ZOO HOSTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Buttonwood Park Zoo had the distinct honor of hosting the New World Primate Husbandry Workshop this year. Typically held at large facilities, such as the San Diego Zoo, workshops like these bring together zoo professionals from around the world for an interactive learning experience. The star of this year’s workshop was BPZOO’s innovative Rainforests, Rivers & Reefs exhibit, which boasts an impressive transfer chute system allowing zookeepers to move primate species through multiple indoor and outdoor habitats. Providing ample opportunities for movement stimulates natural behavior and is an essential part of maintaining our high standard of animal care. What a treat to share our BPZOO animal welfare innovations with the international zoo community!

TOYS FOR ELEPHANTS

Christmas came in May this year for BPZOO’s beloved Asian elephants, Emily and Ruth. Thanks to a unique partnership between BPZOO, Mass College of Art and Design and Handshouse Studio in Norwell, our ladies received new enrichment items (“toys”) created with the unique personality of each elephant in mind. (Emily enjoys drumming and solving puzzles while Ruth loves objects that roll!) Believed to be the only course of its kind in the country, students are put to the test, creating items that are mentally stimulating for the elephants, while also withstanding the antics of their users — one year Emily completely dismantled a xylophone that was created for her! BPZOO employs numerous social, cognitive, physical, and sensory enrichment techniques to increase our animals’ behavioral choices, elicit species-specific behaviors, and enhance animal welfare.

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

Buttonwood Park Zoo celebrated its milestone 125th anniversary in 2019 with a host of community events and activities. “Everyone who grew up in or around New Bedford has a Zoo story,” said local attorney Adrienne Beauregard Rheuame, who chaired the Zoo’s 125th Anniversary Celebration. “The Zoo is part of our identity as a community.”

What began in 1894 as an animal menagerie — a way to educate residents about wild animals in a time before mass media — is today a modern, accredited institution and the number one cultural attraction on the South Coast. BPZOO’s transformative Master Plan, now being implemented, leads the institution toward new opportunities, and new relevance, as an environmental organization focused on education and conservation. “We can make this one of the best small zoos in the world,” said Zoo Director Keith Lovett. “In the process, we can not only play a substantial role in the revitalization of New Bedford, but also inspire future generations to care about, and be connected to, the natural world.”

CITIZEN SCIENCE DRIVES DISCOVERY OF VERNAL POOL

More than 50 citizen scientists, age 7 to 70, drive the work of BPZOO’s FrogWatch chapter. As part of a national project to monitor declining amphibian populations, trained volunteers listen for the calls of frogs and toads in local wetlands. FrogWatcher volunteers monitoring a Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust property identified the presence of wood frogs. Upon further investigation, a vernal pool was discovered. This increasingly threatened ecosystem provides habitats for many rare plants and animals. The property has now been added to the State’s list of Certified Vernal Pools thanks to our FrogWatchers!
AN AGING 446-POUND BEAR GOES TO THE DOCTOR

Aching joints, heart disease, kidney problems, sensitive teeth, a stomach that doesn’t quite digest what it used to... for those of us growing older, this may sound familiar. With an aging animal population at the Zoo, it’s many of our beloved residents who are experiencing these age-related symptoms. Staff veterinarian, Dr. Erica Lipanovich, is well versed in geriatric animal care. From herbal supplements for joint health, to diet modifications and intestinal protectants, our vet staff goes to great lengths to keep the Zoo’s aging animals healthy. Toby, our 21-year old male black bear, recently received his regular check-up including bloodwork, vaccines, and whole-body radiographs. Noting that Toby had some periodontal issues, specialist veterinarian Charles Schor, of Acoaxet Veterinary Clinic, stepped in to provide a dental exam. (Our social media followers had a behind-the-scenes view of Toby’s check-up: a 446-pound black bear on the examination table is not something you see every day!) Dr. Schor is one example of several veterinary clinics that provide extra special pro-bono care for our animals, especially those now in their golden years. We’re grateful to everyone on our extended veterinary team!

VISITORS DONATE $27,000 TO FUND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Coins for Conservation, initiated at BPZOO in 2016, is a guest-driven fundraising initiative supporting conservation projects in the wild. Zoo guests may donate $1 (or more) to conservation, and then select one of three current projects to support with their “Conservation Coin.” The total donated by zoo-goers in 2019 demonstrates the collective power of many people doing small things to make a big difference! The Zoo’s sixteen conservation partnerships, which span the globe, focus largely on habitat protection and regeneration. From replanting forest corridors to save the golden lion tamarin in Brazil, to protecting Asian elephant habitats, to restoring critical red panda habitats in Nepal, projects supported by BPZOO visitors connect our species survival efforts to the needs of these endangered species in the wild.

RED PANDA MANIA

In its 125th year of operation, BPZOO opened its first red panda habitat, welcoming two young red pandas. Easily the cutest animal residents on the SouthCoast, red pandas Jacob and Marie have quickly become guest favorites. With fewer than 10,000 red pandas remaining in the wild and habitats that are shrinking drastically, accredited zoos across the world are working collaboratively to ensure their survival. BPZOO partners with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plan for red pandas to ensure the sustainability of a healthy and diverse population while enhancing the conservation of this species in the wild. Jacob and Marie were recommended by AZA as a strong (genetic) match -- we hope they think so, too!

GET ON BOARD! 2,000 STUDENTS TRAVEL ON FREE BUSES

First and second graders in the New Bedford Public Schools (NBPS) have something in common: a much-anticipated field trip to BPZOO. A leading provider of environmental education in the region, the Zoo offers 23 distinct, curriculum-based programs for students K-12. Nearly 50% of the programs we present each year are provided free-of-charge to NBPS students. As a critical science partner for local schools, BPZOO offers STEM learning experiences in an immersive environment unlike any other. With both admission and programming free of charge for NBPS, more than 5,000 New Bedford children experienced the Zoo in 2019. Despite free programming, one big challenge remains: the cost of transportation. Thanks to a generous donor, though, we were able to underwrite transportation costs for first and second graders from NBPS. We’ll add our voice to those first and second graders to enthusiastically shout – thank you!
$18,455 donated by our visitors for wildlife conservation

35,000 social media followers learning about animals and environmental stewardship

33 SCHOLARSHIPS for local children to attend zoo camp

25+ COMMUNITY PARTNERS expanding our reach and impact

16 CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS helping protect animals and habitats across five continents.

21,840 HOURS donated by 700 volunteers – valued at $703,000!

212 species, 31 of which are endangered, threatened or vulnerable

151,000 GUESTS – a record-setting year!

42,252 riders on the BayCoast Black Bear Express Zoo Train

$16 MILLION economic impact on New Bedford

13,846 STUDENTS from area schools learned how to save wildlife and make conservation a priority

OH BABY! Bearded emperor tamarin twins, Bolivian gray titi and Goeldi’s monkeys, and three scaly-sided mergansers born at the Zoo.