

An insider's view of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

My ZOO

FALL 2023

Magazine

**AMUR
TIGER CUBS
DEBUT
AT WILDLIFE
TRAIL**

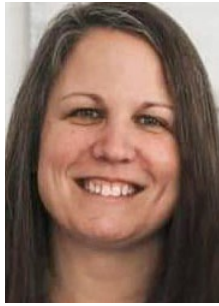
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**CONSERVATION
IN ACTION:
SNOW LEOPARDS'
UNLIKELY ALLIES**

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**ELETWINS
TURN ONE**

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A Message from the Friends Executive Director

We hear it everywhere — we can't believe summer went by so fast! It was fast because of the fun-filled events and moments that filled our summer schedule. Having koalas visit from San Diego for the summer so our community could get close and learn about them was an absolute treat! After a season of delighting guests and snoozing in the crooks of their tree habitats, Kolet and Kumiri headed back home to San Diego Zoo on September 5. We are all sad to see our koala friends leave, but we are so grateful to have had the opportunity to host them and introduce them to the community – many of whom have never had a chance to see a koala in real life!

It was an eventful season to say the least. From our Tee Off FORE the Animals charity golf tournament to Asian Elephant Extravaganza, a busy calendar of summer events offered something for everybody. Brew at the Zoo and Koalas, Too! was an especially big hit this year, with a record number of attendees.

And, there is more to come this fall! Our new Amur tigers cubs are now on exhibit with mother Zeya, and our Asian elephant twins Yaad and Tukada will be celebrating their first birthday on October 24! It's hard to believe that it has been almost a year since the historic birth of the dynamic duo! Make sure to keep an eye out for updates on celebrations for the twins.

The twins' birthday is just part of our upcoming season of celebration. Spooky and kooky family fun is in store with Zoo Boo weekends in October, and December's Holiday Nights will bring tons of festive cheer to the zoo!

Catering at the Zoo has ushered in a new era with recently promoted Chef Allison Walts. Chef Allison has taken over executive chef duties and is showing off her talents with her creative menus at our popular Gourmet Dinner Series, weddings and other celebrations. You can read more about Chef Allison on page 22.

As cooler weather approaches, many of our animals are becoming more active. With two sets of rambunctious twins and fun-filled upcoming activities, it's a great time to come to the zoo! We're grateful for your continued dedication and generous support, which makes our conservation mission possible.

We look forward to seeing you soon and sharing your excitement as you enjoy all our zoo has to offer!

Carrie Large

Carrie Large
Executive Director, Friends of the Zoo



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The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is such a special place! For me, it's about more than observing animals in their habitat. It's about the passion for education of the community and conservation of the animals and the planet that the entire zoo team embodies. That's why I support the zoo.

Terry Hopkins | Friends of the Zoo Board Chair

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Please direct questions regarding this publication to editor@rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

ON THE COVER:
Male Amur tiger cub Zuzaan
Photo by Camille Murphy

Amur Tiger Cubs Make Their Debut

Zuzaan and Coba are now on exhibit at the Wildlife Trail

Mother Amur tiger Zeya and her two cubs made their public debut on Tuesday, September 5 after spending the summer off exhibit as the cubs grew, learned from Zeya, and received routine healthcare and necessary vaccinations.

The cubs — a male named Zuzaan, and female named Coba (pronounced 'Sova') — were born on the morning of April 29. The names of the cubs reference their species' range countries from the Amur region of Asia that spans Siberia and northern China. After the tiger care specialists noticed the male cub had thick stripes, they decided to name him 'Zuzaan,' a Mongolian word meaning 'thick.' The female cub has a stripe pattern on the back of her neck that bears uncanny resemblance to the face of a barn owl, so the animal care team named her 'Coba,' the Russian word for 'owl.'

The cubs have spent the summer in an off-exhibit den with Zeya while they received necessary vaccinations to provide them with immunity to common diseases and infections that they may encounter in their exhibit. While the cubs stayed close to Zeya in the first month of life, they've grown more explorative and rambunctious in the past few months, and have begun to venture outside of their den to explore the outdoor portion of their home.

continued on pg. 6



ANIMAL UPDATES

Did You Know?

San Clemente Island goats are considered a Heritage Breed. Introduced by Spanish missionaries, they have been allowed to run feral on the remote San Clemente Island for decades. This has preserved their distinct, traditional genealogy. As a result, their genes are valuable to agricultural heritage and future sustainability.



San Clemente Island goats, Fern and Oakley, romp at the domestic animal barn.

Four domestic lavender Orpington chicks hatched on May 7.

Twenty northern lined seahorses were sent to Aquarium of the Americas on May 10.

A male Black Welsh Mountain sheep named Fenrir was born on May 24.

Two San Clemente Island goats, Fern and Oakley, were born on May 26.

Male meerkat Rafiki arrived from Oglebay Good Zoo on June 22.

Seven northern lined seahorses were sent to Kansas City Zoo on June 28.

A female white-lipped deer was born on July 3.

Red river hog Nile passed away on August 5.

Common barn owl Otis was humanely euthanized on August 8 due to declining health.

Female snow leopard Marcy was sent to the Philadelphia Zoo on September 4. Marcy, featured in the Fall 2020 issue of *MyZoo Magazine*, was diagnosed with Swimmer Syndrome at three weeks of age. Our expert animal care team successfully rehabilitated Marcy with a physical therapy regimen composed of 36 sessions.

Koalas Kolet and Kumiri returned to San Diego Zoo on September 5.

We acquired 24 guineafowl chicks on June 3, 2022. Animal care specialists raised the flock in the Domestic Animals Barn. The flock was moved to the Bactrian camel exhibit early this summer.

Did You Know?

Our guineafowl flock has access to zoo grounds and may be seen on the zoo's trails and walkways.

Guests are encouraged to observe, but not interact with them. Rest assured, the animal care team is keeping watch to ensure that the guineafowl do not wander into dangerous situations.

CREATURE FEATURE: FIJIAN BANDED IGUANA

AT THE
ROSAMOND
GIFFORD ZOO:
1 Male : Matuku



Fun Fact:

All iguanas from the Fiji Islands were grouped into the same species until the release of the film "Blue Lagoon" in 1980. When Dr. John Gibbons viewed the movie, he noticed banded iguanas running throughout scenes, but also noticed other lizards that looked a bit different. After traveling to the Fiji Islands, Dr. Gibbons differentiated the banded iguana from its cousin the crested iguana, which was unknown to science until this point.

Scales and Stripes: Fijian Banded Iguana is the newest resident of USS Antiquities

One of the rarest reptiles on the planet is now on exhibit!

Thanks to the San Diego Zoo, we have acquired a critically endangered Fijian banded iguana, which hails from the Fiji Islands of the South Pacific Ocean.

It is estimated that the wild population of Fijian iguanas has decreased by 50% in just the past four decades. In acquiring this lizard, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo has taken on the vital work of safeguarding this beautiful species from extinction.

Not as large as some of their cousins, these little lizards like to climb around their moist forest habitats in search of plants to eat (though they sometimes are observed dining on insects).

Fijian banded iguanas are not just rare – they are visually breathtaking! Their shiny scales display an exotic lime green coloring and the males feature pale, blue-white stripes. Big, leafy trees are the Fijian iguana's preferred hangout – the taller, the better. Thin, clawed fingers and a long tail allow the Fijian banded iguana to climb trees with ease, but like many lizards, this species is also an adept swimmer.

Iguanas are iconic creatures that are disappearing from the planet at a rapid pace, and the chance to provide care for one of these neon-colored climbers is an important milestone for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.



“Since the birth of the cubs, our team of tiger care specialists have worked tirelessly to provide routine vaccinations and regular health check-ups to ensure their well-being,” Executive Zoo Director Ted Fox said. “We’ve all waited for this moment, and know the public is anxious to see them. Now we get to enjoy seeing the curious tiger cubs as they explore their exhibit — all while knowing that the care they received these past few months has set them up for a lifetime of health and success.”

Amur tigers are the largest feline species on Earth, but their population is one of the smallest — the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has determined that less than 400 of these Critically Endangered cats remain in the wild. Along with other Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) -accredited institutions, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo participates in the Amur tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP), which seeks to contribute new generations of genetically diverse Amur tigers to the currently declining population. The goal of all SSPs is to reverse negative population trends of species at risk of extinction, with the goal of one day, potentially taking these animals born in human care and introducing them into the wild.

The zoo’s tiger specialists had hoped for cubs since acquiring Zeya in 2020. The zoo has cared for Zeya and Thimbu (the cubs’ father), for over three years, but the process of introducing them was long, slow, and unpredictable. The zoo’s goal has always been to pair these tigers to breed, but as apex predators, this species of cat is incredibly

Zuzaan and Coba square off as they explore their exhibit and are viewed by the public for the first time.



complex. After years of introductions, Zeya and Thimbu have welcomed their first cubs, passing along their crucial genetics to a new generation of Amur tigers.

Adult Amur tigers like Zeya and Thimbu are elusive and stealthy, but the animal staff that has been caring for the cubs have observed that both cubs are quite outgoing and curious. Compared to other tiger cubs that the zoo has cared for in the past, Zuzaan and Coba are more explorative, unafraid to traverse and inspect every nook and cranny of their habitat.

Zeya, Zuzaan, and Coba are in their exhibit on the Wildlife Trail every day now, weather permitting. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo invites guests to come see two miniature versions of the biggest cat species in the world.



Kolet and Kumiri Return to their home on the West Coast

As the summer season drew to a close, the zoo community bid a fond farewell to our arboreal VIPs from San Diego Zoo on Tuesday, September 5.

The Friends of the Zoo were delighted to bring the koalas to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, if only for a temporary time, so our community could see these amazing and iconic creatures first hand. Our animal care specialists were honored to provide care to this unique and increasingly rare species.

Knowing our special guests were very fond of getting their beauty sleep, the zoo created two opportunities for guests to observe the koalas while they were up and active. Daily keeper chats – one at 10:30 a.m. that included an enrichment feeding, and a second at 1:30 p.m. – gave our visitors the chance to watch the koalas climb around their exhibit and dine on a variety of eucalyptus leaves (which volunteers drove twice a week to Rochester to collect). Our eternal gratitude to the volunteers!

Koalas are particular about the type of eucalyptus leaves they prefer, so animal care staff made sure to provide Kolet and Kumiri with different kinds of eucalyptus each day, and everyone enjoyed watching both of them decide which bundle of leaves they wanted to eat. Its safe to say that our special guests had a luxurious stay here at our zoo.

“Kolet and Kumiri helped make this an unforgettable summer at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo,” said Carrie Large, executive director of the Friends of the Zoo. “We are sad to see them head back to their home in San Diego, but we are so grateful to have had them here for our community to see and enjoy, and are proud that we were able to raise funds to support the conservation efforts San Diego is doing to help these creatures not be extinct.”

The koalas were loaned to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo through the San Diego Zoo’s Koala Conservation and Education Loan Program, which began in 1983. The program has sent approximately 80 koalas to other zoos over the past 40 years – that’s only two koalas a year – so the temporary acquisition of Kolet and Kumiri was a true privilege.

“Caring for Kolet and Kumiri was a triumph for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, one that created a special experience for our zoo community,” said Ted Fox, executive director of the zoo. “We will miss seeing these koalas snoozing in the crooks of their trees, climbing and jumping around, and snacking on their favorite kinds of eucalyptus leaves, and we are honored that San Diego Zoo entrusted us with Kolet and Kumiri. The unique education opportunities that the Koala Loan Program offered to our zoo community are truly exceptional, and the fact that participation in the program supports wild koala conservation made this whole experience even more significant.”

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo has never before hosted animals through a program quite like this one, which proved rewarding to our zoo staff, the Friends, and our beloved zoo community. Given the challenges that wild koala populations are facing, our zoo is proud to have played a role in the conservation of this incredible species — and honored to have been able to showcase koalas to our community.

We would like to acknowledge the generous sponsors that helped make our Koala Outpost exhibit possible. Friends of the Zoo extends our deepest gratitude to **Southwest Airlines, Hampton Inn East Syracuse, Keybank, M&T Bank, Yellow Tail, and Catania Orthodontics.**

“I just want to say thank you for bringing the Koalas to RGZ for the summer ... It was encouraging to see the faces of folks seeing them and learning about them and the threats they face.

Seeing a koala was a bucket list item for me that I never thought I would check off. Thank you so much!”

Debbie Brant

“We were so incredibly lucky to have the girls visit for the summer. The look on everyone’s faces when they found Kumiri or Kolet hiding in their food was priceless. Getting to be a part of this will be something I cherish for the rest of my life.

Thank you Rosamond Gifford Zoo for putting this together and taking such great care of them.”

Justin Gorelick

“What a wonderful experience I had visiting them several times. Caught a demo yesterday and learned a lot. Thank you!”

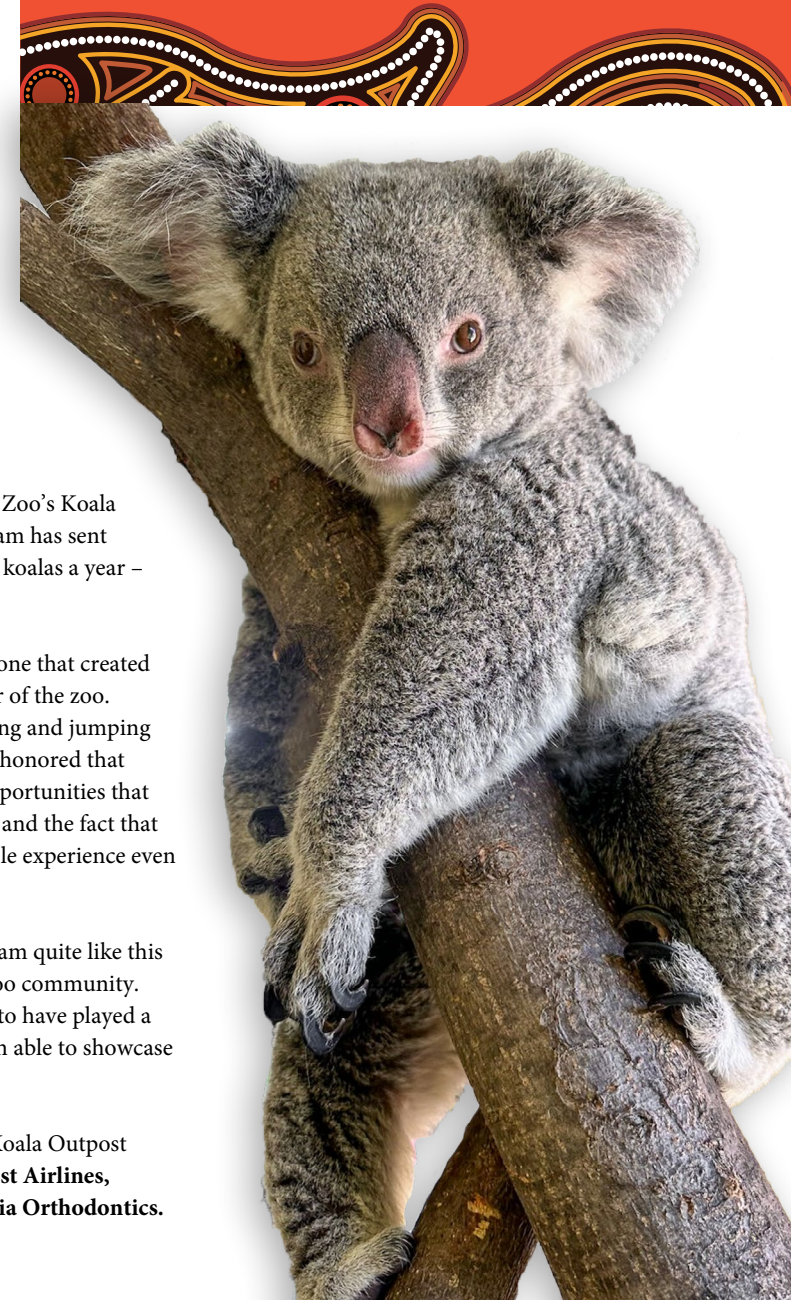
Theresa Lawson Swiderski

“This was one of the best experiences for me... I love my (koala) bears.. melted my heart... Safe travels home.”

GiGi Leslie

“I hope they return sometime in the future, it was great seeing them locally! Thank you Rosamond Gifford Zoo for the time and effort you put in to this endeavor.”

Renee Gosselin



Snow Leopard Conservation has gained two unlikely allies: bees and fruit trees

In snow leopard range countries, new agricultural development has proven fruitful in more ways than one.

Fruit trees and little bees are making a surprising yet sizeable positive impact on snow leopard conservation in the species' range countries. Beekeeping is a burgeoning industry in Kyrgyzstan, where local beekeepers produced a total of 2,382 tons of honey in 2021. As the beekeeping industry in Kyrgyzstan has grown in the past few years, it has provided some local livestock herders with an additional source of income.

After consultations with different stakeholders, several business sector representatives and local community members, the Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) has partnered with the Snow Leopard Foundation of Kyrgyzstan (SLFK) to expand the beekeeping industry in Kyrgyzstan, implementing a program with three local communities that facilitates the expansion of beekeeping and orcharding (the practice of planting fruit trees and growing their fruit). Beekeeping as a conservation initiative is not a new concept, with successful programs in Africa and Latin America. Kyrgyzstan used to be a big honey exporter within the Soviet Union, and there remains a huge potential for honey production in the region.

While some community members were already practicing beekeeping, the SLT-SLFK program introduced better equipment, hundreds more beehives, and more efficient methods to allow locals to reap greater rewards from their efforts. For their part, the communities committed to snow leopard conservation by signing agreements dedicating 20% of honey sales (and 50% of fruit sales) to initiatives that will benefit both humans and wildlife, such as research cameras, anti-poaching patrols, and pasture management.

"As part of our interest in the communities that live adjacent to important snow leopard habitat, we have been trying to engage and strengthen our relationships through activities that directly link conservation with economic development," the Snow Leopard Trust said. "Climate change threatens many existing livelihood streams, so it is imperative to diversify livelihood options with adaptation strategies that can mitigate current and future effects of a warming climate. There is a need to develop additional sources of income for people because they mostly rely on agriculture and livestock breeding which will be adversely affected by climate change. In addition, there is a risk of increased human-wildlife conflict in the future."

Beekeeping presents multi-faceted benefits for communities and their surrounding environments. Raising bees provides people with additional sources of income, but that's not all. Bees help with pollination which, in turn, increases food security and

biodiversity. Finally, the conservation contracts allow SLT-SLFK to link this economic activity with protection of important snow leopard habitats.

The program has achieved great success so far in Kyrgyzstan, and is expanding to other snow leopard range countries. For instance, at least one community in Pakistan is currently engaged in beekeeping initiatives, with hopes to involve more communities in the future. In Pakistan, beekeeping may just be beginning, but orcharding is already thriving. In 2022, seven communities were engaged in planting programs across Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan, planting more than 7,000 trees and more than 1,000 fruit plants. The new development has yielded unexpected benefits for native snow leopards, especially in these nations.

Snow leopards are sneaky, silent hunters well-adapted to an unforgiving life in the barren mountains of their range countries, but climate change, loss of habitat and loss of prey species have driven snow leopards closer to humans, resulting in competition between us and them. When snow leopards wander near livestock farms, they make easy prey of fenced in, domesticated livestock like sheep. This, of course, means the farmer has lost money, and many farmers kill snow leopards in retaliation for killing livestock.

This negative relationship is detrimental to conservation of the endangered snow leopard species, and to the livelihood of the farmers who are losing money due to snow leopard predation. However, the implementation of beekeeping and orchard farming has allowed livestock farmers to shift their practices, and in the process, reduce competition with local snow leopards. While it isn't a universal solution to the threats facing wild snow leopards, the beekeeping and orcharding program has been a wonderful success with a clear positive impact.

Here at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, we are honored to provide care for both snow leopards and hives of honey bees, and are pleased to see one of these species indirectly benefitting the other!



Three cheers for our koala volunteers! During the course of Kolet and Kumiri's stay in Syracuse, our rockstar volunteers were at the zoo almost every single day educating the public about these marvelous marsupials, and literally going the "extra mile" – driving twice a week to Rochester to pick up fresh eucalyptus! We couldn't have welcomed this iconic species without their dedication and support. Thank you from everyone at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo!

Join us in celebrating the Eletwins 1st Birthday

Wish
Yaad and Tukada
a Happy Birthday on
Sunday
October 22!



Check our social media for the schedule of activities!

Want to Give the Eletwins a Birthday Present?

PURCHASE ENRICHMENT ITEMS FOR THE MIRACLE TWINS AT THE CURIOUS CUB GIFT SHOP OR ONLINE AT SYRACUSEZOOEVENTS.ORG





Stepping Up to Save Species

Recent changes to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)’s Species Survival Plans (SSPs) resulted in the cessation of some SSPs.

After the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) updated its guidelines for Species Survival Programs (SSPs), some programs have lost SSP status, meaning the AZA will no longer lead collaborative breeding efforts for these species. Some of our animal collection managers at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo are rising to the occasion, volunteering themselves to oversee these frozen SSPs, inheriting a bulk of new responsibilities to add to their ongoing conservation work.

This means that the AZA will not make breeding recommendations or update these species’ studbooks, which record genealogical information and maintain genetic diversity within a species. While this will allow the AZA to continue important conservation work where it is most effective, it will complicate conservation efforts for other species.

Luckily, some collection managers around the nation, such as zoo Collection Manager Seth Groesbeck, are stepping up to fill the void that this change in policy will create. Groesbeck already maintained the studbook for the Turkmenian markhor, a species which lost SSP status under the AZA’s new framework. While the Rosamond Gifford Zoo already played a big role in the Turkmenian markhor SSP, the zoo is now in charge of the species’ population management.

“The population as a whole, all through North America and AZA, is being managed out of this institution,” Groesbeck said. “So previous to that, it was run out of this institution, but it was also overseen by AZA and the Population Management Center.”

That AZA oversight allowed for easier collaboration between institutions and streamlined maintenance of studbooks. Part of this process includes coordination with the AZA’s Taxonomy Advisory Group (TAG), so the AZA will remain in the loop. Groesbeck will continue the same work he was already doing here for this species, but will take on oversight responsibilities that the AZA and the Population Management Center previously performed.

“I will have to do a little bit more training on the building of new databases and breeding matrices to understand which animals should be bred with each other. Again, that will all have to be done within this institution,” Groesbeck said. “But we’re lucky enough that the zoo and our director is supporting us doing that, because there’s a lot of facilities where that’s not happening now, and a lot of studbooks are just being phased out.”

With so many vulnerable species facing many disparate challenges, it makes sense that the AZA wants to concentrate its efforts and resources where they can be most effective. But the SSPs that are being

phased out by the new AZA qualifications are some of the most critically endangered, so without a plan, the future of these species is bleak.

“If it was phased out, then each zoo would manage its own population to their standards as an individual facility, and not as a collectively managed group,” Groesbeck said. “So, it would probably harm the genetics of a population, as not a lot would be known about the individual animals within those populations.”

Some species, though, are very close to meeting the new qualifications, including the Turkmenian markhor. So, Groesbeck will independently manage the markhor population of accredited institutions in North America with the goal of regaining SSP status.

“The ultimate goal for any of these is to eventually be able to be an SSP again,” Groesbeck said. “It takes a certain number of facilities and a certain genetic demographic to be able to be an SSP, but that’s something that these studbooks can work towards.”

Groesbeck’s determination to help this species may prove monumental for markhor conservation, and similar actions from other collection managers throughout the country will help other vulnerable species whose SSPs have been frozen or phased out.

One obstacle to managing a population independent of AZA, though, is time. Groesbeck will have to dedicate more of his personal time and energy to leading the markhor population management, which means he has less time to devote to his normal duties.

Groesbeck emphasized that the support of zoo director Ted Fox and the zoo overall is necessary for him to successfully manage the Turkmenian markhor population, given the time and educational commitments that this requires. Other collection managers at the zoo are following Groesbeck’s lead; Tamara Singer is preparing to manage the populations of fairy bluebirds and patas monkeys, Theo Campbell is preparing to manage the population of Armenian mouflon, and Alana Auwae will manage the Thorold’s white-lipped deer population.

These are tough circumstances, but the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is rising to the occasion. The zoo’s dedicated specialists are proving that the actions and determination of just a few conservation-minded individuals can literally stand in the way of extinction for some of the most vulnerable species on earth.



Hill Insurance Service, LLC: Official Presenting Sponsor of Senior Citizen Appreciation Day

The Friends are always looking for new ways to provide unique events and opportunities for our senior visitors. So, it is important to us that sponsors for our annual Senior Day event share our commitment to seniors. As such, we are pleased to announce Hill Insurance Service, LLC as presenting sponsor of Senior Citizen Appreciation Day.

“We are always excited to partner with like-minded community organizations,” said Carrie Large, executive director of Friends of the Zoo. “The zoo is for all ages, and visiting the zoo helps to support a healthy, enriching life – which Hill Insurance is trying to do.”

Hill Insurance Service, LLC dedicates its resources to educating senior citizens on their health and life insurance options, primarily through Medicare. Jeff Eveleth, a broker manager with Hill Insurance Service, believes that the zoo’s commitment to senior citizens makes it the perfect partner to help advance Hill’s goals in educating seniors.

“The zoo is a place where people go and feel safe with family. We have an insurance agency where people can feel safe, and go and get answers,” Eveleth said. “So, the fact that the zoo is here and caring, and has such a strong foothold in the community, it just makes sense for us to partner with the zoo, help the zoo, and help each other.”

Medicare policies are in a state of near-constant flux, meaning Eveleth and his colleagues have to take courses each year to learn about updates and how these changes might affect clients’ plans. Eveleth knows that the average person does not have the knowledge to analyze this information on their own, but every senior citizen, at some point or another, will need help with health and/or life insurance. Hill seeks to translate various policy changes into terms that are easier to understand, and advise each individual on their best available options.

“We want to take fear and uncertainty away from seniors about Medicare and give them mind space or just a calmness to do some of the other things they want to do,” Eveleth said.



At the second-annual Senior Citizen Appreciation Day, held on May 10, Hill was joined by a number of senior citizen-oriented vendors situated throughout the zoo’s courtyard. Hundreds of seniors had the opportunity to connect with groups such as Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Humana, Loretto, InterFaith Works, and more. Everleth said that the variety of vendors offered seniors a range of valuable information and resources, but also showed that, at least in our community, the majority of organizations for seniors share a common goal.

“We all have the same vision,” Eveleth said, “which is just to help the seniors be in a place where they’re saving money, especially in this day and age. If I can save a senior \$100 a year in health insurance, or some form of co-pays or dental or vision, that \$100 is huge.”

The Friends look forward to working with Hill Insurance Service, LLC to help provide guests the resources they need in their senior years while providing a fun and enriching experience at the zoo.

Save the date! Next year’s Senior Citizen Appreciation Day presented by Hill Insurance Service, LLC, Wednesday, May 8.





Tee Off FORE the Animals Smashed a Hole-in-One!

On Monday, June 26, we welcomed 82 golfers to the greens at historic Bellevue Country Club for our annual charity golf tournament Tee Off FORE the Animals. Thunderstorms were forecasted for the event, but the rain held off and a beautiful, sunny summer day emerged! Teams arrived early, and a continental breakfast at 7 a.m. gave everyone a chance to get energized before practicing on the driving range and putting greens. Throughout the day, participants had the chance to bid on exclusive animal items in our silent auction, which included sports memorabilia, zoo-themed apparel and even artwork painted by our animals themselves!

Play began with a shotgun start at 9 a.m., and throughout the day teams competed while encountering our special animal ambassadors on the course. Animal care specialists were stationed on different teeboxes with the various ambassador species, adding an educational component to the already engaging day.

Most golfers are familiar with birdies, eagles, and albatrosses, but our golfers came away with some exclusive animal knowledge. Our "star" animal ambassadors were really a hit. Stellar the red-tailed hawk, Eagon the Eurasian eagle owl, and Drogon the bearded dragon wowed our golfers, but Muppet the North American porcupine was the clear crowd favorite! Other animal ambassadors included turtles and a skink, and the variety of animals made for 18 holes like no other.

Beyond breakfast, the event was replete with tasty refreshments. Sponsor A.L. George provided refreshing beverages, including Sunny D canned cocktails, White Claws, and beer, which complimented a lunch on the cart.

Throughout the day, golfers participated in special activities. We challenged guests to "Beat the Pro" in a putting competition against Lindsey Hunnell, (a former college golf star and the current High Point University women's golf coach), and some of our golfers managed to do just that! Our golf teams also got to benefit from professional long-drive athlete Ryan Steenberg, who put our guests as close as possible to the tee thanks to his exceptional abilities with a driver. In addition, golfers competed in contests including "Longest drive," "Closest to pin," and "Best dressed."

Capping off an exceptional day of competition and conservation, golfers enjoyed a gourmet dinner and ice cream dessert at 3 p.m.

The silent auction was a great success, with the most coveted item in the auction being Yaad and Tukada's first attempt at artwork. Entitled "First Steps," the work of our little "pachyderm Picassos" raised \$1,510 for the zoo's conservation mission! **In total, the third annual Tee Off FORE the Animals Golf Tournament raised \$55,686.25 for the zoo!**

This remarkable event was made possible by the generous support of our sponsors: **Nave Law Firm, 1 World For All, Community Bank, Coca-Cola, Dannible & McKee, LLP, RBC Wealth Management, A.L. George, CST Media Productions, imagepress, CNY Business Journal, Arquette & Associates, REALTORS, AYNi BRIGADE, Bowers CPAs & Advisors, Centerstate CEO, Century Heating, Cintas, COAST Physical Therapy, Jim & Carol Gaspo, Mariott Syracuse Downtown, One Group Retirement Advisors, Tracy & Dave Pollock, Practice Resources, LLC, RJ Caruso Tax & Accounting, Shaughnessy's Irish Pub, T.J. Sheehan Distributing, Tompkins Trust Company, and Wilmington Trust.**

And, many thanks to our volunteers that helped make this a memorable event! Save the date and join us next year! 2024 Tee Off FORE the Animals, Monday, June 24.



Brew at the Zoo and Koalas, Too! Draws a Record Crowd!

More than 2,000 guests enjoyed this year's Brew at the Zoo and Koalas, Too! The popular, annual fundraiser featured a selection of 140 regional craft beers, wine, and canned craft cocktails. This year was especially unique - featuring our special summer guests from San Diego Zoo, koalas Kolet and Kumiri.

The day started with clouds, which soon gave way to beautiful sunshine and blue skies.

In addition to the many beverage offerings, guests enjoyed a variety of local food trucks, live music throughout the zoo, and animals on evening exhibit. While local band Los Blancos rocked out in the courtyard, guests had the opportunity to visit the koalas in the Social Building and learn all about these wonderful marsupials.

The Hayden Jewelers VIP Lounge sold out early. Those who purchased a VIP ticket were able to skip entry lines and had access to the exclusive indoor and outdoor VIP space, where they dined on complimentary gourmet fair and were greeted by our charming animal ambassadors.

Brew at the Zoo also featured a chance to bid on exclusive collectables and one-of-a-kind items in the NBT Bank silent auction. Featured items included animal artwork (including a piece by the artful elephant twins Yaad and Tukada), sports memorabilia, and dozens of other coveted items.

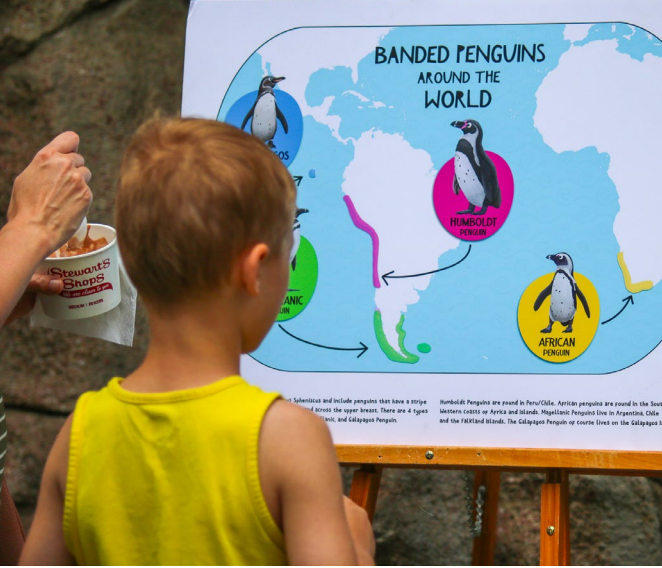
Altogether, the event raised \$150,216 – an incredible sum for the Friends' mission!

The Friends are extremely grateful for the dedication and support of the generous sponsors that made this one-of-a-kind event possible: **Hayden Jewelers, Nave Law Firm, Construction Associates LLC, NBT Bank, Hancock Estabrook, Grossman St. Amour CPAs, A.L. George, T.J. Sheehan Distributing, Cumulus Media, CNY Business Journal, C&S Companies, and Hand In Health Massage Therapy.**

And, many thanks to the 150 volunteers that help make this summer-time favorite event possible!

Save the date! 2024 Brew at the Zoo, Friday, August 2





Penguin Palooza



This summer-time favorite, sponsored by Nave Law Firm, was held on Friday, July 9.

Guests of all ages enjoyed this ice cream party centered around the zoo's Penguin Coast exhibit, featuring an incredible array of fun activities, yoga with the penguins, entertainment, kid-friendly foods, music, face painters, and of course, demonstrations with our colony of Humboldt penguins!

Penguin Palooza kicked off at 10 a.m. with guests hearing from NYS Fishery Biologist Tom Hughes, who presented "One Fish, Two Fish How Many is Too Many Fish," teaching guests about sustainable fishing. He presented twice throughout the day and brought local marine species to the zoo for educational purposes.

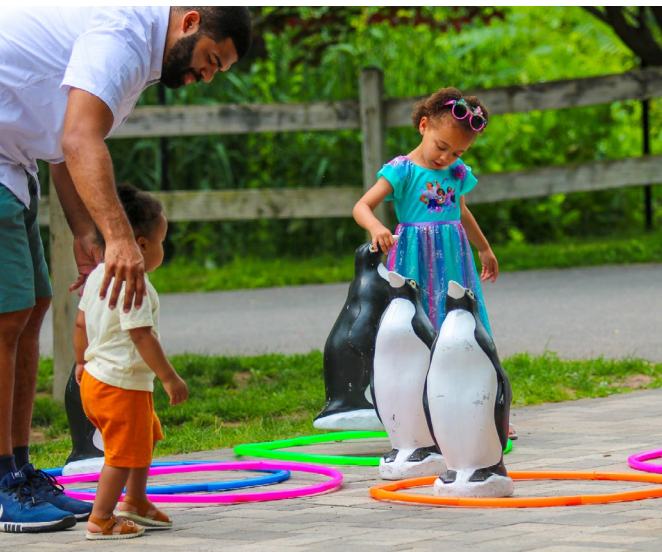
Keeper talks throughout the day informed our guests on our penguin colony, and special signage – such as a map of penguin habitats – featured cultural information about the Humboldt penguins' native range countries, Chile and Peru. Additionally, volunteers helped our children guests make Chilean rainstick crafts, celebrating the fact that the zoo's Humboldt penguins hail from a colony on the Chilean coast.

Stewarts Shops generously donated a portion of the ice cream served and our volunteers scooped and handed out 1,750 FREE scoops of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream!

A raffle that included original penguin artwork (by our very own Humboldt penguin painters Hugo and his daughter Quatro) helped raise funds for further conservation efforts. **In all, this year's Penguin Palooza attracted 2,063 guests to the zoo!**

Thanks to Nave Law Firm and CNY Arts, the zoo community got to celebrate our special South American colony, and the cultures of their native countries!

This project is made possible with funds from the Statewide Community Re-grants Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by CNY Arts.



Asian Elephant Extravaganza



Asian Elephant Extravaganza brought nearly four thousand Ele-fans to the zoo on August 19 for a celebration of our elephant herd and the cultures of their native range countries. Sponsors CNY Arts and Nave Law Firm helped host one biggest events of the summer for the biggest species in our care.

Asian Elephant Extravaganza began with an early-morning yoga session. The day's schedule kicked off in earnest at 10 a.m. with games, cultural music and dance performances, and elephant activities throughout the day.

Guests were able to watch an elephant watermelon smash – made even more special since it was the first time the miracle twins Yaad and Tukada got to interact with watermelons. Following that was a birthday celebration for Siri and Romani, the elders of our elephant herd. The elephant care staff conducted keeper chats throughout the day at the Helga Beck Asian Elephant Preserve, giving our guests a chance to learn more about the herd. The zoo raffled off three animal art pieces created by the twins, Siri, and Romani. As an added delight, visitors were able to watch Romani paint her artwork live at the Asian Elephant Preserve.

Representatives from SU's South Asia Center provided fun and educational rangoli coloring sheet craft, promoting the Indian art style to our guests. This cohort also taught visitors how to say "elephant" in the languages used in the regions of India in which elephants live. Zoo volunteers educated visitors on the importance of choosing sustainable palm oil, and explained how unsustainable palm oil sourcing is harmful to Asian elephant populations.

In all, 3,849 guests came to the zoo to celebrate our herd at Asian Elephant Extravaganza, making this a birthday party to remember! A big thank you to CNY Arts and Nave Law Firm for making this incredible event possible!

This project is made possible with funds from the Statewide Community Re-grants Program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by CNY Arts.



Modern Art Memorial Sculpture Honors Our "Little Giants"

The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo recently installed an elephant sculpture monument dedicated to Asian elephant brothers Ajay and Batu, who succumbed to the deadly elephant endotheliotropic herpes virus (EEHV) in December 2020. The statue was donated by Stone Quarry Hill Art Park in Cazenovia.

"Ajay and Batu were our 'Little Giants,'" Friends of the Zoo Executive Director Carrie Large said. "The Friends acquired this statue to serve as a memorial to these young elephants that left us too soon."

The biggest killer of young Asian elephants is EEHV. The zoo's Animal Health Center provides resources to help advance EEHV vaccine research, and the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is coordinating with national and international partner institutions, such as Cornell University and Surrey University to that end.

Combatting EEHV is one of the biggest priorities of the Asian Elephant Species Survival Plan. The conservation of this amazing species hinges on finding a cure for EEHV — if we can eradicate this virus forever, our efforts to rebuild the Asian elephant population will become even stronger.

Artist Ellen Rogers created the steel sculpture as a reflection on her experience as a wildlife veterinarian in Africa, where she aided

conservation efforts for critically endangered species. Entitled "Welcome to the Anthropocene," the abstract artwork is an interpretation of humanity's influence on nature and wildlife.

"My artwork addresses the Anthropocene Epoch, the current geological time period defined by humans causing vast and unprecedented changes to the biosphere: changing climate, massive loss of natural habitat, and animal extinctions," Rogers said in her artist statement.

Throughout her experiences in Africa, Rogers was struck by the immense resources — teams of people, helicopters, dart guns, powerful drugs, large trucks, specialized trailers, and hands-on capture of animals — now necessary to keep Nature "wild" and "natural." The same is true about the accredited institutions of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) — institutions like the Rosamond Gifford Zoo play a vital role in the conservation of Asian elephants and countless other iconic species.

Rogers' elephant sculpture will help the zoo continue its crucial conservation mission while memorializing Ajay and Batu. Informational signage near the sculpture directs guests to the Ajay and Batu Memorial Fund – allowing zoo visitors to support the zoo's work and join the fight to rebuild the Asian elephant population.

MEET OUR ROCK STAR EDUCATION TEAM



Chelsea Lembo – Education and Conservation Manager

Chelsea Lembo, a native of Syracuse, has worked with children of all ages in academic settings for more than a decade. She holds a masters of education degree in elementary education and creative arts in learning from Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is a licensed educator in the state of New York. Her extensive experience in various classroom settings made her the perfect person to deliver solid environmental education across age groups.

“Working in the Education department at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo offered a unique opportunity to merge my skills as an educator, passion for STEAM education, and love of all animals,” Lembo said. “I am especially excited about developing programming for people of all ages that promotes a better understanding of how we may have a positive effect on the welfare of animals living at the zoo — and their counterparts in the wild.”

Chelsea said the best part of the job has been working alongside the other educators. She has learned so many interesting facts about oceans, horticulture, invertebrates, and more, and her collaboration with the animal care staff constantly exposes her to new animal information. She is looking forward to developing programming for next summer’s zoo camps.



Meghan Rahner – Zoo Camp Coordinator

Meghan Rahner has a background in environmental education and a passion for all things conservation. She previously worked as a Piping Plover Steward at NY State Parks, where she aided in the conservation and education of the endangered piping plovers. She also worked as an environmental educator for seven years at Lime Hollow Nature Center. Rahner began her tenure with the Friends of the Zoo as a development associate, and transferred to the education department when she saw the opportunity to work here as an environmental educator.

“I have a passion for interpretation. I hope to inspire other educators so that they can teach the younger generations and create a healthier planet,” Rahner said. “My goal is to design programs that create a learning environment that is fun, passion driven, and inclusive to all types of people.”



Ashley Thompson – Senior Education Coordinator

Ashley Thompson grew up in Oswego County. She received a bachelor’s degree in English from Utica College. Her experience includes teaching high school English in Washington, DC, serving as director of education at a national park in Maryland, and developing and teaching school programs at the Smithsonian’s National Zoo and National Museum of Natural History.

“The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is my ‘home’ zoo. I grew up visiting multiple times a year with family, used to do my homework here after classes when I was a student at Onondaga Community College, and came here on my first date with my now-spouse!” Thompson said. “The zoo is part of who I am as a conservation educator and an animal lover, and I’m so excited to be back as a part of the team.”

Thompson was interested in this position because it provided the chance to inspire young people to care about the incredible creatures with whom we share our planet. Through meaningful and authentic experiences with guests, Thompson hopes to empower them with knowledge and show them how to advocate for our animals.



Keirsten Frair – Zoo to You Coordinator

Keirsten Frair grew up in Greene, New York, and holds a master’s degree in Marine Conservation from the University of Miami. She lived in Boston, Massachusetts for two years, where she worked as an education/research intern and naturalist for Cape Ann Whale Watch, and also worked at the New England Aquarium as a visitor experience assistant. She wanted to return to her Central New York roots, and work for an organization that deeply values its education and animals.

“Education is one of the greatest tools we have to help animals in the wild. I am able to take the knowledge I have – of animals, their environment, and what the zoo is doing to help them – out into the community,” Frair said.

“This helps others understand our mission and what they can do to help save animals right here and around the world.” The best part so far, according to Frair, is seeing kids’ faces light up when she teaches them a new fun fact about an animal.



Mary Hillebrand – Zoo Safari Coordinator

Mary Hillebrand is originally from Buffalo, NY. She studied environmental education and biology at SUNY ESF. She loved working with other students as a teacher’s assistant, and went on to get a master’s degree in science education at Syracuse University. After seeing a job posting from the zoo, Hillebrand immediately knew that she wanted to work with people in the informal education setting.

“Two of my favorite things are animals and people, so a job that combines the two is the perfect fit,” Hillebrand said. “Through my education I have found that I really love to connect people with the environment, and zoos are special in the way that they allow that to happen.” So far, Hillebrand’s favorite part of the job has been seeing people react to animals in the zoo, especially when they see something new for the first time!



Kim Arnold Director of Education

We are honored to have found such an innovative group of passionate educators to join the zoo team. They are excited to guide diverse audiences on a journey of learning, empathizing, and taking action to save animals and the planet.

They truly embody “Conservation in Action!”

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Join the education team for a three-week program tailored just for your age group. Perfect for home-schooled children or anyone just wild about learning!

Wild Beginnings

Ages 1-3 | 9:15-10 a.m. or 10:30-11:15 a.m.

Join the education team for a three-week program tailored just for the little ones, ages 12 to 36 months. Each themed class includes animal biofacts, nature-themed sensory play, songs and a story. Young ones will explore with their senses as well as develop language and motor skills in the process during this early learning adventure. **This program is for one child/one caregiver pair.** *Live animals will not be used in this program, but class fee includes admission to enjoy the animals in the zoo on your own after class.

Session 1: Mondays, October 16, 23, 30

Session 2: Mondays, November 6, 13, 20

Session 3: Mondays, December 4, 11, 18

Tuition per session: Members receive a 7% discount

Non-members – \$50 per child/adult pair

Additional child (in same session) – \$25

Adventure Days!

Ages 3-5 | 10:30 a.m. – Noon

Join the Education Team for a three-week learning series that provides a unique opportunity for you and your child to learn more about the animals at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. This class consists of stations for learning, experiencing, creating and utilizing the outdoors — weather permitting! **This program is designed for one child/one caregiver pair.**

SERIES:

Creepy Cool Crawlers: Friday, October 6, 13, 20

Winter Warriors: Friday, December 1, 8, 15

Tuition per series: Members receive a 7% discount

Non-members – \$90 per child

Additional child (in same session) – \$45

EcosySTEM Explorers

Ages 6-8 | 10:30-12:00 p.m. Ages 9-12 | 2-3:30 p.m.

Learning Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics has never been more exciting! Join us for some hands-on fun connecting to the animal world. This class uses a project-based learning approach.

This program is drop off and requires a waiver on file.

Series 1: Saturday, October 7, 14, 21

Series 2: Saturday, November 11, 18, 25

Series 3: Saturday, December 2, 9, 16

Tuition per series: Members receive a 7% discount

Non-members – \$90 per child

Additional child (in same session) – \$45

Kids’ Night Out

Ages 6-10 | 5:30-9 p.m.

Looking for a night out? Drop your kids off at the zoo to party like an animal! Kids will enjoy pizza upon arrival; meet animals up close, tour the zoo after hours, make crafts and play games throughout the night.

Friday, October 27

Tuition per session: Non-members – \$40 | Members receive a 7% discount

One-Day Zoo Camp

Ages 6-11 | 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Join us as we explore the zoo, play games, make crafts and meet animals up close!

New! For your convenience you can select to pre-order lunch from the Honey Bee Café during registration.

Monday, October 9, Tuesday; November 7, Friday; November 10; Wednesday, November 22;

Friday, December 22; Wednesday, December 27; Friday, December 29

Daily Tuition: \$65 per child | Members receive a 7% discount

Family Adventures

Join us for a family-style learning adventure for people of all ages! Whether it’s touring the zoo, playing games, making crafts or meeting animals up close, this family-friendly programming is a perfect opportunity to connect with your loved ones while also connecting to nature.

Saturday, November 4 | 10 a.m. – Noon

Tuition per session:

Non-members- \$40 child/adult pair | Members receive a 7% discount

Pre-registration required;
a minimum number of
participants are needed
to run all programs.

Questions?
Call the education department
at
(315) 435-8511 x8506
or email education@rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

Sessions fill fast,
sign up today!

Register online at
rosamondgiffordzoo.org/learn
or

SCAN THE QR CODE
BELOW



TIGER GAMES

Amur tigers are the kings and queens of their frosty forest homes, and no two tigers are the same. Like human fingerprints, the stripe pattern of each individual tiger is unique.



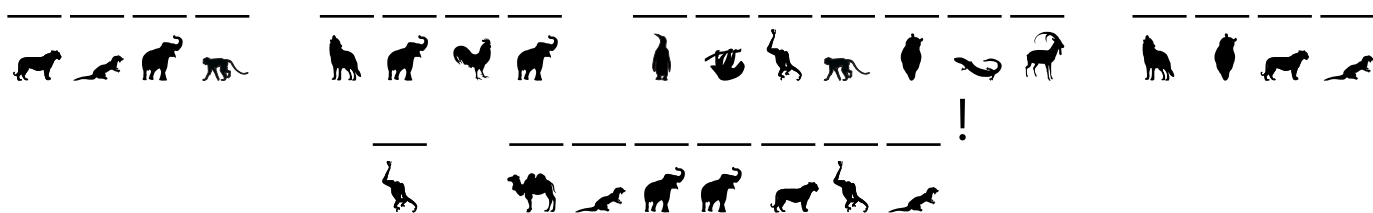
Did you know that tiger stripes are skin deep?

Below all that thick fur, each tiger's skin displays the same stripe pattern as its fur!

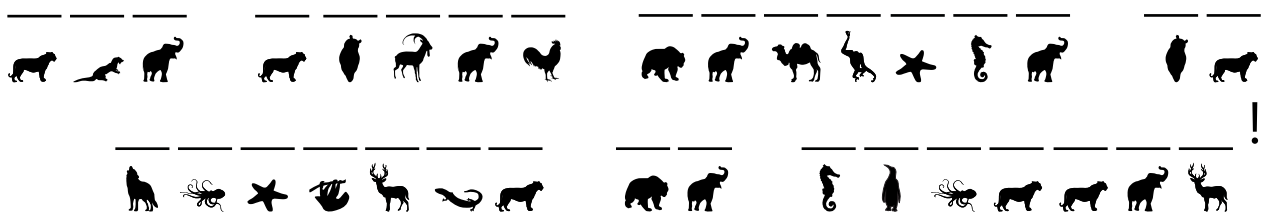
To learn even more about Amur tigers, identify the pattern in the Carnivore Cryptograms below. You'll need to be as clever as a tiger to solve these puzzles!

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

WHY DID THE TIGERS LOSE THE GAME?



WHO WOULD WIN A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK BETWEEN A LEOPARD AND A TIGER?



Thanking a Dedicated Horticulture Team that Beautified the Zoo While Educating the Public

With so many species on exhibit, the zoo is full of vibrant, colorful life – and much of that life resides in the gardens between exhibits and along our walkways. Beautifying the zoo through plant life has long been a goal of our institution, and this summer, we assembled a Horticulture Team to start fulfilling that mission.

With volunteer groups like the Garden Club, the zoo's Master Gardeners, and our maintenance team, we've pursued some beautiful plant projects in the past. The creation of the horticulture team allowed our horticulture specialists to dedicate their full focus and energy toward the gardens and greenery around our zoo. Ted Fox, executive director of the zoo, said that the Horticulture team advanced the already superb work of our gardeners and Garden Club volunteers.

"On our last two accreditation reports, the inspectors have remarked at how beautiful our grounds are, and how they're kind of dumbfounded that we don't have a full-on horticulture staff like most other zoos and aquariums do," Fox said. "So, it's always been my goal to have one middle-management level, horticulture person to oversee and coordinate all the volunteer groups."

The horticulture specialists focused on outdoor endeavors, but there are plenty of indoor plant projects – both within and beyond animal habitats – to be explored during the winter months in the future.

"Another goal would be having a growing house so that we would not have to depend on buying new plants whenever we need them," Fox said. "We could actually grow some or take cuttings. Or, if plants are stressed from being in an exhibit environment without natural light, we could rotate the plants from inside and out."

This summer, ESF student Emily Bernthal oversaw plant projects and garden development throughout her work study here. Sam Carballo, a 103 with the zoo, aided her in this work throughout the summer, and their labors speak for themselves. The Diversity of Birds Aviary is a night-and-day difference from last year; trimmed trees allow more sunlight into the room, and colorful plants throughout the aviary complement the vibrant feathers and beaks of all our indoor birds.

Education signage created by the team and placed at select gardens around the zoo provide useful information to guests about pollinator gardens and how to pursue their own horticulture practices at home.

"The zoo is a beautiful place, and it shouldn't just be about animals or fish or an art collection," Fox said. "It can and it should be curated just like every other living collection."

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo would like to thank our first Horticulture Team for providing the zoo with an enhancing, educational summer!





Amur Tiger

Senior Keeper Special

\$55

Package includes:
A certificate of adoption, 4x6 color photo, animal fact sheet, 12" tiger plush, an adopt parent gift, copy of *MyZoo Magazine*, and listing in online adopt parent board for one year.

Adopt an Animal online at syracusezooevents.org/shop
Looking to adopt another animal at the regular rate?
Call (315) 435-8511 x8563 or email giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org



Adopt an Animal 

MEMBER NOTES

Give the gift that lasts all year long... a zoo membership!

DON'T WAIT! Purchase a gift membership between November 1st and December 15th and your recipients will be valid for the FULL 2024 year. **PLUS we'll include 2 free single-use guest passes!** (An \$18 value)

A Rosamond Gifford Zoo membership is the perfect gift for everyone on your holiday list!

We have **endless opportunities** to create **unforgettable memories with the ones you love.**

We're here all year, and members can be, too!

Best of all, your gift membership purchase directly supports the precious creatures in our care. As an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, you have the knowledge that **your gift is in the best of hands.**

If you have been considering a gift membership, now is the BEST time to do so. You won't want to miss the exciting new exhibit we have planned for 2024! Make sure to follow our social media for updates!

ALL MEMBERSHIPS INCLUDE:

- Unlimited, FREE zoo admission 362 days a year
- Discounted admission to more than 150 other AZA-accredited institutions
- Discounts on education programs and zoo camps
- Discounts on purchases at The Curious Cub Gift Shop
- Discount at the Honey Bee Café and concessions
- Discounted prices for birthday parties
- Discounted special-event tickets before they go public
- Subscription to our full color zoo publication, *MyZoo Magazine*
- Exclusive, FREE limited-edition member t-shirt



New in the Gift Shop!

Check out our new seasonal items, including newly arrived tiger apparel and more! Stop in and see our great selection of conservation-themed gift items for the animal lovers in your life next time you visit.

Members Receive 10% OFF!

Best of all, your purchases benefit animal care at the zoo and conservation in the wild.



Protect Animals Bracelets

3D Magnet

 **The Curious Cub**
GIFT SHOP



Can't come to the zoo? Scan the QR code to visit our online store or go to syracusezooevents.org/shop



Mama and cub plushie

Looking for even more ways to contribute to the zoo's conservation mission while experiencing even more exclusive benefits? Combine the best of a Rosamond Gifford Zoo membership with essential support to the zoo and its programs by becoming a **premier member** and joining the Circle of Friends. Premier memberships start at \$500 and can be made by check, credit card or through a gift of securities.



Become a premier member by joining one of seven Circle of Friends tiers to enjoy these exclusive benefits:

- Four additional guests per visit
- Four guest passes for your distribution
- Invitation to exhibit previews
- Docent led tour of zoo for six people
- Invitation to annual insider's briefing

ASK ABOUT BECOMING A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS MEMBER

Get additional benefits that bring you closer to the zoo! For more information, contact Gina Rapasadi at (315) 435-8511, X8534, email grapasadi@rosamondgiffordzoo.org or scan the QR Code



Wish List

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is thankful for your contributions and always appreciative of enrichment items for the animals under our care. Items can be delivered to the membership desk during zoo hours. If you have any questions, please contact our philanthropy office at (315) 435-8511 x8534 or x8518

Indoor/Outdoor Birds:

Ryobi drill, impact driver, pruning saw, string trimmer, cultivator, cordless circular saw, mower

Elephants:

Jelly-beans
Peanut Butter
Marshmallows

Carnivores:

Spices
Canned Tuna

Hoofstock:

Perfume pack

Penguin Coast:

Hand soaps from
Bath and Body Works

MYZOO JR. TIGER GAMES ANSWERS: They were playing with a cheetah! | The tiger because it wouldn't be spotted!





Executive Chef Allison Walts – the New Face of Catering at the Zoo

The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo are proud to announce the promotion of Sous Chef Allison Walts to executive chef. Catering at the Zoo's former Executive Chef Dan Hudson departed in late summer to join the culinary staff of the Georgia Bulldogs football team.

Executive Chef Allison earned a bachelor of science degree at Clarkson University in 2008, but withdrew from law school in 2010 to pursue a culinary career. Since then, she's developed extensive experience in working and leading kitchens, as well as overseeing catering events — which she said is always her favorite aspect of her job. She's helped plan and execute weddings, charity functions, festivals, holiday banquets, and more, all while maintaining restaurant-quality standards.

Her experience is extensive and varied, having worked in many restaurant kitchens and as a private chef for fraternities and sororities at Syracuse University and Cornell University. She also worked ten years at the Sherwood Inn in Skaneateles, working her way up from prep cook to sous chef/ kitchen supervisor alongside Chef Dan for many years. In July 2021, Walts joined the Friends of the Zoo's Catering department as sous chef.

"Dan has been my mentor and friend for more than a decade; while I am sad to see him leave, I am also excited to continue the work we've done together — and to add my own personal touches," Allison said. "Our culinary tastes are very similar, and we share a passion for quality and earnestness in food and cooking. I will miss him very much, and wish him all the best in his new adventure."

Allison's promotion to executive chef represents the culmination of her lifelong culinary aspirations, and is a significant achievement for women in this industry. In the United States, only 12.5% of executive chefs are women.

"I've wanted to be a chef since I was a little girl, watching Julia Child on my parents' black-and-white television set," Walts said. "This is truly a dream come true."

Allison has been coming to the zoo for over 30 years, and takes pride in the knowledge that her everyday work aids the animals in the zoo's care. Under her guidance, the zoo's catering department will continue to thrive and expand while maintaining the prestige and professionalism that has helped Catering at the Zoo to grow and garner such rave reviews in the last three years.

"Working at the zoo is fun, fast-paced, and interesting—I love that I'm able to provide an enriching culinary experience for our guests as they enjoy 'The Best Day Ever!' here at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo," said Chef Allison. "The unique partnership between the Friends and the Onondaga County Parks means that I go to work every day knowing that I am directly contributing to the welfare of these beautiful animals. I'm so appreciative of the hard work done behind-the-scenes to make our zoo an enjoyable place to learn about animals and wildlife conservation."

"Chef Allison has been our secret weapon for a couple years under Chef Dan here at the zoo. She has earned this promotion with her work ethic and commitment to quality. We are thrilled see her step up into the executive chef role and we can't wait to watch her lead the culinary team into our next phase."

Chuck Anthony
Director,
Catering at the Zoo



It's not too late to book your Holiday Party!

Our culinary team is dedicated to making your celebration memorable

You and your guests will enjoy a wide selection of delicious menu options, beverage offerings, a beautiful banquet space with elegant holiday décor, and access to the indoor zoo and/or an animal greeter — an experience available nowhere else in Central New York. **Best of all, your event benefits the animals of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo!**

Offering Evening Receptions and Mid-Day Luncheons



CONTACT OUR EVENT EXPERTS TODAY!

EVENTS@ROSAMONDGIFFORDZOO.ORG | (315) 435-8511 x8543 | CATERINGATTHEZOO.ORG



Reserve your spot today

and savor the delectable dishes masterfully prepared by Executive Chef Allison Walts, paired with select wines and beers

Scan for more information



MONTHLY SERIES





Upcoming Events



ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO
ZOO RUN RUN
April 20, 2024

Register NOW to get started!
Scan the QR Code for details!
Get out and get moving on behalf of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at our annual 5K zoo run!

