

An insider's view of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

SUMMER 2026

My Zoo

Magazine

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MEET THE BLACK AND RUFOUS
ELEPHANT SHREW

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A Message from the Friends Interim Executive Director

Change is a natural, beautiful, and necessary part of life. In the natural world, seasons shift to allow for growth, species adapt to thrive, and new beginnings offer the vital energy required to sustain the future. Here at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, we find ourselves standing at the threshold of one of those meaningful moments of transformation.

As we look toward the future, we are preparing to enter a defining new era. Our vision for what this institution can achieve has never been more ambitious. To bring the impact we want to see into reality, we need the support of our community like never before.

Every breakthrough we achieve, for the well-being of our animals, for the preservation of our planet, and for the enrichment of our Central New York community, is entirely dependent on the collective strength of people like you who believe in our mission. New chapters require a shared passion, and your belief in this zoo is the fuel that will bring our grandest goals to life.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment, your boundless generosity, and for continuing this journey with us.

Andrew Brazill
Interim Executive Director
Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo



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OF THE
ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO

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AT BURNET PARK

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

ON THE COVER:

Black and Rufous Elephant Shrew
photo by Camille Murphy

From Our Board



I'm honored to serve on the board of the Friends of the Zoo and to give back to an incredible organization in our community. Having visited the Zoo often as a kid, it's amazing to see my own kids have fun while learning about animal conservation. We all learn something new every time we visit! We're so lucky to have this resource right here in Syracuse to learn about the importance of biodiversity, species survival efforts, and how we can all help preserve the environment.

Josh Elander
Friends of the Zoo Board Member

Tiny Size, Big Spirit

At first glance, the elephant shrew looks like, well, a shrew.

While their long snout gave them the elephant-inspired half of their name, scientists in the 19th century naturally considered these small mammals a relative of shrews, moles, hedgehogs, and other species in the insectivora order. But as our understanding of these animals, their genealogy, and their biology has improved, there has been an increasing realization that elephant shrews are not closely related to any other group of living mammals. In fact, recent studies have confirmed that elephant shrews actually represent an ancient monophyletic African radiation, or Afrotheria, which encompasses several other distinctive African animals including elephants, sea cows, aardvarks, hyraxes, golden moles, and tenrecs. This means that elephant shrews are actually more closely related to elephants than to shrews! It's an incredibly distant relation, but it's still closer than actual shrews.

As an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited institution, we collaborate with other AZA-accredited facilities when it comes to the acquisition of new animals.

Last year, our staff saw that the Bronx Zoo was looking for facilities interested in educating the public about and participating in the breeding program for the black and rufous elephant shrew to bolster their population in managed care facilities. There are only 6 AZA-accredited institutions that house the elephant shrews, and they are so elusive in the wild that there is not much research on them. As these animals are very shy and skittish, the Bronx Zoo was looking for facilities that not only had the space and expertise for them, but that were within driving distance to minimize travel time, and the Rosamond Gifford Zoo fit that bill.

continued on pg. 6



ANIMAL UPDATES

Hadada ibis

NEW in the Diversity of Birds Aviary!
Meet Adam and Nelson, the Hadada ibis. Native to sub-Saharan Africa, these birds got their name from their distinctive call, which sounds like 'ha-da-da ha-da-da.' Come try to see them (and hear them) in the aviary!



Sept 30, 2025, **1 male prehensile-tailed skink "Seinfeld"** was sent to the Central Park Zoo.

Nov 3, 2025, **male Amur leopard "Grover"** arrived from the Pittsburgh Zoo.

Nov 4, 2025, **2 female Humboldt penguins, "Alita" and "Simone",** arrived from the Woodland Park Zoo.

Nov 10, 2025, **2 female and 1 male domestic guinea fowl** were sent to the Brandywine Zoo.

Nov 25, 2025, **2 male Hadada ibis** arrived, one from the San Antonio Zoo and one from the Living Desert Zoo.

Jan 6, 2026, **14 moon jellies** arrived from Sunset Marine Labs.

Jan 28, 2026, **Black Welsh mountain sheep "Bryson"** passed away.

Jan 28, 2026, **Hoffmann's two-toed sloth "Basil"** passed away.

Feb 7, 2026, **female white-faced whistling duck Shirley** was humanely euthanized.

Feb 14, 2026, **female Sichuan takin "Ling"** passed away.

Feb 5, 2026, **black and rufous elephant shrews "Edwin" and "Curiosa"** arrived. "Edwin" is from the Philadelphia Zoo and "Curiosa" is from the Bronx Zoo.

Mar 17, 2026, **male Bactrian camel "George"** passed away.

Apr 3, 2026, **3 male Chinese hwamei** arrived from the Woodland Park Zoo.

Apr 10, 2026, **male domestic guinea fowl "Moe"** was humanely euthanized.

Apr 15, 2026 - **female Sichuan takin "Cornelia "** arrived from the Saint Louis Zoo.

Apr 27, 2026 - **male colobus "Razi"** went to the Brevard Zoo.

May 11, 2026 - **female moholi bushbaby "Athena"** was humanely euthanized.

May 7, 2026 - **male Hadada ibis "Kevin"** arrived from the SeaWorld Orlando.

May 14, 2026 - **male black and white ruffed lemur "Kai"** arrived from the San Antonio Zoo.

May 14, 2026 - **female fennec fox "Pebbles"** arrived from the Idaho Falls Zoo.

June 10, 2026 - **2 female Henkel's leaf-tailed geckos** arrived from the Central Florida Zoo.

June 24, 2026 - **female meerkat "Little Foot"** passed away.

July 15, 2026 - **male black and white ruffed lemur "Kinte"** was humanely euthanized. He was almost 32 years old.

Female snow leopard "Daania" was humanely euthanized after a battle with chronic kidney disease. Our participation in the Snow Leopard Species Survival Plan remains a top priority as we fight against the extinction of this magnificent keystone species. Please stay tuned for more information about the future of our snow leopard exhibit.



CREATURE FEATURE: SICHUAN TAKIN

AT THE ROSAMOND GIFFORD
ZOO: 2 FEMALE, JIAO
& CORNELIA
1 MALE, KAI



Making new friends

Recently, we teased the arrival of a new animal and revealed it early to guests at a "Why It Matters" lecture.

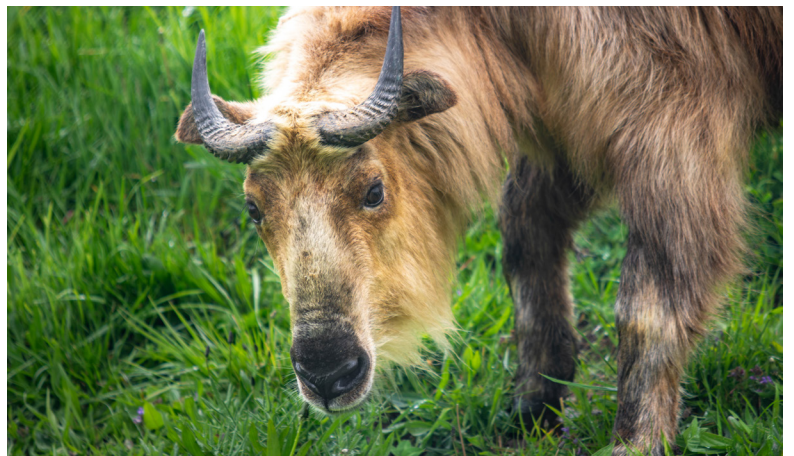
Now, please join us in welcoming one of our newest zoo residents, Sichuan takin Cornelia! Cornelia arrived on a breeding recommendation with our male takin, Kai. She, Kai, and our older female, Jiao, are now on exhibit and visible to guests.

Our care staff say she is an absolute sweetheart, and she got along with Kai and Jiao right away. The Sichuan takin is listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN. They are large hoofed mammals native to rugged, mountainous terrain in the Eastern Himalayas at altitudes above 4,300 meters. Our Takin herd is currently located in the exhibit across from the Asian elephant preserve.



Sichuan takin Cornelia's first time on exhibit went extremely well! She explored every inch of the habitat, and found all the best places to graze on grass and tasty dandelions. Takin grow a thick, secondary coat for the winter, which they shed in the summer. Both males and females have shiny black horns. While sometimes called a "goat antelope," takin are more closely related to sheep!

**Come visit Cornelia, Jiao, and Kai on
the Wildlife Trail today!**



After our Northern tree shrews (another species that is “not a true shrew”) moved into an exhibit in the Social Animals building, our team began looking for a new animal to inhabit their old space. We knew we wanted a new species, something we had never had at the zoo before to interest guests, and that our animal care specialists could contribute valuable research to.

Our Collection Manager and Zoo Registrar, Tamara Singer, took a trip to the Bronx Zoo to see if the elephant shrews would be a good fit. She had the opportunity to see their exhibit and met with their curator, zookeepers, and veterinarians to learn about their care. Ultimately, we decided these funky little mammals would be a perfect fit!

We put it through our collection planning and made the decision to bring this species to Syracuse. And then there was just a matter of finding the right animals so we could potentially breed them. We needed unrelated animals that would add to the genetic pool. The Bronx Zoo had a young female, Curiosa, and the Philadelphia Zoo had a young male, Edwin.

Singer and our Zoo Director, Dan Meates, picked up both animals on one trip. Curiosa’s team at the Bronx Zoo took her to Philly, where our team picked up both shrews, minimizing travel time for each facility.

Usually our animals complete their mandatory quarantine behind-the-scenes in our Animal Health Center, but in order to minimize stress and give them more time to acclimate, Edwin and Curiosa completed their quarantine on exhibit with the viewing windows covered.

Introductions between Edwin and Curiosa went remarkably well! After their road trip, our team let the new couple meet in private, watching their interactions remotely through a camera. The species as a whole doesn’t exhibit much aggression, but there is always a possibility of chasing or tail nipping, but our team didn’t see any of that behavior. From the moment they met, Edwin and Curiosa were very comfortable with each other. Edwin is definitely more confident, and was the first to venture from his travel carrier and explore the exhibit. His self-assured and calm personality is rubbing off on the more cautious Curiosa, and she gets braver by the day. The two have even started building a nest together at the back of their exhibit!

While the black and rufous elephant shrew is classified by the IUCN Red List as “Least Concern,” that does not mean the conservation of their species and protection of their native range is any less important. Like so many species they still are being affected by human encroachment and habitat destruction. Being classified as “Least Concern” doesn’t mean that there is a giant population of elephant shrews, It just means that they’re not considered to the point where they’re in danger of becoming extinct. And it’s our duty, as stewards of the natural world, to do everything in our power to make sure it never gets to that point. As this species is so timid and elusive, there are still quite a few unknowns about more specific information having to do with the species.

Having them at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and participating in their breeding program does more than just ensure a healthy, genetically varied assurance population of these shrews exist. This means that in the event their population does crash we will have meticulous details about the lineage and genealogy of the animals in our care that would allow them to be safely released and repopulate the wild.







Saving the Amur Leopard

When our final African lion passed away in 2018, we knew we wouldn't be bringing in a new pride. Lions had called our zoo home since 1986, but in the decades since their exhibit was built, standards for big cat care have evolved, and for the better.

Today, accredited zoos prioritize providing animals with habitats that meet the highest standards for their physical and behavioral needs. After consulting with experts from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), we carefully evaluated the future of the former lion habitat. While the space no longer met modern size recommendations for a social pride of African lions, it had tremendous potential for another species.

It was decided that with thoughtful exhibit modifications, the habitat would be perfect for the arboreal, solitary, and critically endangered Amur leopard species. Not only was this decision driven by the exhibit size, but by the crucial need for more Amur leopard conservation.

African lions are classified as Vulnerable, with an estimated 23,000 remaining in the wild. The Amur leopard, however, is listed as critically endangered and among the rarest cats on Earth.

Just a few decades ago, fewer than 30 Amur leopards were thought to remain in the wild. Thanks to decades of intensive conservation work, including habitat protection, anti-poaching efforts, international cooperation, and carefully managed breeding programs, the wild population has begun to recover. Today, approximately 130 Amur leopards survive in the wild, primarily within protected areas spanning Russia and northeastern China.

While this progress is encouraging, the species remains at extraordinary risk. Nearly the entire wild population exists within a single geographic region, making it incredibly vulnerable to disease, habitat loss, and other catastrophic events. Conservationists agree that establishing a second wild population is essential for the species' long-term survival.

As an AZA-accredited zoo, our mission extends far beyond caring for animals. We are part of a global network dedicated to preventing extinction.

Amur leopards are managed through the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) Global Species Management Plan (GSMP), an international program established in 2013. The GSMP coordinates breeding efforts among four regional zoo associations: the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) in North America, the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA) and Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EARAZA), which jointly manage the European Endangered Species Programme, and the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA).

Rather than breeding animals independently, these organizations work together as a single global population. Every breeding recommendation is carefully planned to preserve genetic diversity, maintain healthy populations, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the species under human care.



This cooperative approach serves an even greater purpose. The managed population of Amur leopards is intended to support future reintroduction efforts that would establish a second wild population within the species' historic range in the southern Sikhote-Alin Mountains of Russia.

Remarkably, the Amur leopard is currently the only big cat with an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)-approved reintroduction program built upon animals from professionally managed zoo populations.

Modern accredited zoos are far different from the menageries of centuries past. While providing meaningful opportunities for people to connect with wildlife remains important, today's zoos also serve as conservation organizations, research institutions, and educators.

For species like the Amur leopard, accredited zoos provide carefully matched breeding pairs that preserve genetic diversity, veterinary expertise to ensure healthy populations and evaluate animals for future reintroduction, scientific research that improves conservation strategies, funding for field conservation projects, and educational opportunities that inspire visitors to care about wildlife conservation.

These efforts are coordinated alongside international partners, including organizations like the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance (ALTA), protected-area managers, wildlife biologists, and governments working to secure a future for this remarkable species.

One reason many people are unaware of the Amur leopard's plight is that leopards as a whole remain the most widely distributed of the world's big cats. With eight recognized leopard subspecies spread across Africa and Asia, it's easy to assume they are all thriving. The Amur leopard tells a very different story. Its beautifully spotted

coat has evolved to withstand the harsh winters of northeastern Asia, but that same coat made it a target for poachers. Combined with habitat loss and fragmentation, the species was pushed to the brink of extinction.

Today, fewer than 300 Amur leopards exist worldwide. Approximately half live in the wild, while the remainder are part of professionally managed conservation breeding programs at more than 90 accredited zoological institutions around the globe. Together, these populations represent the species' best hope for long-term survival.

Transforming our former lion habitat into an Amur leopard exhibit was more than a change in species, it was a commitment to conservation where the need is greatest.

Every accredited zoo participating in the Global Species Management Plan contributes to a worldwide effort to preserve genetic diversity, support future reintroduction, advance scientific knowledge, and inspire millions of visitors to care about wildlife.

For our guests, seeing an Amur leopard is a rare and memorable experience. For the species, it represents something much greater: a global community working together to ensure that one of the world's most endangered big cats continues to have a future, both in human care and, ultimately, back where it belongs in the wild.

Asian Elephant Support

*What do elephants and deer have in common?
Besides both being herbivores, they are considered
agricultural "pests" in their native range.*



Deforestation and habitat fragmentation have all but forced elephants closer and closer to humans in search of food, and they are capable of eating an entire harvest in one day, leading to human-elephant-conflict.

With fewer than 52,000 Asian elephants remaining in the wild across 13 countries, the death of even one elephant is detrimental for the survival of their species – especially considering their slow reproductive rate, giving birth to a single calf every 4 to 5 years, and a long gestation period of almost two years. Finding a balance between human agriculture and elephant survival is key for both species to coexist.

This is where the work of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo and our conservation partners come into play. As an AZA-accredited zoo, and as members of the International Elephant Foundation (IEF), we have a critical responsibility to participate in breeding programs through the SSP (Species Survival Plan), and SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) by working with the AZA Studbook keeper to responsibly breed Asian elephants in order to strengthen genetic diversity.

This way, if the wild population crashes (and enough improvements have been made to prevent a repeat crash) the descendants of our herd can be released into the wild. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is one of fewer than 10 facilities of the roughly 240 institutions accredited by the AZA approved to breed Asian elephants. It is also our mission to educate the public about the threats facing Asian elephants, raise money and awareness to protect their wild territory, and fund critical research.

One such project is the work of AES, or Asian Elephant Support, in the GPS collaring and tracking of elephants in Sumatra, Indonesia.

The resulting data will be able to inform the local wildlife department and veterinarians on the migration patterns, range sizes, and territory of the elephant herds that live there. Along with providing vital data on elephant behavior for critical research, GPS Tracking is one of the best ways to prevent human-elephant-conflict, or HEC, one of the leading causes of death for adult Asian elephants in the wild. By actively monitoring herd movement, residents can be warned ahead of time, and are able to prepare in advance if an elephant is detected approaching their village.

To help support their vital project, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo partnered with Meier's Creek in April to support their GPS Collaring Project. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo's elephant department and Meier's Creek have a strong partnership, showcased with the release of our joint Elephantastic NEIPA in 2022, where the purchase of every can raises money for Asian elephant conservation. This beer won the 2024 Elephant Managers Association Craft Beer Competition! The creation of Elephantastic was spearheaded by our late Elephant Manager, Ashley Sheppard, and her dedication to elephant care and conservation. Our continued partnership is a testament to her legacy. Additionally, we also participated in AES's Pizza for Pachyderms event at Toss & Fire! With your support, we can mitigate human-elephant-conflict, and usher in a new era of human-elephant-coexistence.



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ASIAN ELEPHANT
SUPPORT

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Photo by
Camille Murphy

Why It Matters: Animal transportation

A new lecture series has begun! Learn more about the happenings at the zoo and all our keepers do.

Earlier this year, our animal care experts unveiled a new lecture series: Why It Matters! This thought-provoking new series is designed to educate guests about the inner workings of being an AZA-accredited institution and leave attendees with a deeper understanding of the work that we do to provide exceptional animal care and world-wide conservation, and help showcase what sets us apart from non-accredited institutions.

Our first topic of the year was on animal transportation! Our Collection Managers and Zoo Director gave guests the inside scoop on all of the paperwork, permits, contingency plans, positive conditioning, travel exams, evaluations, and so much more that goes into safely transporting animals of all sizes from point A to point B. If you missed the (two hour) lecture, don't worry, we'll try and break some of it down for you!

It can take months, if not years, to transfer an animal from one AZA-accredited zoo to another! There is so much that goes into safely transporting an animal, no matter the distance or the species.

There are many reasons a zoo might have to transfer an animal. One of the most common reasons is for breeding recommendations. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and their European and Canadian counterparts participate in nearly 300 Species Survival Plan® Programs, or SSPs. The SSP is a cooperative breeding program that helps make sure that all of our animals maintain a healthy, genetically diverse, and demographically varied population of animals in human care. This is especially important for endangered and vulnerable animal populations, as it means that once their native habitat has been restored and it is safe to do so, we will be able to contribute to release programs to repopulate the wild.

In 2025, AZA-accredited institutions invested over \$341 million into field conservation projects! Visit aza.org to learn more about how we're protecting and restoring the habitats of the species entrusted to us.



The SSP works almost like a dating app, matching animals together based on scientific data and genetics to result in genetically diverse offspring, should the paired animals reproduce. So when two animals at separate facilities are "matched", it's up to us as their stewards to help them get together! Our male red wolf, Sage, actually flew in on a private plane to be paired with our female red wolf, Evie, piloted by a volunteer from LightHawk. You can read more about Sage's arrival in our previous issue of MyZoo Magazine from Summer 2025!

Before an animal can be transferred, for any reason, they must undergo routine preshipment exams, and we have to fill out a LOT of paperwork. We must know every minute health detail about that animal, and the veterinarians of both the sending and receiving facility must give it a clean bill of health before any actual movement is made. Our previous female red panda, Simone, became pregnant right before she was scheduled to move to a new zoo per the Red Panda SSP! We waited over two years for Simone to give birth and for her cub to mature and become independent before we could complete the necessary transport.

A select number of animals can be safely shipped through FedEx. Those animals include marine life, insects and invertebrates, amphibians, and non-venomous reptiles. The shipping containers must be thoroughly inspected and have a waiver of liability on file. Most animals have specific temperature requirements to be shipped at. This means if the forecasted temperature outside is too high, or too low, we have to reschedule the transfer – because even if the transportation vehicle is climate controlled we have to prepare for any and all possibilities, including if the vehicle breaks down! These temperature requirements are mandatory not just for animals being shipped, but for animals being privately flown or driven with experts across the country.

When the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) asked us to take the illegally cloned Marco Polo Sheep, Tilek, we had to meet strict CITES and USDA humane shipping guidelines. CITES, or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, had a very specific crate requirement for transport – but there are no other Marco Polo argali sheep in the country, so there were no zoos for us to borrow a crate from. Our maintenance team had to build it from scratch!

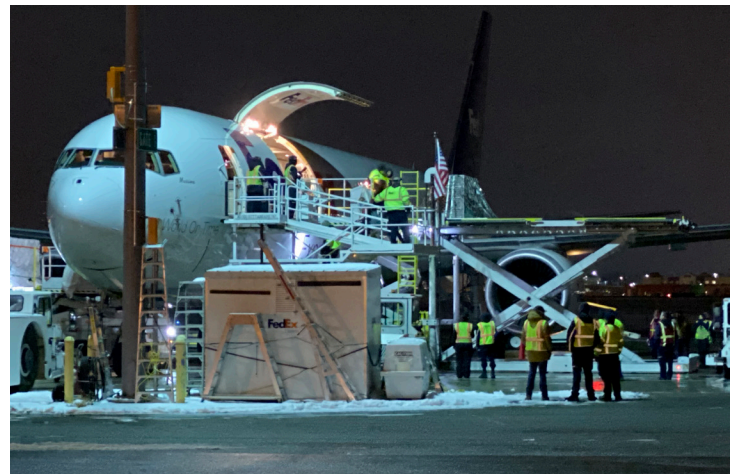




Other animals, like meerkats, are considered injurious wildlife (or, animals designated as harmful to human beings, agriculture, forestry, or native wildlife). These animals have even more paperwork, and even stricter transportation regulations. We need not just state permits, but Federal permits, including an Injurious Wildlife Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and they must be transported in a double escape-proof enclosure that meets rigorous transportation standards.

After the pre-transport wellness exams and paperwork have been completed, and the crates have been constructed and inspected, we can start physically moving an animal. Flying or driving, we have to create a number of contingency plans in case of a motor vehicle accident, crate failure, or an animal experiencing health problems. We check with other zoos along our planned transportation route, preferably accredited by the AZA, to alert them that we'll be passing through and ask if they will be able to assist us if something were to happen during the journey. There is no such thing as being too prepared.

On the journey, experts are with the animals every step of the way. Depending on the needs of the animals, sometimes a veterinarian will travel alongside the zookeepers. In the event our staff are unable to accompany their animals, we have contacts with reputable animal transportation companies recommended by other AZA accredited facilities. Zookeepers will sometimes travel and stay with their animals at their new home, helping the new care staff learn that animals' individual quirks and behaviors to make acclimation to their new home seamless.



MAKE A POLLINATOR HOUSE FOR SPRING & SUMMER!

Bees are our most important pollinators, and there are over 4,000 wild bee species native to North America! Most bee species nest inside of plants, underground or in decaying wood instead of a hive. A lot of native bees have been struggling to find safe nesting spots because our neighborhoods are dominated by lawns. You can help your native bees by building a Pollinator House! Decorate it with bright, floral colors and watch the happy bees swarm!

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- 1 clean and empty tin can or chip canister
- Paper
- Twigs
- String
- Paint for decorating

HOW TO ASSEMBLE:

1. Cut both your paper and your twigs to the same length as the container.
2. Roll your paper into narrow tubes and place them inside the container.
Try to fit as many as you can without the tubes being squished!
3. Put your trimmed twigs between the paper tubes to fill gaps and add support, make sure the pollinators have room to be comfortable.
4. Use your paints to get creative and decorate.
5. With the help of an adult, tie your string around the can and hang it against a flat surface.



NOTES:

Water resistant paint stays vibrant longer!
Just like us, Bees love the sun! Avoid putting your house in a shady or damp areas, you'll get more visitors when the Bees feel nice and warm.



These fun projects brought to
you by the Friends of the Zoo
Education Team!

Sign up for a class
to experience more!



EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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.

2026

Sept. 14 | Oct. 19 | Nov. 16 | Dec. 14



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.

2026

Oct. 23



Summer Camp

Full Day 9 a.m.-4 p.m. | Half Day 9 a.m.-Noon

Each week, campers will engage in STEAM challenges, animal encounters, zoo tours, create animal enrichment and practice conservation skills that will bring out their inner zooper-hero. At the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics have never been more fun!

2026

**Scan to Learn More about
Camp Week Themes and Dates**

Register Today!

Limited spots remain!



One-Day Zoo Camp

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

Join us for a deep dive 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.

2026

Oct. 12

Nov. 3, 11, 25 | Dec. 23, 28-31

Questions?

Call the education department at
(315) 435-8511 x8506

or email education@rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

Register online at rosamondgiffordzoo.org/learn/education



**Scan for more information
about each class!**

Sessions fill fast, sign up today!

A VITAL MISSION FOR CAMEL CONSERVATION: SECURING THE FUTURE OF A CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES



Bactrian camels are a powerful reminder of nature's resilience, but they are also facing an urgent crisis. There are actually fewer wild camels left on Earth than there are giant pandas. While global conservation efforts have helped giant panda populations climb to nearly 1,900 in the wild, the wild camel is on the absolute brink. Officially classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and ranked as the 8th most endangered large mammal on the planet, there are fewer than 1,000 of these magnificent animals left in the wild.

When discussing these animals, it is important to distinguish that the wild camel (*Camelus ferus*) and the domesticated Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*) are actually completely separate, genetically distinct species. While they share a similar double-humped appearance, genetic studies show they evolved separately, making the preservation of the remaining wild populations even more critical to global biodiversity.

Our mission at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo extends far beyond our own gates. We are proud, long-standing partners of the Wild Camel Protection Foundation USA, directly supporting critical work to protect these animals in their native habitats. We were recently honored to host Dr. Kah-Wai Lin, the president of the foundation, who visited our zoo and gave an inspiring lecture to our staff about his on-the-ground conservation work to save this species from extinction.

To advance this vital work and support the long-term welfare of the animals in our care, we are officially launching a dedicated camel conservation fundraising campaign. Because camels are naturally social herd animals, maintaining an enriched, high-standard environment is essential for supporting our resident camel, Patrick, while continuing to honor the legacy of George, who served for many years as a cherished representative of his species.



Here in Syracuse, you can play a hands-on role in this global rescue mission. This summer, we are hosting public camel feedings, giving your family the opportunity to get up close with these incredible animals while learning about their survival story and the science of desert ecosystems.

To help support our resident camels here at the zoo and keep this vital wild conservation and educational programming going, we need the support of our community. You can back the effort directly by making a donation at RosamondGiffordZoo.org. Help us advance global camel conservation and protect these magnificent animals both locally and in the wild!



Memories Made at the Zoo

Thank You To Our Sponsors

Novelis Party for the Planet®

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Thank You

DVC Games, BEyond, Advocates, Community Bank, the Q center at ACR Health, Energy Savers, Inc., and New York Life



Senior Citizens Appreciation Day

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Thank You

Hampton by Hilton, Tops Markets, Countryside Credit Union, Melvin & Melvin, Seneca Savings, Akl & Associates, Central Rock Syracuse, Community Bank, McDonald & Kimball, GSNY Penn, Salt City Coffee, New York Life, CST Media Productions, and Energy Savers, Inc.



Thank You

Tops Markets, New York Life, and Energy Savers, Inc.



Thank You For Your Generous Support. These Events Wouldn't Be Possible Without You!

More Memories Await

Asian Elephant Extravaganza

Saturday, August 15

Come celebrate our Asian elephant herd and the cultural traditions of their native countries in South Asia, including an Indonesian orchestra and demonstrations with our eight-member elephant herd - including our miracle twins, Yaad and Tukada.

Fall Conservation Bash

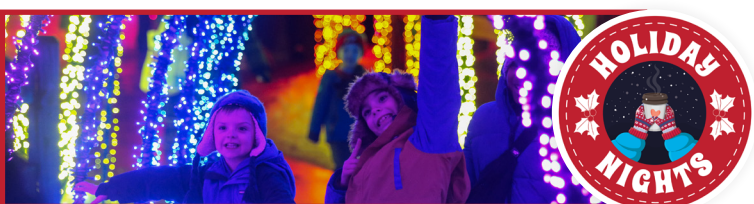
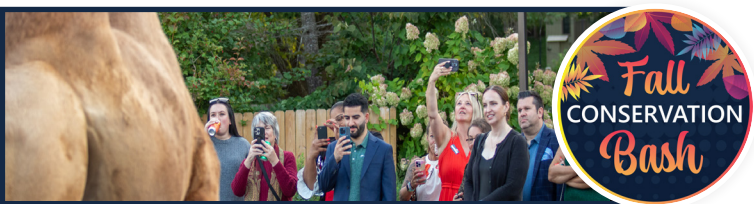
Wednesday, September 16

Join us for an elegant autumn evening celebration featuring delicious, gourmet mix-and-mingle stations and a bounty of savory hors d'oeuvres. Guests will enjoy live music, animal greeters, and a live raffle offering one-of-a-kind items.

Holiday Nights

December 4-19 (Fridays and Saturdays)

Enjoy a festive and fun after-hours stroll amid sparkling displays of holiday lights. Visit with Santa and friends, warm up by the fire pits and enjoy hot chocolate, s'mores, live performances of holiday music, carolers, roving entertainers, and more!





Meet Dan Meates

On Tuesday, March 10, Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon officially announced the appointment of Dan Meates as the Director of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Dan has served as the Interim Zoo Director since May of 2025, and was the General Curator for nearly 10 years.

Dan Meates joined the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in 2016. Dan has worked at several other zoos around the world and hand-reared a number of different species, including the first baby patas monkey to be hand raised in North America.

Dan is a native of Wales, United Kingdom, with a background in falconry and field biology research. He has previous animal care, management and curator experience at the Wellington Zoo in Wellington, New Zealand, the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, TX, the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, MT, and the Niabi Zoo in Western Illinois.

As a master falconer, Dan has extensive experience handling large birds of prey and has implemented free-flight training demonstrations for several species of raptors at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.



Membership “Early Bird” Mornings!

Join us this summer for one of our favorite member perks – early zoo entry! Active members may take advantage of early zoo admission beginning at 9:00 a.m. on the second Wednesday of the month (through October).

Join us for our remaining 2026 Dates: August 12th, September 9th and October 14th

Wake up with the zoo and enjoy the peace and tranquility of our beautiful wildlife trails. Watch as our animal care staff perform their morning routines, our zoo animals emerge on exhibit, and the zoo comes to life!

Valid zoo membership card and ID required for entry, with early access ending at 9:45 a.m. General public access begins at 10 a.m.

Members in Motion!

Swim, soar or slither your way around this summer and visit a new zoo or aquarium!

One of the great benefits of being a member of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is discounted admission to other AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums that participate in the AZA Reciprocal Admissions Program. Your membership grants you **half-off admission** to our partner institutions all over the country (and into Canada and Mexico, as well!)

So, no matter where you roam, your member benefits will follow. Visit our website to view our most current list of over 150+ reciprocal zoo partners. Where will your membership take you this summer?

More fun to come for Members!

Stay tuned for all of our exciting events and activities coming later this year.

Brew at the Zoo – DISCOUNTED tickets for members

Asian Elephant Extravaganza – FREE for members

Fall Conservation Bash – DISCOUNTED tickets for members

Steam Day at the Zoo – FREE for members

Fall Festival – FREE for members

Zoo Boo – FREE for members

Holiday Nights – DISCOUNTED tickets for members

Noon Year’s Eve – FREE for members

Not a member?
Join today and access your benefits immediately!



New in the Gift Shop!



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



Adopt an Animal

Senior Keeper Special

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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
Looking to adopt another animal at the regular rate?
Call (315) 435-8511 x8563
or email giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org



Make it special...



Make it **CATERING AT THE ZOO**

Summer is heating up and it's the perfect time to enjoy a picnic!
Why not choose the zoo to host your event? Creature Chat included with your Zoo rental.



CONTACT US!



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

CELEBRATE WITH CATERING AT THE ZOO!



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Upcoming Events!



**SATURDAY
AUGUST 15**



**WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 16**



**FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS
DECEMBER 4**

