

ESSEX COUNTY
TURTLE BACK



Zoological Society
of New Jersey, Inc.
AT ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO

Turtle TALK

Spring 2021

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Photo of the Season!

Brianna DeRose

To be considered for Visitor Photo of the Season, please send photos to info@zoologicalsocietyofnj.org

UPCOMING EVENTS



Virtual Summer Camp Open House

Sunday, February 27th

It's that time of the year again: Summer Camp Open House!! Spoiler alert: there will be crafts! Join us virtually to meet our camp counselors and see what they have in store for summertime. Members-only summer camp registration begins Saturday, 3/13, general registration begins Saturday, 3/27, stay tuned: <https://bit.ly/3coNVB8>.

Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers

2nd/4th Sundays monthly, with some exceptions

Ever wondered what plants and animals live in your backyard? Whether you want to discover our amazing, local wildlife or just get out for a breath of fresh air, join us for Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers! Recommended ages 6+ email tbzkfenyar@gmail.com for more info and to join our email list, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3afxDlm>.



Early Childhood

Multiple Dates

Virtual options (Hatchlings, Tots, and Explorers), in-person (select Explorers dates)

Introduce your Hatchlings (6-24 months), Tots (2-3 years), and Explorers (4-5 years) to fun, science-based lessons about the wonderful and fascinating world of animals. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/38f073O>.

Sophisticated Science

Multiple Dates

Sophisticated Science is Turtle Back Zoo's newest program for ages 14-104! This program is perfect for more mature folks who are interested in zoo animals, science, conservation, and animal careers. Stay tuned: <https://bit.ly/36kK58r>.

Wonders of the Wild

Wonders of the Wild has partnered with the Sri Lankan Wildlife Conservation Society: every week we take a deep dive into the fantastical features our planet has to offer. From ecosystems to pets, climate change, and Native American cultures with more topics and themes to come, we'll explore the wonders Earth and its wilds provide. Ages 6-12, multiple dates, learn more: <https://bit.ly/36txKio>.

New social media TikTok

TBZ has a TikTok! That's right, follow @[officialturtlebackzoo](https://www.tiktok.com/@officialturtlebackzoo) to see all your favorite TBZ residents in a fun new way. Leave us a comment to let us know what else you would like to see.

Bad Bugs

While environmental issues appear foreign, Bad Bugs are right outside our back door. Join Educator Virginia for an in-depth look into the devastating issue of invasive species, both locally and globally. Recommended for adults, but all are welcome to join and discover how to protect our beautiful, valuable habitat. Sunday, 2/21: register here: <https://bit.ly/3iffh2X>.

Distance Learning

Interested in a virtual animal presentation or zoo tour? Turtle Back Zoo is hosting Distance Learning programs available for all ages with topics tailored to your group. In-person programs may be available, email our Education Curator, Marguerite Hunt, at mhunt@parks.essexcountynj.org for more information.

Become a VolunTEEN

Interested in volunteering at TBZ? Now accepting applications for VolunTEENS, ages 14-17. VolunTEENS help TBZ's camp counselors with summer camp for a minimum of 2 weeks. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/2KtZZp8>.



ZOO NEWS



TBZ's New director - Dr. Jilian Fazio

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo welcomes Dr.

Jilian Fazio: our new zoo director! Check out our interview on pages 3 and 4.

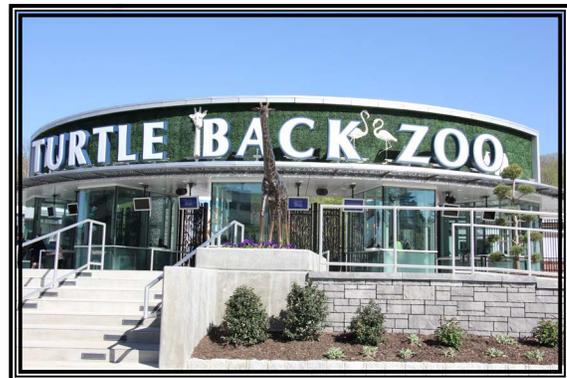


Welcome to TBZ, Julio, the Toco Toucan (*Ramphastos toco*) - Least concern IUCN redlist status

Julio the male Toco Toucan has arrived at TBZ safe and sound! Julio, hatched on May 6, 2019, was recently introduced to Coco, our resident Toco Toucan whose hatchday was July 31, 2018. Just in time for Valentine's Day, Julio has been courting her by sharing fruit and other gifts with Coco, including his favorite foods: grapes, blueberries, strawberries, and papaya. Julio and Coco are recommended by the SSP (Species Survival Plan), so we are hopeful for chicks in the future! Though Toco Toucans are not endangered, the SSP works with zoological facilities across the globe to maintain a backup population of various species and helps conservationists research, preserve, and protect our Earth's amazing biodiversity.

AZA's new initiative

TBZ has reopened to the public in February, we thank you all for helping to make sure we overcome this pandemic together! The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), one of TBZ's accreditation organizations, is beginning a campaign to "reduce the risk" of future pandemics. Visit page 5 to learn more about this new initiative and how you can help.



got bats? 

PROJECT: BATWATCH
Help us help the bats of New Jersey

The Program
Rutgers Cooperative Extension is providing and installing free bat houses to homeowners who are having bat evictions performed. In exchange for this service, we ask that homeowners enroll in our bat monitoring program so that we can evaluate the success of this initiative to provide long-term solutions to bat-human conflicts.

How Does it Work?

1. Homeowners enroll in our Bat House Distribution Program, and pledge to have bats safely and humanely evicted from the house.
2. Prior to the bat exclusion, Rutgers installs a bat house on the homeowner's property.
3. Every spring, homeowners check for bat activity in the bat house (Don't worry - it's safe and easy!)
4. Homeowners perform 1:2 "exit surveys," counting the bats as they fly out at dusk (we'll send you an email reminder).
5. Homeowner reports survey results to Rutgers.



That's It!
We can provide technical assistance and guidance throughout the process, and in some cases, can perform the survey ourselves. For more information contact us at wildlife@nj.rutgers.edu or visit our website at...

RUTGERS
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
wildlife.rutgers.edu

Citizen science opportunity!

Rutgers University's Wildlife Conservation and Management team is helping to create safe habitats and homes for NJ's native bats! NJ bats, which include the Brown-nosed Bat, face numerous challenges ranging from white-nose syndrome (an often-lethal fungal infection) and human-animal conflict (such as extermination of bats roosting in homes). To reduce this conflict, Rutgers' Project Bat Watch is offering bat houses, which provide a safe, outdoor location for bats to thrive. Did you know bats are pollinators? According to Rutgers University, these essential employees help pollinate wildflowers in addition to agricultural crops, like mangos and cashews! Check out the flyer to learn more.

Zoo Director Spotlight

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo is happy to welcome Dr. Jilian Fazio, our new director! Jilian Fazio has 20+ years in the zoological community: ranging from Disney's Animal Kingdom, Bergen County Zoo, and the Smithsonian National Zoo. In addition to being our director, Jilian is a researcher, a mother, the Clouded leopard Species Survival Program coordinator across AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) facilities, and the stud book keeper for the clouded leopards in international zoos. Check out our interview below to learn more about Jilian's career and work as SSP coordinator:

Welcome to Essex County Turtle Back Zoo? How have you been liking your time here so far?

JF: I've been having a lot of fun getting to know the staff, the animals, and how they fit into Turtle Back. It is fascinating for me to learn about what each person's passion is for working here. We do some amazing things at the zoo, so learning about what is going on was my first priority. I want to make sure we are maintaining the current programming and guest experiences that we have, and then determine how we can move forward. I really have been, the past 6 weeks, figuring out what TBZ does and how they do it. It's been fun, everyone's been very welcoming.

Throughout your career, you have interned and worked as a zookeeper and researcher at several facilities, what are some of the most memorable moments you've had along the way?

JF: I had a lot of fun at Bergen Zoo because it was a small zoo, I think there were about 8 keepers and some part time staff. It was nice because it was a smaller collection of North and South American species, and so we rotated around and were able to work with the whole collection. I gained a lot of experience there, on just working with different families of animals: primates, birds, and cats. I only had felid experience prior to that. It was a nice introduction into [working with] a larger collection.

[Bergen County Zoo] actually gave me the opportunity to go to Thailand, which was my

first experience helping out with the Clouded Leopard Consortium, a breeding program that was established in cooperation with a few AZA zoos: National Zoo, Nashville Zoo and Point Defiance Zoo, as well as the Zoological Parks Organization of Thailand and the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand.

It was such a great opportunity that allowed me to connect with the people at the Smithsonian, as they were visiting at the same time when I went to Thailand. When I came back, they offered me a position at the CRC: at the time, it was the Conservation Research Center. It's now the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. I went down to Virginia and worked as an animal keeper with their carnivore collection (Clouded leopards, Maned wolves, and Red pandas). While I was there, I volunteered to try and get a job at National Zoo, and the rest is history. I was an animal keeper at the National Zoo, and I was able to work on my M.S. during that time. When I decided to get my PhD, I changed roles over to a Smithsonian-Mason Graduate Fellow. I also had some kids in there; I have a wonderfully spunky five-year-old and sweet, lovable eight-year-old!

How did you become the SSP coordinator? What experience did you require for this position?

JF: I have worked very closely with the felid TAG (taxonomic advisory group). This is one of the ways that AZA helps us collaborate with other organizations, each other, researchers, and NGOs (Non-governmental organizations). There's lots of different TAGS: a rhino TAG, an ape TAG, there's a felid TAG: it's all the people who are working with the managed felid species in AZA zoos. We work with Europe; Europe has a field TAG as well. Those TAGS talk to each other: we're centralizing all the knowledge and then creating an opportunity to communicate and collaborate between each other. I got involved in the felid TAG, I think in 2002, and started going to the annual conferences and meetings: where the cat people who know all the husbandry and the research, field researchers, and educators, come to the annual conference. That was really one way that helped to network and get my



Zoo Director Spotlight Continued...

foot in for being an SSP coordinator. So I had a really good network of Clouded leopard people, because I was working with Clouded leopards in one of the institutions that's considered one of the more experienced Clouded leopard organizations.

I actually applied for that SSP position prior to this, maybe five or six years before 2016, and I didn't get it because I didn't have enough experience. You need to have the time in, and the knowledge and the experience of not the individual animals you're working with, but of the species. In that additional six years when the position opened again, I was able to get [that experience]. [The SSP Coordinator is] an elected position: the TAG board elects the SSP coordinators, and then the institutional representatives from each institution. So that's how I got that.

What is a day like in the life of a SSP coordinator?

JF: As an SSP coordinator, I'm getting emails and phone calls from [institutions] if they have questions. Sometimes they're asking about whether they should [give their cat] contraceptives or their cats aren't getting along. It could be veterinary if they are seeing health related problems. All SSPs have steering committees: so I have a vet advisor, a nutrition advisor, a secretary, and a husbandry advisor. I reach out to them when I need help and when something's going on. There's also people who want to do research that could involve the whole SSP population, because that helps to increase your sample size. So if they want to use all the Clouded leopards [in zoos], then they typically would contact me and then that's something the steering committee would approve as an SSP-recommended study to participate in. I would send that out to zoos and say this research has been approved by the steering committee.

Breeding and transfer plans done every three years: we're actually due for planning in May of this year, and that'll require a lot of effort ahead of time. I'll put out surveys to all the institutions and get their information: it's called the wants and needs. Do you want leopards? Do you need to get rid of leopards? Do you want to breed leopards? Are your leopards not getting along and you want to split them up?

And then we'll have a one-day meeting with the population management center out of Lincoln Park Zoo. And they help us with all our genetic modeling and make sure that we're making the most valuable pairings and that we're breeding enough cats each year to maintain the demographics and our target populations and all that. That's a little synopsis!

What is your favorite animal?

JF: So I obviously love Clouded leopards (laughs), but my second favorite cat is probably the Pallas' cat [felid from Asia]. Most of the cats, really: but I like Sifakas [lemur from Madagascar]: they're so cool, Aye-aye [primate from Madagascar]. I love all of the Australian animals: the Tasmanian devil, the echidna, the platypus: so cool. If we could do a giant Australian section, that would be so cool.



Is there a message you would like to share with our readers?

JF: I would encourage people to join us: not just the zoo as a member, but the conservation efforts however you can. Do whatever small actions you can to help maintain and preserve this planet, because that's really what we are trying to do here, and everyone needs to help us. Please, please help us! Pick your thing, and put your conservation action out there.

Thank you to Dr. Jilian Fazio again for the interview! This abridged interview has minor edits for clarity. Stay tuned for the full interview on www.turtlebackzoo.com!



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

by Educator Katie Fenyar

With an increasingly connected world, the door has opened for international cooperation to protect our shared Earth. For 2021, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is promoting a new international initiative to “reduce the risk” of current and future pandemics. Pandemics are often caused by zoonotic diseases (diseases

that transfer from animals to humans or vice-versa). The COVID-19 pandemic is caused by the zoonotic disease SARS-COV-2. Numerous research studies have observed a SARS-like coronavirus in horseshoe bats native to Europe and parts of China (Lau et al. 2005, Wang et al. 2006). Scientists traced the Covid-19 virus to a market in Wuhan, China: a high-risk market in which both domestic and exotic species are sold for human consumption. This close contact of humans and animals in unregulated conditions lead to the spread of disease between humans to animals.

Such markets reveal a problem that affects both wildlife conservation and human health: unregulated trade and consumption of wildlife and the risk of exposure to disease that comes with it. As seen with other pandemics including West Nile and the H1N1 swine flu of 2009, pandemics can begin in any country in the world. The response to future pandemics should include international cooperation.

“Our current crisis was knowable, predictable and preventable. And unless we learn these lessons and take steps to reduce related risks, the same will be true of the next pandemic, and the next.”
– Dan Ashe, president of AZA

With the support of our global conservation partners, we support AZA’s initiative to #EndtheTrade. This initiative includes: closing high-risk wildlife markets for human consumption, strengthening local, national, and international wildlife trade policies, combating wildlife trafficking, and engaging the public in our efforts.

On an international level, AZA plans to introduce the charters of “End the Trade” and “Ban Wildlife Crime” with the support of CITES (The Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species) and the UN (United Nations). To achieve this goal, it will take all of us to lobby our local, state, and federal government(s) to incorporate stricter, transparent regulations on legal and illegal wildlife trade.

This legislation is a crucial part of the actions we can take to save species on the brink of extinction. According to UN scientists, over 1 million species of wildlife worldwide are facing extinction in the years to come. Despite the hardships of 2020, the Natural History Museum in London reports 503 new species discovered in 2020 alone. The findings range from the tiniest wasp and tarantulas to a recently-discovered monkey: the endangered Popa Langur of Myanmar’s Mount Popa. Protecting our world takes a person, a village, a nation, and our world together to see our biodiverse planet through these times. Today we would like to echo the sentiment that our new director, Dr. Jilian Fazio, said in our recent monthly newsletter:

“We are here. We have hope. We need you.” In the name of countless endangered species who need us, learn more about AZA’s initiative, [#EndtheTrade](#).



Citations:

Lau, S., Woo, P., Li, K., Huang, Y., Tsoi, H., Wong, B., . . . Yuen, K. (2005, September 27). Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-like virus in Chinese horseshoe bats. Retrieved January 18, 2021, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1236580>

Wang, L., Shi, Z., Zhang, S., Field, H., Daszak, P., & Eaton, B. (2006, December 12). Review of bats and SARS. Retrieved January 18, 2021, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3291347/#__ffn_sectitle

SUPPORT YOUR FAVORITE WILD ANIMALS AT ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO

We appreciate your generosity in strengthening Essex County Turtle Back Zoo's commitment to conservation, education, & inspiration. All donations to the Zoological Society of New Jersey support the Zoo by providing necessary funds for new habitat design & construction, general zoo improvements, operating support, and conservation programming. There are many ways to donate: Adopt an Animal, Donor Wall, Living and Memorial Tributes, Corporate Matching, Amazon Wish List, Monetary Donation, or Becoming a Member of the Zoological Society of New Jersey and Essex County Turtle Back Zoo.



Visit www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/support to get started!

Zoological Society of NJ Board of Directors

The Zoological Society of New Jersey, Inc. is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) corporation, organized under the laws of the State of New Jersey. Its purpose is to promote the general welfare of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, a facility of the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs; to stimulate the public's interest in the growth, improvement, and development of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo through education and research with an emphasis on natural conservation of all species of animals; to support and sponsor fund-raising events to help in the financing of new facilities, purchase of equipment, and acquisition of animals; to encourage membership in the Society by persons interested in the promotion of the physical and aesthetic qualities of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo; and to stimulate the public interest in the development and enjoyment of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo and of animals everywhere.

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