

An insider's view of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

SPRING 2025

# My ZOO

Magazine

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## A Message from the Friends Executive Director

As we step into another exciting season at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, I want to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your support. Your membership is more than just an entry pass— it is a commitment to wildlife conservation, education, and the future of our beloved zoo.

This year is shaping up to be a fun and exciting one. We are thrilled to share that Canine Champions for Conservation will be here this summer. The show is a dazzling display of rescue and shelter dogs who will perform feats of astounding agility,

all while inspiring guests to protect our natural world, sure to delight visitors of all ages.

Our education team continues to inspire the next generation of conservationists through hands-on experiences and engaging programs, which are available at a discount for members. Additionally, we have introduced new membership benefits, including discounts on more events, membership appreciation days, and the addition that Zoo Boo tickets are now included with your membership. Your support ensures that we can continue to provide exceptional care for our animals, to deliver meaningful educational programs, and to create unforgettable experiences for all who enter our gates.

I invite you to visit us often! Participate in our upcoming events, and witness firsthand the positive changes happening at your zoo. Thank you for being a part of our zoo family—we couldn’t do it without you.

*Carrie Large*

Carrie Large  
Friends of the Zoo Executive Director

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Golden Lion Tamarin  
photo by Kevin Pierce

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Please direct questions regarding this publication to [editor@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:editor@rosamondgiffordzoo.org).

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OF THE  
ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO



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The **Rosamond Gifford Zoo** One Conservation Place, Syracuse, NY 13204 is owned and operated by Onondaga County. **Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo** is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing a level of excellence that makes the Rosamond Gifford Zoo a national leader in animal care, conservation, and visitor experience.

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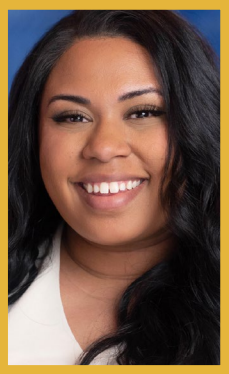
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*Growing up in the area, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo holds most of my childhood memories! Now having my own children, I love that I get to continue and make our own traditions and make new memories with them. The zoo is something that I’ve always viewed as being the heart of our community, so when I was asked to join the board, I felt so honored and was absolutely thrilled. The passion that the team has for the animals, educating our communities, along with bringing awareness is commendable. Being able to contribute is empowering!*

**Savannah Gibbs**  
**Friends of the Zoo Board Member**  
**ONEGROUP Risk Management and Insurance**



*I have always had an interest in animals and conservation, but I did not truly understand the role that Zoos play in conservation, protection, and advocacy until I started going to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. The research collaboration efforts of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo towards species survival plans, breeding, and the health and welfare of both common and endangered species is positively brilliant. As part of the Board, I have a sense of being part of something that is globally meaningful. I love working with the dedicated Zoo staff to ensure that conservation, education, and fun are paramount.*

**Melissa Hicks**  
**Friends of the Zoo Board Member**  
**Onondaga Community College**

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## No One’s Pet: The Cruelty of the Exotic Pet Trade

*As many of our readers know, some of the biggest threats to the world’s wildlife include habitat destruction, pollution, poaching, climate change, and invasive species.*

Unfortunately, in addition to these dangers, another often overlooked threat to wildlife that is no less harmful lurks: the exotic pet trade.

The exotic pet trade refers to the capture, trade, and/or sale of wild, non-domesticated animals for the purpose of keeping them as pets. Each year, this lucrative practice generates an estimated \$30.6-42.8 billion and subjects tens of millions of animals to abject suffering (Siev 2022). The global demand for exotic animals as pets continues to increase, and social media has only exacerbated the problem. From species as large as Bengal tigers to tiny parakeets, from aquatic clownfish to arboreal sloths, from animals as (seemingly) innocuous as hedgehogs to venomous king cobras, the reality is that no animal is safe from exploitation in the exotic pet trade. Laws prohibiting the capturing/buying/selling/owning of exotic animals as pets are surprisingly lax. Although some jurisdictions have laws that protect some species, it is often legal to participate in the exotic pet trade, as evidenced by popular documentaries such as *Chimp Crazy* and *Tiger King*. Despite its legality, the exotic pet trade remains an unethical, harmful practice.

As an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Rosamond Gifford Zoo seeks to protect and to preserve animal species. Our mission is to support wildlife conservation, and that means we stand against the exotic pet trade. We ask for all those who love animals to do the same.

Profit, not animal wellbeing, is typically the ultimate goal of exotic pet trading businesses. To maximize the number of animals available for purchase, sellers will keep as many animals as they can, avoid spending money on animal care, and continuously work to perpetuate this cycle. “Animals brought into the exotic pet trade really suffer in the process,” says Tamara Singer, Collection Manager of Small Mammals and Primates at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. As an expert in animal wellbeing, she has seen firsthand the damage inflicted upon exotic animals kept as pets. “The people who are collecting these animals for sale into the exotic pet trade are only thinking about profiting from them. The wellbeing of the animal is not a primary concern, and that is evident in every step of process.”

Once brought into the exotic pet trade, the odds of the animal’s survival are devastatingly low. Many do not even survive the transport. When an animal is captured from the wild, it is usually drugged, netted, and carelessly restrained in cramped conditions without access to food, water, or bedding. Because these animals are often being smuggled into areas illegally, they are forced into a variety of transport containers, none of which provide animals with safety or security. For example, birds are shoved into socks hidden at the bottom of suitcases at airport customs. Baby manta rays are mailed internationally in sealed plastic baggies filled with a bit of water. There have even been cases of animals trapped in spare tires, Tupperware containers, or chained in cages for their entire journeys.



photo credit: Save the Golden Lion Tamarin and Associação Mico-Leão-Dourado  
Nearly a victim of the exotic pet trade, a golden lion tamarin looks out after being rescued by Togolese Republic authorities and returned to Brazilian Federal Police for further care.

Most of the time, captured animals are babies or juveniles still in need of their mothers. To secure a capture, smugglers will often kill or seriously injure the animal’s protective mother, compounding the trauma for the now-orphaned baby. As if the physical issues such as malnutrition, dehydration, extreme temperatures, injuries, and lack of space are not enough for the animal to endure, the psychological effects of stress, fear, and confusion also take an incredible toll. When experiencing high levels of stress, animals often engage in self-mutilating behaviors such as feather plucking, overgrooming, and pacing. “Stress compounds all the problems of the less-than-ideal conditions,” Singer notes. “Wild animals are very good at masking signs of illness, injuries, and stress. They have to be good at it to avoid predators. If you’re noticing signs that an animal is stressed or having health issues, then the level of stress that they are under is immense.” Even in cases where animals are bred in captivity to supply the exotic pet trade, their living conditions and health outlook are often bleak.

For those animals who do somehow survive such heinous conditions, there is nothing better waiting for them after they reach their destination and become pets. People who seek to own an exotic animal do not understand or have access to the specialized care exotic animals need to thrive. Once purchased, these animals usually find themselves caged in confined and unnatural environments, fed diets that do not provide adequate nutrition, and forced to interact with their human owners.

Exotic pet care amasses exorbitant expense. The initial purchase of an exotic pet could be anywhere from \$500 to nearly \$100,000, depending on the level of demand and perceived rarity of the species. Over time, costs of care and maintenance can be more than double that (Not a Pet 2024). Amazon parrots, for instance, can live for over 70 years, meaning that once purchased, they will need care for decades, perhaps even outliving their human owners. Ironically, despite the costs, the care given to these animals is inadequate. It is difficult and expensive for exotic pet owners to access veterinarians with specialized zoological training and knowledge of the animals’ physiologies needed to provide proper treatment. A typical vet who sees domestic patients cannot treat exotic animals. When the animals inevitably get sick, human owners without medical training, equipment, or resources are on their own to provide medical care.

*continued on pg. 6*



# ANIMAL UPDATES

**Meet Kai**  
Now that’s what I’m “takin” about! Please join us in welcoming Kai, a male Sichuan takin who arrived to be a companion for our two female takin, Jiao and Ling. Takins are large hoofed mammals native to rugged, mountainous terrain in the Eastern Himalayas at altitudes above 4,300 meters.



# CREATURE FEATURE: GOOTY SAPPHIRE TARANTULA

*Poecilotheria metallica*

AT THE ROSAMOND GIFFORD  
ZOO: 1 FEMALE, 4 JUVENILES  
ULRICH, ANDHRA, SAU, LOTUS,  
AND POPPET

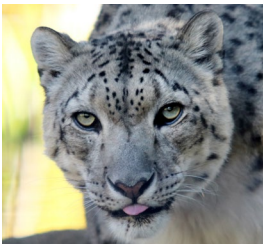


- On October 2, 2024, **male helmeted curassow Sangria** departed for the Brookfield Zoo.
- On October 6, 2024, **male Black Welsh Mountain sheep Ord** passed away and a **violet turaco chick** hatched in the Diversity of Birds habitat.
- On October 8, 2024, **two female Black Welsh Mountain sheep named Eunice and Priscilla** departed for the Utica Zoo.
- On October 9, 2024, **female helmeted curassow Cabernet** arrived from the Brookfield Zoo.
- On October 23, 2024, **male Sichuan takin Kai** arrived from The Wilds.
- On November 4, 2024, **female white-lipped deer Rosie** passed away. She was almost 20 years old, making her one of the oldest white-lipped deer on record.
- On November 13, 2024, **three white-lipped deer, Stag (male), Tashi (female), and Kaila (female)**, departed for West Texas Wildlife Preserve.
- On November 20, 2024, **male red wolf Waya** departed for Brookgreen Gardens.
- On December 26, 2024, **female fennec fox Pink** was humanely euthanized due to thyroid cancer.
- On January 2, 2025, **eight male northern seahorses** arrived from Audubon Aquarium of the Americas.
- On January 25, 2025, **male red wolf Sage** and **a male Von der Deckens hornbill** arrived from the North Carolina Zoo.



## Forever Muppet

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is deeply saddened to announce the loss of our beloved North American porcupine, Muppet. Muppet came to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in 2014 from a small animal facility in Alexandria Bay, NY. After her mother rejected her, staff there began hand-rearing her to ensure her survival. At approximately 6 weeks of age, Muppet was transferred to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, where animal specialists continued her care. Muppet quickly became a favorite of staff and zoo guests alike. From education programs and events to weddings and conferences, Muppet was a frequent guest and true ambassador for her species. Her calm demeanor and natural curiosity also combatted negative stereotypes of her species. Muppet’s legacy lives on in those she inspired to fall in love with wildlife.



## Majestic Senge

With a heavy heart, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo shares the passing of Senge, our majestic snow leopard. Born in 2008, Senge has been a cherished favorite of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo family for years. He could often be found relaxing

at the corner of his habitat as guests marveled at his cryptic coat. His legacy lives on in the cubs he fathered, which contributes to the survival of his species. Senge’s presence and personality helped us spread awareness and promote the conservation of wild snow leopards.

*We offer our sincere thanks to everyone who cared for these wonderful creatures.*

## Get to Know the Gooty Sapphire Tarantula

*The Gooty sapphire tarantula (Poecilotheria metallica) is native to a very small area of southeast India.*

True to the “sapphire” part of their name, Gooty sapphire tarantulas sport a brilliant blue color that develops as they mature. Typically, males display a brighter blue color than females. Although their eyesight is poor, they are photosensitive, meaning they can sense light. Like many spider species, Gooty sapphire tarantulas live solitarily in the wild. They are venomous, but their bite is not fatal to humans.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) designates the Gooty sapphire tarantula as a critically endangered species, meaning that they face a high risk of extinction in the wild. Habitat destruction and the exotic pet trade are their biggest threats. (Learn more about the dangers of the exotic pet trade on page 3 of this issue!) Gooty sapphire tarantulas are an arboreal species, meaning they typically live in trees. When these trees are harvested, usually to be sold as firewood, Gooty sapphire tarantulas are left with no place to live. You can help preserve Gooty sapphire tarantulas by making sure that when you purchase wooden products, you choose ethically sourced products.

### Fun Fact:

*As an ambush predator, Gooty sapphire tarantulas will patiently wait to sense vibrations that signal their prey is nearby and strike suddenly. Their diet in the wild includes moths, crickets, and other insects.*

Five Gooty sapphire tarantulas live at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo: a five-year-old female named Ulrich and four juvenile spiderlings named Andhra, Sau, Lotus, and Poppet. You can visit Ulrich at the USS Antiquities Cave. The four juveniles are off exhibit in a specialized holding space behind the scenes so they can grow and develop safely. As the spiderlings develop, the animal care team will be able to tell their sexes based on their coloring and molting (skin-shedding) patterns. Males stop molting once they hit maturity, but females molt once a year. Ulrich’s diet includes silk moths, caterpillars, crickets, and her personal favorite, hornworms.

Gooty sapphire tarantulas serve an important role in their natural ecosystems. While they might look scary or dangerous at first glance, spiders are very beneficial to most environments. Spiders keep pest populations in check, pollinate plant life, and help maintain balance by contributing to an area’s biodiversity. Rosamond Gifford Zoo hopes to increase our population of Gooty sapphire tarantulas and to encourage other zoos to do the same.



**Learn more about this fascinating species and our plans to save them:**



**Moreover**, the animals are not the only ones at risk of developing serious diseases. So are their human owners. Sustained contact with wild animals increases the risk of zoonotic diseases transferring to humans. Some of the most devastating diseases in human history, such as SARS, H1N1 Swine Influenza, H5N1 (HPAI) Avian Influenza, and Ebola, are zoonotic in origin. Others include salmonella, hepatitis, rabies, measles, tuberculosis, and parasites. To keep an exotic pet in your home is to invite these and other germs directly into your home, too.

Wild animals are just that: wild. They are inherently different than the domestic animals who have evolved over thousands of years to coexist with humans safely and ethically. Even when animals are born in the wild and captured as infants, hand raised, or bred in captivity, they do not lose their natural instincts. For instance, many primate species are social, meaning they naturally live in groups. Although they have been taken away from their troop at a young age, they still need the stimulation and security of living in a group setting. Other animals, such as most big cats, are solitary in nature. Despite their human owners’ best attempts to cuddle, constant proximity to and physical contact with humans cause the animals great harm. Wild animals always pose a danger to humans, especially when kept in stressful conditions. They will attack and bite, no matter what a seller might claim to entice a buyer. In 2019, a woman was found strangled to death by an eight-foot python she kept in her Oxford, Indiana home. In 2021, a pet pig-tailed macaque escaped from its home in Reno, Nevada and injured four people (Pawsome Advice 2022).

Beyond the animal suffering, massive financial commitment, and increased risk of illness, it is sometimes a crime to own specific exotic species. Both domestic and international wildlife protection laws make some pet trade activities illegal, therefore subjecting perpetrators to fines or jail sentences, depending on the severity of involvement. For instance, New York State is one of 19 U.S. states that ban the possession, harboring, selling, bartering, transferring, exchange, or import of any wild animal to be used as a pet without obtaining a permit (McKinney’s Environmental Conservation Law, 2004). Other states, such as Ohio, have bans on certain species, prohibiting the ownership of a “dangerous wild animal,” which the law defines as “hyena, wolf, wolf-hybrid, lion, tiger, leopard, big cat, big cat hybrid, elephant, rhino, hippo, buffalo, wild dog, Komodo dragon, alligator, crocodile, and nonhuman primate, among others” (Drouet, 2022). Conversely, some states (including Alabama, Nevada, and North Carolina) have no ban regarding exotic pet ownership, though they do have some prohibitive laws relating to import and health.

Demand for exotic pets has never been higher, and social media is partly to blame. Any quick internet search will bring up hundreds, if not thousands, of photo and video content featuring exotic animals kept as pets. Unfortunately, such content is exceedingly popular, garnering countless likes, comments, and subscribers that only fuel an exotic pet owner’s impulse to exploit their animals forengagement.

To that end, one way the public can fight against the exotic pet trade is by shrinking demand. Please be conscious of the content with which you interact on social media to ensure you aren’t inadvertently supporting the exotic pet trade. A baby animal being bottle-fed might look cute on screen, but the reality for that animal is anything but cute. If the animal is being bottle-fed, it is far too young to be separated from its mother.

Other signs include the animal wearing clothes and/or diapers, an animal that is naturally social shown on screen alone, and even having had body parts (teeth, claws, glands, etc.) surgically removed to make them allegedly less dangerous to handle. These are exotic pet trade red flags.

Wildlife conservation authorities, such as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), actively work to protect animals from being brought into the pet trade.

When animals are confiscated, a collaborative team effort ensues to ensure that the rescued animals are provided with the care and support they need. These reputable authorities often turn to AZA-accredited institutions, such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Over the years, our zoo has repeatedly partnered with wildlife authorities to help victims of the exotic pet trade. Examples include animals we have either temporality housed or welcomed to our forever home after being involved with the exotic pet trade include spotted turtles, Blanding’s turtles, hyacinth macaws, Gila monsters, ball pythons, and even a ring-tailed lemur. Singer recalls the poor physical and psychological condition of the ring-tailed lemur: “Looking at him when he arrived [at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo] and then looking at him when he was sent to a sanctuary, his physical and mental health vastly improved. He was never going to be a 100% healthy and normal lemur, but he made leaps and bounds of progress.” Due to the patience and support of Singer and the rest of the animal care team, the lemur improved both his physical health, with proper medications and diet, as well as mental health, with socialization practice and enrichment opportunities. For this ring-tailed lemur and so many other animals who are lucky enough to be rescued from the exotic pet trade, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s intervention was quite literally the difference between a life of abuse and neglect to one of proper care and wellbeing.

As gut-wrenching as it is for these animals to be in such dire circumstances, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is grateful to be able to give these animals the help they need. Rosamond Gifford Zoo is able to intervene because we have the proper resources to take care of these animals, including the space, diet, opportunities for enrichment, medical care, and whatever else an animal might need to thrive. All members of Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s animal care team hold educational degrees in disciplines related to animal care, including biology, zoology, or animal sciences, so they possess the base skills and knowledge to provide adequate animal husbandry. Furthermore, the animal care team members at Rosamond Gifford Zoo specialize in certain types of animals, which prepares them to be acutely attuned to the needs of the individual animals under their care. According to Singer, “We do everything we can to replicate the wild to the very best of our ability every day.” Singer’s and the rest of her team’s commitment to animal wellbeing is evident in every facet of Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s operations.

Sometimes, animals rescued from the pet trade can even help contribute to the sustainment of their species population as participants in Species Survival Plans (SSPs.) Singer happily reports that currently, a group of Blanding’s turtles who were rescued from the pet trade have recovered from their illnesses and are undergoing genetic testing to discover if they might be suitable candidates for the Blanding’s turtle SSP at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Animals brought into the exotic pet trade have no choice. But you do.

You can choose to be an ally for wildlife by refusing to participate in the exotic pet trade and encouraging others to do the same. If you suspect an animal is being neglected, abused, or kept illegally, please report it to the appropriate authorities, which might be 911, USFWS (<https://www.fws.gov/wildlife-crime-tips>), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (<https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/report-a-problem>), or another local authority. When it comes to having pets, please choose a domestic animal so you can be confident in your ability to provide the animal with all the care and love they need. Support legislative efforts aimed to create and to strengthen laws that criminalize the exotic pet trade. Additionally, your support of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo directly funds our efforts to help animals affected by the exotic pet trade.

Next time you visit the zoo, we also recommend checking out the Curious Cub Gift Shop, which is fully stocked with plush animals who represent several exotic species. Unlike their real-life counterparts, plush versions of exotic animal species thrive under a domestic lifestyle, and you can know that your purchase ensures that Rosamond Gifford Zoo can continue helping real animals, including those involved in the exotic pet trade.

To find out more about the exotic pet trade, visit [www.notapet.net](http://www.notapet.net), an educational website supported by the AZA.

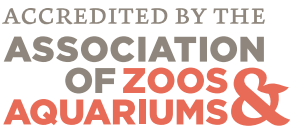
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# AZA Trends 2033 Report Released

*The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA.)*



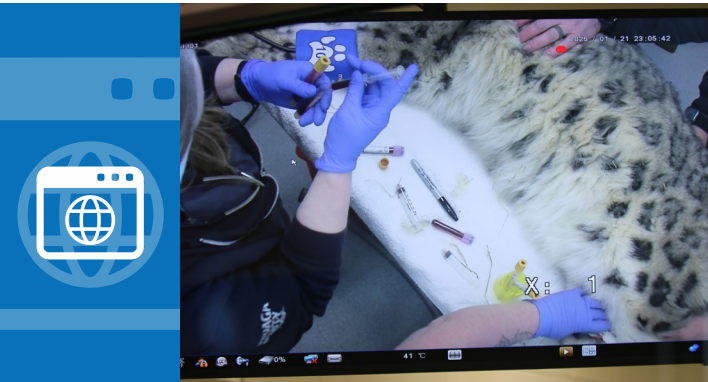
Since 1987 and continuously thereafter, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo has earned this status, signaling our commitment to providing the highest quality of care to our animals, promoting wildlife conservation through research efforts, and giving guests an engaging, educational experience when they visit our zoo. The AZA Trends Committee has recently published its AZA Trends 2033 Report, a document intended to outline their anticipatory vision for the next decade of zoo and aquarium developments. The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the nonprofit partner of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, provided funding to the AZA Trends Committee for this important research.

Now that the report has been published, we are excited for what the future holds and already planning how to incorporate innovations that distinguish the Rosamond Gifford Zoo as a leader in wildlife care and conservation into 2033 and far beyond. **The AZA Trends 2033 Report focused on the following six areas, deemed “megatrends,” to emphasize a holistic approach to further AZA missions, operations, and guest experiences in the next decade:**



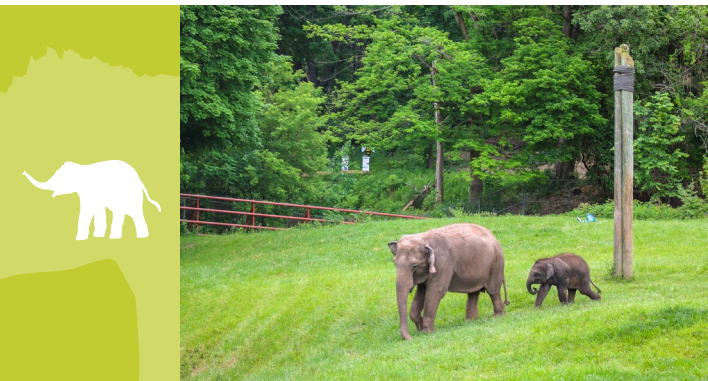
## ENVIRONMENT

AZA institutions will need to adjust to the already-occurring increase of climate change impacts, which will include evolving proper animal care practices to accommodate animals’ needs, preparing for extreme weather, preparing for an increased threat of zoonotic disease, developing sustainable energy plans, and advocating for stronger legislation for wildlife conservation.



## TECHNOLOGY

AZA institutions will leverage new technological developments to streamline operations and enhance guest experience while scrutinizing potential problems such technology might trigger. It is expected that useful technological applications might include incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into market research data and/or promoting interactive opportunities through augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and live streaming. Conversely, technological innovation will also include robust response to problematic developments, such as the rise of deepfake misinformation and attempts to create hybrid “species” serving as “proxies” for extinct species.



## ZOO AND AQUARIUM DESIGN

Animal habitat design will continue to focus on mimicking natural environments, meaning habitats will become larger and include multiple species and/or multiple generations of animals. Sustainability must dictate the direction of design, allowing zoos and aquariums to act as environmentally conscious models for the public.



## CHANGING AUDIENCES

Universal Design Principles (UDP) will be implemented to ensure that institutions are fully accessible for guests with disabilities while actively including guests of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and other historically marginalized demographics. Such features include providing signage for guests with visual impairments, creating and maintaining pathways for guests with mobility challenges, offering multilingual options, and more. Wildlife is for everyone, and AZA institutions need to include and to invite everyone to join our wildlife conservation mission.



## THE NEXT GENERATION

AZA institutions will deliberately encourage younger millennials and Gen Z populations to visit. Social media presence and interaction as a means for communication will be two key factors in attracting and retaining interest from the generations that have grown up with technology. These generations also exhibit greater sensitivity to animal rights and welfare, meaning that AZA institutions must work to communicate their mission and the critical role we play in wildlife conservation efforts more effectively to combat misconceptions.



## THE FUTURE OF WORK

AZA institutions continue to grapple with the global pandemic’s effect on workplace culture and employment expectations. Most notably, compensating employees with a living wage will help to decrease high turnover and to increase employee satisfaction. When possible, remote and hybrid work will help retain employees while promoting work/life balance, though automation will lead to a reduced workforce. Much like the rest of the labor market, AZA institutions expect employees to diversify and to display an increased interest in aligning their values with their workplaces’ missions.

**In light of these trends, the Friends of the Zoo is already working to ensure that the Rosamond Gifford Zoo will be on the cutting-edge of innovation and development, bringing exceptional experiences and opportunities to our cherished guests.**

“As we look ahead, we are committed to implementing these forward-thinking strategies—whether through educating about animal care in response to climate change, embracing technology to enhance guest experiences, or ensuring our zoo remains a welcoming, inclusive space for all,” says Carrie Large, Executive Director of the Friends of the Zoo. “This report reaffirms the vital role that accredited institutions play in wildlife conservation, education, and innovation, and we are excited to be at the forefront of these transformative efforts to connecting people to care.”

Exciting projects are in the works, so stay tuned for more details! We are excited to help shape our zoo’s future with the AZA’s key megatrends in mind, and we look forward to bringing that bright future to life for our guests and animals alike.

With your help, the Friends of the Zoo will provide our zoo community with the newest technological innovations and engaging guest experiences as we continue to safeguard wildlife species around the world.

**To bring the Rosamond Gifford Zoo into the future, please consider donating to the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo:**





# Minimizing Stress and Maximizing Animal Welfare During Zoo Events

*Promoting good animal welfare is, without a doubt, the top priority of both the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.*

While the Rosmond Gifford Zoo handles animal care and maintenance operations, the Friends of the Zoo is a nonprofit organization that exists to provide financial support to the zoo through funds dedicated to the welfare of our animals, educational programs, and facilities. Although the main functions of the two groups are different, we come together over our shared missions to take the best possible care of over 1300 individual animals who live at the zoo and to conserve wildlife populations across the globe. Even during events hosted by the Friends of the Zoo that do not directly involve animals, the animals' welfare and comfort are always addressed, monitored, and maintained so that the event adheres to our goal of wildlife conservation. When you attend popular events such as Holiday Nights, Brew at the Zoo, Zoo Run Run, and others, you can be sure that you are supporting the zoo's mission without compromising the animals' welfare.



The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has developed animal welfare guidelines to promote and to standardize animal welfare across accredited facilities. As defined by the AZA Animal Welfare Committee, "animal welfare refers to an animal's collective physical, mental, and emotional states over a period of time, and is measured on a continuum from good to poor." As an AZA-accredited institution, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo adheres to these guidelines and uses them to shape our procedures related to animal welfare, which include having action plans in place to prevent animals from being negatively affected by large events. At all times, we strive to promote good animal welfare. This means that when the Friends of the Zoo hosts an event at the zoo, a major part of planning that event must account for the animals' comfort, health, and happiness.

At first glance, this might seem almost counterintuitive. After all, events such as Asian Elephant Extravaganza or Novelis Party for the Planet draw crowds of 2,000+ people to the zoo. Brew at the Zoo and Zoo Run Run feature live music. Holiday Nights and Fall Conservation Bash are held in the evenings when the zoo is usually closed. Zoo Boo brings bright costumes, decorations, and other startling visual stimuli to the zoo. How can these such events go on while prioritizing animal welfare?

According to Theo Campbell, Collection Manager of Large Mammals at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, careful planning, transparent communication, and detailed observation all play important roles in maintaining animal welfare during these large events. "The biggest thing we take into consideration for animals during large events is that it's something outside of their normal routines," says Campbell. "We want it to be as least disruptive as it can be for the animals."

The AZA continues to study the dynamic interplay of animal care amidst large-scale events, with a recent article noting, "As in day-to-day operations, peak animal wellbeing is achieved when everyone works together as a team across departments [when planning and executing events]" (Fuller 2023). The Rosamond Gifford Zoo and Friends of the Zoo take this sentiment to heart as we work to align with it during all operations, including large events. At the start of event preparation, the Friends of the Zoo will submit written requests with detailed information to the animal care team, including the expected size of the event, planned activities, locations, typical guest age ranges, and more. Sharing this information allows the animal care team to strategize effectively to reduce animals' stress levels.

Signs of stress can manifest in several different ways that vary across species. Excessive pacing, panting, and head rolling might indicate an animal is stressed. Others might try to hide or refuse to eat their normal diet. Our hoofstock species, including Turkmenian markhor and Sichuan takin, often are the most likely to react poorly to stimuli from large events. Animals' heightened senses lead them to react to certain stimuli that humans do not perceive as strongly or at all. Asian elephants, for example, can pick up on reverberations from a booming bass line over far distances. Intense stress can even cause an animal to experience dangerous physiological reactions such as lethargy (a state of inactivity or confusion), rapid breathing, or cardiomyopathy. Red wolves are a species at a higher risk of acute cardiomyopathy, which is a metabolic reaction to stress that presents similarly to a heart attack.

To mitigate animals' stress effectively, the procedures and guidelines that the animal care team follows are proactive as possible yet leave room for reacting to any unpredictable changes. For instance, when music is part of an event, the Friends of the Zoo will proactively communicate to music groups that the decibel level of the performance cannot be above 80dB. During the event, a designated animal care team member will use a decibel reader to measure noise levels at various spots on zoo grounds. If noise levels are determined to be too high, music groups are asked to adjust their performance accordingly. Additionally, animal care team members will observe animals' behavior throughout the event and intervene if an animal is showing any signs of experiencing stress. "Sometimes that means allowing animals to go into their indoor holding areas so they can be away from the commotion and crowds. Sometimes it means making the decision for them and keeping them inside," explains Campbell. "If an animal is having an adverse reaction, we will always adjust. The animals are our top priority."

In addition to performing rounds and monitoring behaviors, the animal care team will also document their observations by filling out a Welfare Assessment Form, which draws on the AZA's guidelines for monitoring animal welfare. These forms can be used to record an animal's reactions to a disruptive trigger by type, duration, and other classifications. "We monitor the welfare status of every animal in the collection regularly," Campbell describes, "But when there's a potential trigger—large events, construction, introducing a new animal, or anything else that might cause distress, we'll monitor that animal with special attention and fill out a Welfare Assessment Form." The Welfare Assessment Form measures a variety of inputs that might affect an animal's status of wellbeing, such as diet, environment, appropriate social grouping within their habitat, and more resources provided to promote good welfare. Moreover, the form measures short-term outputs that indicate an animal's welfare status, such as engaging in proper social behavior, coat/scale/feather condition, eating normally, and other signs of welfare status. The documentation and availability of this qualitative data is vital for both immediate intervention and future planning. By logging their observations, the team keeps track of each animal's reaction to the event and compiles baselines that can be drawn upon to inform future actions. "Welfare Assessments are records of objective data we can all use," Campbell asserts. "Having them on file helps us determine action plans for the future so we can be as proactive as possible for our animals."

Animal welfare is a collaborative effort at every level, internally and externally. Before Welfare Assessment forms are filed, multiple members of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's Welfare Committee, a veterinarian or veterinarian technician, the relevant Collection Manager, and General Curator of the zoo all review the information together. In addition to immediate stress mitigation, that collective awareness helps shape zoo protocols to serve our animals better. Additionally, the data helps the animal care team work with the Friends of the Zoo to organize large-scale events that preemptively consider animal welfare. Beyond our zoo's borders, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo partakes in ongoing conversations regarding animal welfare with other AZA-accredited facilities. "There's a lot of communication about all kinds of topics, including animal welfare, [in the form of] discussion boards and email blasts," Campbell notes. "That's one of the benefits of AZA-accreditation. As members, we can communicate with all of these other facilities and pool our knowledge to benefit all of our animals."

The Friends of the Zoo will attest to the fact that planning large-scale events has a lot of moving parts, but the stable center around which everything else revolves always is and will continue to be the animals' welfare. For animal welfare and any other project, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo are complementary to each other in every sense of the word, collaborating and innovating as we lead efforts to sustain wildlife and inspire the public to join our cause.

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MYZOO JR.

IUCN Status:  
**ENDANGERED**

Red pandas are native to the Himalayan Mountains, living at elevations between 4,900-13,000 ft. They migrate vertically, moving to the lower elevations during colder months.

Red pandas have an enlarged wrist bone, known as a "false thumb," that enables them to climb and to grasp bamboo.

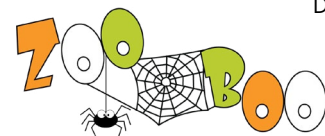
Red pandas have fur on the bottom of their feet that helps them stay warm and remain balanced when climbing.

# RED PANDA





# EVENT RECAPS



During the last three weekends of October 2024, over **14,000 guests** attended the zoo. Zoo Boo participants donned their costumes, held out their treat bags, and enjoyed a kooky-not-spooky time at Zoo Boo! Thanks to the effort of our team and over **100 volunteers**, the zoo transformed into a Halloween wonderland, full of decorations, activities, and festive fun for all. With your help, we raised over **\$40,000** to benefit the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. **Many thanks to our sponsors who helped make this sweet event a success: Community Bank, Countryside Credit Union, Energy Savers, Girl Scouts Troop 60500, New York Life, Springside Farm, and Tops Friendly Markets.**



Ho-Ho-Holiday Nights was back and better than ever! During the first three weekends of December, over **4,000 guests** enjoyed a series of magical nights that brought together the giving spirit of the season, the festive mood of winter, and the year-round joy of supporting wildlife conservation. We raised over **\$50,000** for the zoo, and we were proud to give back to two community organizations. Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo donated over **\$1,800** to United Way of Central New York through hot chocolate sales and nearly **\$100** to Make-A-Wish CNY through special stuff-a-plush sales. Almost **100 volunteers** helped the Friends of the Zoo prepare for and host the event. **Many thanks to our sponsors for their generous support: Berkshire Bank, Community Bank, Cumulus Media, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, New York Life, Visions Federal Credit Union, and Wegmans.**



Over **2,700 guests** rang in 2025 in wild style! Hosted by the nonprofit partner of the zoo, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Noon Year's Eve is our kid-friendly, daytime celebration of the new year that has quickly grown into an annual tradition for so many families. The zoo grounds filled with children of all ages, excitedly watching their favorite animals as they counted down the noon ball drop in the courtyard. The event even included a dance party, giveaway, and ginger ale toast so that everyone welcomed the new year with all the pomp and circumstance it deserved. **We are grateful to the 20 volunteers who worked this event and to our sponsor, Tops Friendly Markets.**

**Our 2025 events calendar is live on our website!**

**SAVE THE DATES AND JOIN THE FUN!**



## Where Problem-Solving Meets Professional Pride: Get to Know the Rosamond Gifford Zoo Maintenance Crew

**Operating a zoo is a massive undertaking that requires an incredible amount of work from the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's entire team.** An important, but often overlooked, part of that team is our Maintenance Crew. Without this team of specialist laborers, operations would come to a screeching halt. From mowing to repairing fence line, from shoveling snow and ice to crafting animals' habitat structures from scratch, from clearing leaves to hauling materials, from handling heavy machinery to hanging holiday decorations, the workers who make up the Maintenance Crew ensure that Rosamond Gifford Zoo can function as the stellar, gold-standard institution of animal care and wildlife conservation that we are proud to be.

Led by Kevin Closser and Joshua Clasing, the Maintenance Crew also includes four full-time and three part-time professionals. Together, it is this team of nine's responsibility to perform all the work needed for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to maintain its beauty and functionality.

It's easy to find examples of the crew's positive impact on zoo grounds. In fact, one of their recent projects is visible as soon as guests arrive at Rosamond Gifford Zoo. The large hilly area that welcomes guests as they turn onto 1 Conservation Place was once full of massive brush that was too thick to navigate. Not only were the acres of bushes overgrown, unsightly, and potential safety hazards, but most were invasive plant species. (Learn more about invasive species in the EcoNotes section of this issue on page 20!) To rid the vast hills of dense brush that reached heights of up to seven feet, the crew diligently worked to cut away the unwanted brush and to dispose of debris properly.

Doing this job with wildlife conservation in mind posed extra challenge, but the Maintenance Crew was up to the task. Preserving natural wildlife is at the heart of all operations at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, and the Maintenance Crew's work is no exception. Amidst the dense brush was a sweetgum tree that needed to be preserved. Thanks to the careful effort of the Maintenance Crew, the sweetgum tree is alive and thriving! Closser recalls, "We took a lot of care with that [sweetgum tree.] Being around it and making sure it stayed there during our work. It's something you can see right away when you drive up [to the zoo.]" As their work continues, Closser envisions the area as being one where people might be able to gather for picnics and other fun activities.

Maintaining a zoo is a complex endeavor that often requires problem-solving and ingenuity. After all, much of the crew's work involves ensuring that animals' habitats are well-kept, operational, and provide an environment that best suits each animal's needs. As Closser explains, "Everything is outside-the-box. There's no how-to book for us." Case in point, it was the Maintenance Crew who brought Andean bear Bjorn's large climbing structure to life. As an arboreal species, Andean bears spend much of their lives up in trees.

Caring for Bjorn means giving him the option to exhibit his natural affinity for higher elevations. In short, he needs to have the chance to climb, just as wild Andean bears do. Not only that, but ensuring Bjorn has a climbing structure encourages him to keep his muscles strong and healthy.

After the Large Mammal Care Team came up with a design for the structure that would mimic an Andean bear's natural habitat, the Maintenance Crew began the work of developing the design into reality. "We go above and beyond. That's what it's about," Closser describes, recalling how he and his team approached bear-proofing the giant climbing structure made of logs and stone. The structure is also strong enough to support a hammock and multiple enrichment toys for Bjorn.

"It takes a little bit of fortitude, a little bit of common sense, and a lot of problem-solving," Closser describes. Bjorn frequently uses his structure, engaging in natural behaviors and offering guests insight into the agility of Andean bears.

Creative problem-solving is a key facet to the Maintenance Crew's work, especially when that work concerns the animals in the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's care. Not only do they perform their labor, which often includes a mix of carpentry, masonry, and other trade skills, to the highest degree, but they contend with another added layer of complexity: the animals. When executing their projects, the Crew accounts for the strength, smarts, and determination that most animals possess when they interact with their environments. Even so, wear-and-tear is inevitable. "[The animals] break everything," Clasing adds with a smile. "And when they break it, we fix it. That's part of our job."

That job is vital to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Despite not directly interacting with our animals, it is no exaggeration to say that their work directly and positively impacts our animals.

"We take pride," asserts Closser. "We take a great deal of pride in the way things look and what we do. It's a team effort, a real team effort."

The next time you visit the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, we invite you to notice the work of our amazing Maintenance Crew. Whether you admire the sweetgum tree on your drive up to the zoo, Bjorn's climbing hammock, the salted and shoveled pathways after a heavy snowfall, the reinforced fence line that keeps animals and guests safely distanced, the 50,000 gallon watering-hole for our Asian elephant herd, or any of the many projects that fall under the wide range of maintaining, supporting, and improving the zoo's operational functions, remember the team of professionals behind that important work.



EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programming for Kids

Wild Beginnings!

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

Join the education team for a special program tailored just for the little ones, ages 12 months to 3 years. Each themed class includes animal biofacts, nature-themed sensory play, a story, and hands-on learning! Young ones will explore with their senses as they develop language and motor skills in this early-learning adventure. **This program is designed for one child/one caregiver pair.**

April 21: Animal Sense and Sounds  
May 12: Trunks, Tusks, and Toes  
June 16: Exploring Habitats

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$15 per child/adult pair

Stroller Safari

Ages 1-5 | Saturdays | 9:45 - 10:30 a.m. or 2 - 2:45 p.m.

Get ready for an exciting journey through the zoo designed just for our youngest adventurers! Join us for **Stroller Safari**, where kids aged 5 and under, along with their adult companions, will embark on a fun-filled exploration of the animal kingdom. Together, we'll stroll through the zoo, discovering amazing animals, engaging in interactive activities with unique biofacts, and enjoying captivating stories about wildlife. Each stop on our safari is packed with sights and sounds that will spark curiosity and wonder!

June 7: Exploring Habitats  
July 12: Uncover the Colors of the Zoo  
August 2: What Do Animals Eat?

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$15 per child/1-2 adults  
Additional child (in same session) – \$5

Kids' Night Out

Ages 6-12 | Fridays | 5:30 - 8:30 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, learn about animals, tour the zoo after hours, make crafts, and play games all night long.

April 11  
May 9

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

Programming for Families

Family Camp

All Ages | 10 - Noon

A learning adventure for everyone! Whether it's touring the zoo, playing games, making crafts or meeting animal ambassadors, this family-friendly program is a perfect opportunity to connect with your loved ones while also connecting to nature.

June 21: Buzzing for Summertime: Bees and Pollinators  
August 16: Wildlife World Tour

Tuition per day:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$40 per child/adult pair  
Additional Child Tuition – \$20

One-Day Zoo Camp

Ages 6-12 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Join us for a dive deep into the incredible world of animals for a full day of Zoo Camp! Each camp day is different, allowing your child to explore something new about the animal world through hands-on science, artistry, technology, and engineering projects – whether they're registered for just one or multiple days! **For your convenience, you can select to pre-order lunch from the HoneyBee Café during registration.**

Sessions:  
Spring Break: Monday, April 14 – Friday, April 18  
Wednesday, June 19

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$65 per child

All members will receive a 7% discount on camps.

Pre-registration required. Sessions fill fast, sign up today! Register online at rgz.campbrainregistration.com  
Questions? Call the education department at (315) 435-8511 x8559 or email zoocamp@rosamondgiffordzoo.org

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Adult Programs

Adult Learning Series

Grown Ups (18+) only! | Saturdays | 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

**Learning is a lifelong adventure!** Discover the untold stories of wildlife conservation with our adult learning series. Join our education team in the classroom for a seminar-style program to learn about the animals who live at our zoo, the exceptional animal care we provide every day, exciting scientific research, and more!

May 17: Amazing Adaptations  
July 19: Energizing Enrichment

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$25

Scan to Register Now!



Don't forget to register your child for Summer Zoo Camp!

Week-long day camps for children ages 4-17.

REGISTER NOW!



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

Sessions fill fast, sign up today!

Register online at rgz.campbrainregistration.com or  
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW



Register for Adult Programs  
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW



Adult Zoo Camp

Grown Ups (18+) only! | Saturdays | 1 - 4 p.m.

**Zoo camp is NOT just for kids anymore!** Immerse yourself in an elevated and active zoo adventure designed just for adults. Join our educational team for an afternoon of hands-on projects, themed walking tours, and engaging activities as you learn how the Rosamond Gifford Zoo provides exceptional animal care and works to conserve wildlife. Adult campers should be ready to move, ready to learn, and ready to have wild fun!

May 17: Amazing Adaptations  
July 19: Energizing Enrichment

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$60

Scan to Register Now!



Nature Journaling

Grown Ups (18+) only! | Sundays | 10 - 11 a.m.

**Want to deepen your connection and understanding of the natural world?** Try your hand at nature journaling! Join our education team as we guide you through a series of observational exercises to fuel your creative writing. Learn more about plant life and wildlife throughout zoo grounds as you craft STEAM-based expressive narratives. This immersive program offers a unique opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Darwin, Thoreau, and other writers who blended scientific discovery with the art of language. Whether you're drawn to flora or fauna, prose or poetry, this class is for you. All you need is a notebook and something to write with—coloring supplies, binoculars, and cameras are optional but welcome, as they can help enhance your experience and capture meaningful moments.

April 6  
May 11  
June 8

July 13  
August 10

Tuition per session:  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$25

Scan to Register Now!



FREE All Ages Program

Community Conservation

All Ages | 10 - 11 a.m.

Did you know bird watching and taking pictures of plants can impact the world around you? Be the change in your community by bringing your passion for nature to Community Conservation with the Zoo!

One Sunday a month, learn about what scientists are doing to help plants and animals, and be a part of the solution. From bird identification to native plant gardening, you will learn skills and work alongside peers to participate in real conservation projects. Collect data to contribute to current scientific research, get involved with local organizations, and find your own passion for nature. **This program is free of charge, and open to the whole family, but you must register so that we know to expect you.**

May 4: Ocean Actions

June 22: Insect Investigation





# An Interview with Barbara Sheklin Davis, Ph.D.: Author of *Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park*

*The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is delighted to announce the publication of Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park, a new history book written by Barbara Sheklin Davis, Ph.D.*

Her monograph chronicles the century-long history of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Featuring an array of historical photographs, archival documents, and first-hand accounts, Davis presents a detailed account of our zoo's humble beginnings and transformation into the leader in wildlife conservation it is today. In celebration of her scholarly achievement, Davis joined us for an exclusive interview to offer insights on her research. *\*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**Thank you so much for sharing your work with us all. We're very excited for everyone to read your work and to learn more about the zoo's past, present, and the future we will create. What drew you to study the Rosamond Gifford Zoo?**

I'm a native of New York City. My father used to work for the Parks Department, and so going to the Central Park Zoo was part of my childhood. When I was in college, I took an anthropology course, which I loved, and we were sent to the Bronx Zoo to study primates. I've always liked zoos and didn't have any negative feelings about them as I grew up. And then I married. My husband liked zoos very much. Every time we travelled, even on our honeymoon, wherever we went, we'd always go find the zoo. When we moved to Syracuse, we'd go to the zoo a lot. My husband was a photographer, so he also took lots of pictures of animals, using an extremely large lens, at least two and a half feet long. He could get real close-ups. We have a lot of animal photographs hanging in our house. After my husband passed five years ago, I wanted to do something in his memory. It occurred to me that I could donate to the zoo, because they were in the process of creating the Animal Health Center at that time. We donated funds for one of the rooms in the Health Center. Along with that, I donated an enormous, and I do mean enormous, photograph of an orangutan that my husband had taken in California. At some place along the way there, I don't remember how, I said to someone at the zoo, "Would you like me write a history of the zoo?" And they were very enthusiastic.

**Our enthusiasm has only grown since then! Now the book is complete, published, and available for purchase. It's such an achievement. Writing a book can be a lengthy marathon of a process. From conception to completion, how long did the book take you?**  
About a year and a half. But I love to do research. I've written several other books with different topics, including the Black community of Syracuse NY, the Jewish community of Syracuse (with a co-author), Symphoria, and a book of advice that draws from my experience with my husband, who had Parkinson's for over twenty years, and others. The stories are there. You just have to find them, and I personally enjoy the search. I discovered that what I do is not called local history. It's called micro-history. What I try to do is place the story in the context of a larger picture. That is what I do in this book, too. People and animals are a very interesting topic. It's funny, every time you turn around, you discover there's another story. There's another history. There's another side. I very much like finding the other side.



**As someone with such a knack for finding the story and, perhaps even more challengingly, situating that story within its broader context, how would you describe the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's micro-history?**

Interesting, with a lot of layers and dimensions. Rosamond Gifford Zoo is doing a wonderful job. They're AZA [Association of Zoos and Aquariums] accredited, which is apparently a very minority position. Most zoos are not. They have a wonderful team up there. I mean, everybody that I've met has just been amazing. Anything I can do to help them further their mission, I'm delighted to do whatever little bit I can.

**Your book is a huge contribution, and we are so grateful.**

As for the bigger picture, the whole function of zoos has changed dramatically, and I think for the better. A zoo's purpose originally was for people to look [at animals.] People didn't travel the way they do now. They'd never seen a giraffe. They might have heard about it. They'd never seen an elephant. Being a place for people to look at animals was the purpose zoos served, but the animals paid the price. In fact, in my book, I mention how, decades ago, the zoo wanted to acquire monkeys, but they had to send somebody to Africa to capture the monkeys. I mean, that's unthinkable today.

**With good reason. Delving into the past of zoos, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo included, is one striking element of your book. Our past and the criticism it merited are there. It's not something we or anyone else can change. But it's something to learn from as we move forward. We're here to help wildlife thrive, whether that wildlife is in our care or in the wild. That goal drives every aspect of our work and dictates the methods of our operations. When you write, how do you approach your research? What's your methodology?**

I go to Jacksonville Beach, Florida for two months in the winter because I can't stand our Central New York winter weather. They have an excellent library system with online reservations. That's where my research began. I looked up 'zoos' and took out what must've been 15 books about zoos. I spent two months just reading about zoos. Then I returned and searched through our local newspapers, because they have a rich archive. Although, the trick is that you have to get the right search words. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo was then called the Burnet Park Zoo. I found many, many old articles. And the OHA has a pretty good selection of materials also.

**OHA?**

Onondaga Historical Association. They're another incredible resource. Plus, of course, the zoo. And the community. There was a lady, she was a schoolteacher, who wrote what basically amounted to a dissertation about the zoo. There was another person, a zoo lover, who had saved all kinds of clippings and materials, all kept in a plastic bag. Most recently, the photos people can take have just become so good. And the zoo takes wonderful photos. Spectacular. There are enough pictures in it that one could leaf through the book. We really have, I think, a beautiful book.

**What a challenge it must've been to pull from so many interesting and diverse sources! Your dedication to providing the reader with a full, comprehensive picture of the zoo shows in your work.**  
For me, what it comes down to is people caring about other people and other species. And I guess if you had to find an overriding theme for everything that I've done, it's about trying to convince people to care about others. Regardless of where someone comes from, or what their skin color is, or anything, I care. And I want people to care, too. That's why I taught Spanish, because when you speak another language, you have different words for different things that may not exist in English. You can express different points of view and understand that there are other points of view.

**That's a critical objective, I think. Tricky to achieve, but I think readers will certainly find themselves caring about the zoo, its multifaceted history, and where we might be headed in the future. What's at stake for us when we care for wildlife?**

One has to always ask the question, what are we doing to the planet? I mean, if we destroy animals' habitats, we don't know where it's going to take us. I remember watching Sesame Street with my kids when they were little, and they had this little cartoon about a guy who pulled out all the weeds from a pond. Then the fish didn't have anything to eat, and the flies took over the pond. It was a little tiny little video years ago, but it showed how interdependent we are. I know there are people who probably think it's crazy that a project gets derailed because, hypothetically, the only species of beetle in the universe lives where that project is happening. People say, 'Who cares about those beetles?' But we have to care! And I'm hoping that the book will help people care. I mean, that's why I think the zoo is so important.

**As you highlight in your work, the ways that AZA-accredited zoos have transformed into leaders of wildlife conservation overtime is remarkable. Participating in Species Survival Plans (SSPs), Saving Animals from Extinction (SAFE) Acts, designing habitats with animals' natural habitats and individual autonomy in mind. It's a huge undertaking. We also spend a lot of effort towards educating and inspiring the public to join our conservation mission. We look to tell the story of Asian elephants, of Amur leopards, of radiated tortoises. To tell the animals' stories, we need them here at the zoo, properly cared for and thriving.**

You want people to fall in love with them so that they want to preserve them.

**Yes, that's exactly what we want. Speaking of that, what do you want for your readers? What would you most like for a reader to take away after having read your work?**

That's a good question. Probably an appreciation of how far zoos have come and how important their role is going to be in the next 100 years as we deal or don't deal with the climate crisis. We all have a role to play, even if it seems small or "micro" compared to the grand scheme of things. When you think about how the zoo started, everything began with just a couple of people. And then a couple of volunteers. The Friends of the Zoo was once just a volunteer organization, and look what it does now! I think that partnership between the Friends and the zoo is incredible. A wonderful model.

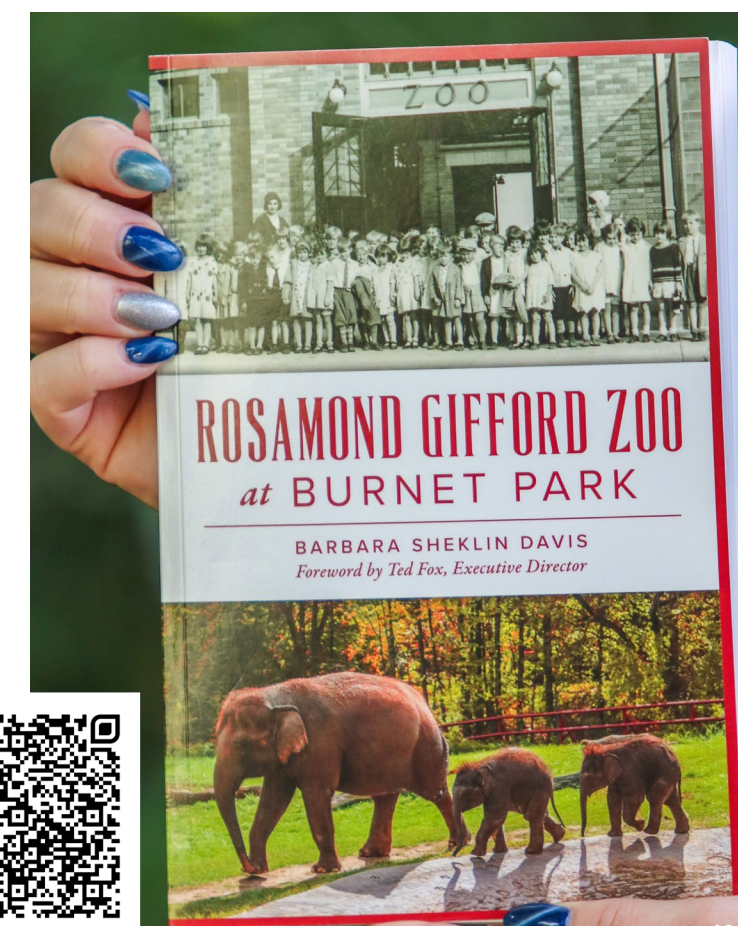
**We come together to work towards our shared cause of wildlife conservation. A big part of writing this book involved learning about the zoo's history and the history of zoos broadly. Upon learning about our past and present, where do you see the future of zoos headed?**

That's a big question. And I'm not sure that I'm qualified to answer it. But I would like to see more zoos follow the example of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and become accredited. I understand the majority of zoos are not accredited. I hope that people who come to the zoo and enjoy the zoo will be supportive with funding.

**I know a lot of our conversation focused on a lot of different challenges. Challenges that you navigated to write this book, challenges zoos face to operate ethically and sustainably, challenges that humanity might face as continue to grapple with our role of preserving the world's wildlife. Let's pivot a bit. What would you say was the most enjoyable part of the project for you?**  
I think working with the people at the zoo. Seeing how hard they work and how dedicated they are to the animals and to the future of wildlife. Everybody that I met was just wonderful. Historically, there have been people there who really love these animals and want to see them continue. It's tremendous dedication.

**Thank you. Thank you so much. That's very nice to hear. And, again, thank you for sharing your work with the world. Congratulations on your publication. You provide an insightful look at the history of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo that inspires us all to care about the world around us.**

**Purchase *Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park* at the Curious Cub Gift Shop or online! Scan the QR Code to buy now!**







## American Association of Zoo Keepers

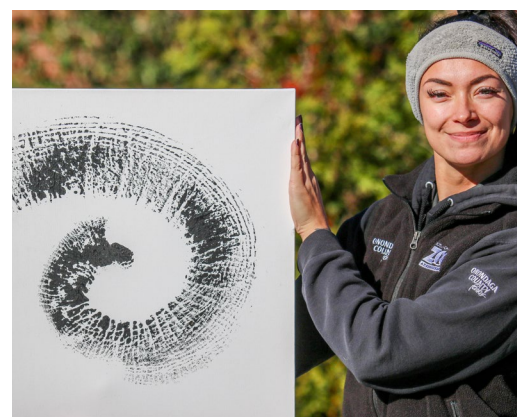
The members of the animal care team at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo dedicate themselves to providing the best quality of life to the over 1300 animals in our care.

They do everything possible to meet the animals' every physical and mental need. Remarkably, their commitment to wildlife does not stop at the end of their shift. Read on to learn more about the amazing work of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers as they lead the charge for advancements in ecological conservation and animal care.

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) is a professional group that works to advance excellence in the Zoo Keeping profession, to foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, to support deserving conservation projects, and to promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life. Rosamond Gifford Zoo's chapter of AAZK is a thriving, active group of 10 animal care specialists. Large mammals care team member Alana Auwae serves as the chapter's president, with Alinda Dygert serving as vice president, Emily Barbay and Kalli Miller as secretaries, and Liam McCarthy as treasurer. Throughout the year, the chapter hosts a variety of fundraising events to support their endeavors, including the popular Art Gone Wild (an auction of art painted by animals as enrichment activities.)

AAZK will often sponsor enrichment orders, including new toys, new scents, and different, large objects to ensure animals have everything they need to be happy and healthy. Boomer balls (toys for large mammals), for example, can cost up to \$2000, so AAZK's sponsorship is vital. Additionally, AAZK sponsors animal care team members who would like to attend specialized training courses and conferences, allowing them to cultivate animal care expertise and to implement that new knowledge here at Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Auwae notes, "AAZK is committed to bettering not just our animals, but our keepers, too. By supporting professional development, we learn more about innovative practices of animal welfare so that we can provide our animals with the best possible care." Stay tuned for AAZK's next event so you can support this awesome group of zookeepers!



## MEMBER NOTES

## Are You Getting the Most Out of Your Membership?

Your Rosamond Gifford Zoo contribution comes with some of the very best (and most unique) member benefits around! One of our favorite offerings is the opportunity for advanced registration AND discount pricing on our popular ticketed events and programs.

In 2024, our zoo member family made up for more than 70% of our program and event registrations— *We hope you join us again in 2025!*

**Here are just a few activities that are coming up soon:**

### Easter Brunch

April 20

Sessions take place at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.

Non Member Adult: \$42

Non Member Kids (3-12): \$24

2 and under are free but do need a ticket

Member Adult: \$36

Member Kids (3-12): \$18

2 and under are free but do need a ticket



### Mother's Day Brunch

May 11

Sessions take place at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.

Non Member Adult: \$42

Non Member Kids (3-12): \$24

2 and under are free but do need a ticket

Member Adult: \$36

Member Kids (3-12): \$18

2 and under are free but do need a ticket



## Get ready for a BARK-TACULAR SUMMER!

Beginning July 2025, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo will host **Canine Champions for Conservation**.

Canine Champions for Conservation is a live show that features a variety of **rescue dogs** of different breeds, ages, and skill levels performing delightful **choreography** and **feats of agility**, all while inspiring guests to protect our natural world.

**FREE for members!**



## SUMMER ZOO CAMP REGISTRATION

Member and Non-member access **OPEN NOW!**

Sessions sell out quickly, so be sure to use your member benefit and book early!



Don't forget one of our most popular benefits of all – **YOUR FREE MEMBER T-SHIRT!**

Stop by the membership desk during regular zoo hours to redeem today.



## = UNWANTED: Invasive Species in NYS =

An invasive species is any species of wildlife or plant life that has taken up residence somewhere other than its native habitat, usually by way of unnatural human intervention.

When an invasive species infiltrates an environment, it can cause serious damage. With no natural predators, their population explodes, often disrupting the ecosystem, decimating populations of native species, and costing millions of dollars in mitigation and management efforts.

In New York State, some invasive species include the spotted lanternfly, Asian long-horned beetle, zebra mussel, sea lamprey, European starling, hydrilla, European buckthorn, loosestrife, and water chestnut. Soon, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's Conservation Committee will install an informative exhibit about these species. Learn more about these invasive species, how to recognize them, and what to do to help native New York species thrive.

The exhibit will be a temporary fixture in our Social Animals building across from our black-and-white ruffed lemur habitat, featuring detailed images, research, and video content. Along with this multimodal experience, the convenient QR code will lead to an educational blog post on the zoo's website for further learning.

Be on the lookout for our new Invasive Species feature!

Remember, these species are UNWANTED in NYS!





\$26.99

Choose from a variety of occasions!



The Curious Cub  
GIFT SHOP

## New in the Gift Shop!

A friend from the zoo, sent just to you! Let someone know you care with a special box from Rosamond Gifford Zoo! Each package comes with a themed greeting card and an adorable plush animal buddy, perfect for cuddles and comfort.

Members Receive  
**10% OFF!**

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



Can't come to the zoo?  
Scan the QR code to visit our online store or go to [syracusezooevents.org/shop](https://syracusezooevents.org/shop)

Adopt  
an  
Animal

Senior Keeper  
Special

\$55

## AMUR TIGER

### Package includes:

A certificate of adoption, 4x6 color photo, animal fact sheet, 12" Amur 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 [thecuriouscubgiftshop.org](https://thecuriouscubgiftshop.org)  
Looking to adopt another animal at the regular rate?  
Call (315) 435-8511 x8563  
or email [giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org)



## Do you remember the thrill of seeing your favorite animals at your childhood zoo?

Now that we've grown up, we recognize that cherished fun was the catalyst for developing our lifelong love of nature.

Much like those beloved memories we keep close to our hearts, we aspire to keep all wildlife and plant life species in our world. Without them, nature becomes a distant memory to us and a foreign past to our children. Now, the time has come for us to impart impactful memories onto the next generation, to be devoted stewards of nature as we work to preserve the world's wildlife and plant life.

Do not let these precious creatures fade away into the past.

Help us create a future where we all thrive. Your new favorite memory is waiting to be made at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Please, make your contribution to the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford to help protect our animals, their wild counterparts, and so many memories in the making.



Please consider donating to the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to protect everlasting memories.

## CATERING AT THE ZOO



## SAVE THE DATE

Are you looking for a special day full of love, happiness, and wildlife?

Book now to say your "I Do" at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo!

"The team was very professional and everyone went above and beyond to ensure we had an unforgettable day. I would highly recommend getting married at the Zoo!"



Scan to Learn More



Photo by Michael Argento Photography

## HOST YOUR PICNIC AT THE ZOO



## NOW OFFERING FULL SERVICE CLAMBAKES!

Book an entire zoo for your clambake and receive a complimentary keeper chat at one of our popular exhibits.

Must book event by May 31 for events hosted by August 31.

For more information please email Stephanie Deibler at [sdeibler@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:sdeibler@rosamondgiffordzoo.org), or call (315)435-8511 x 8543



CONTACT US!





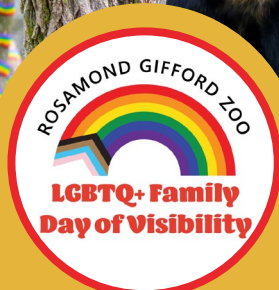


# Upcoming Events!



**Novelis**  
Party for the  
**Planet**

**APRIL 26**  
**SATURDAY**



**MAY 4**  
**SUNDAY**



**SENIOR**  
**CITIZENS**  
**APPRECIATION**  
**DAY**

**MAY 14**  
**WEDNESDAY**



**JULY 13**  
**SUNDAY**



**GET READY FOR**  
**A SUMMER OF**  
**DOGGONE FUN!**



**BEGINNING JULY 17!**