our Zoo Studio, educators lead a standard-aligned lesson with interaction through Zoom video and chat. Ambassador animals often make appearances in these programs.

Digital Field trips bring your group out of our studio and into the Zoo with a virtual tour of one of our exhibit areas. With standards-aligned offerings for every grade level K-12, there's a virtual field trip option for everyone!

### CAMPS

When school is out, Zoo Camp is in! Each summer, fall, winter, and spring break the Zoo hosts weeklong day camp experiences for school-age kids. Campers spend time exploring the Zoo, meeting our resident animals, learning through play, and, for our older campers, working alongside our Zoo keepers to care for animals. Campers get the Zoo to themselves when the Zoo is closed to the public on Mondays and Tuesdays and get a premium visit experience riding the train or carousel and feeding animals where able.

### TEACHERS' NIGHT

Each fall the Zoo welcomes area educators to enjoy a special night of professional development and fun. This unique opportunity includes special animal experiences, door prizes, keeper chats, and shares about the programs and classroom resources the Zoo has to offer. Teachers can even earn CEU credit.

If you're interested in learning more or registering for any of the education programs shared here, visit our website at <https://www.birminghamzoo.com/education/> for full details, dates, and registration information. You can also reach our team at [Education@birminghamzoo.com](mailto:Education@birminghamzoo.com)

## ZOO TEACHER SPOTLIGHT ' ELI RODDA

My favorite animal is the Stoptlight Parrotfish!

The best thing about working at your Zoo is learning about all sorts of animals.

My favorite sweet treat is ice cream, especially cookie dough.

When I'm not teaching at the Zoo, I love to go hiking!

My Advice: Make sure all of the trash you have always gets recycled (if you have to- thrown away) or taken out with you! Never leave trash on the ground, no matter what. Even better, help pick up other people's trash, a great place to start is at your local park!





# A PHOTOGRAPH, A MEMORY, AND A LEGACY

An Interview with Zoo Docent, Linda Barnard



Meet Linda Barnard - Member, Docent, and Donor

A cherished photograph reminds Linda of how her lifelong love affair with zoos began with a visit to the Philadelphia Zoo when she was a child. This 120-mile round trip was a big deal for a family that rarely ventured more than 10 miles from home.

When she and her husband, Bob, first moved to Alabama, joining the Zoo was a priority. In the years preceding his passing, they spent many wonderful afternoons roaming the grounds and took great pleasure in feeding the giraffes at the Kiwanis Giraffe Encounter (KGE). As a new widow, joining the ranks of volunteers was an important decision. "While I was grieving my loss, I knew it was important to remain socially engaged and to find a sense of purpose. The Zoo has given me all of that and more," Linda said. These days, you will often see her working as a Lead Volunteer on the KGE giraffe deck, regaling guests with her passion for what she affectingly calls her "tall and furry friends".

When you are taking photos of your family at the Zoo, don't be surprised if Linda strolls up and insists that you get in the shot yourself. "The old photo of my family inspires me to want all of our guests to have at least one picture to remind them how much fun they had just being together at the Zoo," she said.

Linda recently made the decision to include the Birmingham Zoo in her estate planning. The Beeson Wildlife Legacy recognizes those who have made lasting gifts to the Birmingham Zoo through their bequest or other planned gift. The name honors Mrs. Lucille S. Beeson, a lawyer and philanthropist known for her incredible generosity, and for whom the Beeson Way walkway around Henley Park was named. She thoughtfully donated the Zoo's first planned gift, demonstrating her abiding love for all animals. "For me, it was as simple as designating the Birmingham Zoo as the beneficiary on one of my investment accounts," she said. Her gift will help future generations to continue to engage and create memories.

If you are interested in learning how you can become a volunteer, please go to

<https://www.birminghamzoo.com/get-involved/volunteer/>

If you would like to include the Birmingham Zoo in your will or estate plan, please contact Karen Carroll, Volunteer, Planned Giving Officer, at [kcarroll@birminghamzoo.com](mailto:kcarroll@birminghamzoo.com) or 205-516-4218. The Beeson Wildlife Legacy was set up to recognize those individuals who have made planned gifts to the Birmingham Zoo, Inc.

## Meet the NEW NEIGHBORS

### Meet Kodo

In July, your Zoo welcomed a two-year-old, female Himalayan red panda named Kodo to our Zoo family! Kodo arrived from the Buttonwood Park Zoo in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Kodo joins us as a part of our ongoing collaboration with the Red Panda Species Survival Plan (SSP). The program is in place to ensure that there is a genetically diverse population of species in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited zoos and aquariums in North America. Through the Red Panda SSP, Kodo has been recommended to breed with current Zoo resident red panda, Gizmo.

The endangered Himalayan red pandas are an arboreal species found in high-elevation forests in Nepal, central China, and northern Myanmar. Kodo and Gizmo have several unique adaptations such as their red coat, which is the exact color as the moss found on the trees where they live. While they have no paw pads, the soles of their feet are covered with fur to help them grip trees, and their long, sharp claws help them climb. They are one of the few animals that can climb down a tree head-first! Their long tail helps them maintain their balance and is used as a blanket in cold temperatures.

Birmingham Zoo is passionate about our strong commitment to the sustainability of red pandas. We are also proud of the work we do for red panda conservation, including our partnership with the Red Panda Network, which works to protect the remaining 2,500 red pandas currently in the wild.

**Come say "Hello" to Kodo and Gizmo on habitat in the Predator Building!**



### Meet Josh

This past spring, we welcomed a young male African lion named Josh. He came to us from the San Antonio Zoo and is 7 years old.

The African lion is one of the four roaring cats. Their roar, which can be heard more than 5 miles away, is used to communicate with other lions and to help mark territory, not to scare prey. The thick manes on adult males serve as protection for the cats when fighting over prides or when defending territory. They spend an average of 15 to 22 hours a day resting and sleeping.

**Guests are invited to meet Josh in his home at the Predator's habitat!**

### Meet Baron

Named for the Birmingham baseball team that provided the familiar red clay used in their habitat, flamingo chick "Baron" hatched in the nest on 6/29/2022 with fluffy white down feathers. Baron has spent the last several months bonding with his parents, learning to feed himself, and growing more independent. Baron is currently going through several stages as he grows into an adult with long, stilt-like legs and full pink plumage. Now nearly the same height as the adults in the flock, Baron's feathers have grown-in grey and will be turning fully pink within the next year.

This year's successful nesting season may be due in part to the donated clay for their habitat. In 2020, the Birmingham Barons, Double-A affiliate of the Chicago White Sox, donated infield clay from Regions Field for the Zoo's newly renovated flamingo habitat. "It's the mixture of sand with the clay that makes it a perfect consistency for flamingos to build their tall, mound-shaped nests," according to Tiffani Thompson, the Zoo's Assistant Curator of Birds. "We were delighted when they began breeding and nesting in the early spring."

**Come by and see Baron at your Zoo's flamingo lagoon!**

### Meet Mani

On June 28th, we welcomed a brand new baby cotton-top tamarin to your Zoo family. Born to five-year-old mom Lena, and dad, Leo who is seven. Leo came to your Zoo in November 2021 on the recommendation of the Cotton-top Tamarin Species Survival Plan (SSP) and was introduced to Lena in hopes of starting a family.

Cotton-top tamarins live in close family groups where both parents and older siblings (when present) help raise the babies. According to Danielle Williams, Zoological Manager of Primates, "Our tamarin group does not include older offspring, but both parents participated in the infant care. In fact, dad Leo did most of the carrying! Lena nursed the infant, and conducts most of the grooming."

Cotton-top tamarins are small primates, and their offspring grow quite quickly, often becoming fully independent around 12 weeks of age. This baby has been hopping from branch to branch on its own for a few months now. "We will be able to observe the sex of the baby soon. As with most other primates, the babies cling closely to their parents' bodies until they are ready to become independent."

**Come see Leo, Lena and their baby Mani in the Primate building at your Zoo today!**







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