

**ESSEX COUNTY  
TURTLE BACK**



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

# Turtle TALK

**Spring 2022**

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**Photo of the Season!**

**Marketing & Events Coordinator, Brianna**

To be considered for Visitor Photo of the Season, please send photos to [info@zoologicalsocietyofnj.org](mailto:info@zoologicalsocietyofnj.org)



# UPCOMING EVENTS



## Wonders of the Wild

*Most Saturdays @1-3PM*

Wonders of the Wild offers students an opportunity to participate in supplementary science and nature-themed programs and projects that facilitate scientific literacy and life-long environmental stewardship. Recommended for ages 6-12, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3G1Unuq>.



## TBZ Valentine Photo Contest

*Submissions due @10AM February 16*

Take a picture of your favorite TBZ animal and enter it in our TBZ Valentine Photo Contest! There is a \$5 entry fee per photo. Submission period ends for entry at 10AM on Wednesday, February 16, 2022. Visit [www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/valentinephoto](http://www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/valentinephoto) for more information.

## Sophisticated Science

*Multiple Dates*

Sophisticated Science seminars take a deeper dive into various topics from zoological careers to invasive insects. Upcoming topics include Amazing Anatomy (2/12, 2/19), Wild Careers (2/26), Healing our Habitats (3/5, 3/12, 3/26, 4/2), and Bad Bugs (email Virginia at [tbzvosnato@gmail.com](mailto:tbzvosnato@gmail.com) for more information). Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3y19Ukw>.

## Family Nature Club

*Sundays 2/27 & 3/13*

FNC: Nature Adventurers are exploring winter ecology! Join us to explore Essex County's parks, including the South Mountain Reservation, for a 2 hour hike. Average hike is 2-3 miles, recommended for ages 6+, all minors must be accompanied by an adult, register here: <http://bit.ly/2XDVPWB>.

## Early Childhood

*Multiple Dates*

In-person Tots (3-4 w/ caregiver) and Explorers (4-5 w/out caregiver)! Your little learner will enjoy zoo tours, fun science lessons, arts-and-crafts, animal presentations, and more! Stay tuned: <http://bit.ly/2XDVPWB>.

## Summer and Mini-camps

*Multiple Dates*

TBZ is hosting mini-camps for ages 5-10. Join us for the Land of Ice and Fire: Animals that live in extremes (2/21) and Keeping the Wild Alive (4/12 - 4/14, 4/19 - 4/21). Explore our summer camp curriculum in our open house on 2/19, registration for summer camp starts 4/12 for zoo members and 4/26 for the general public. Each camp session is one week long, learn more about our camps: <http://bit.ly/2GvNm70>.

## Easter Storytime

*4/9, 4/10, 4/16*

Ring in the Spring season with our Easter Storytime event! Recommended for children 8 and under, join our educators for a story and animal presentation. Light refreshments included, stay tuned: <http://bit.ly/2XDVPWB>.

## Turtle Back Zoo's Education Team will be at these events. Stop by and see us!

Family Day: Saturday, 4/9 at Branch Brook Park in Newark, NJ

Bloomfest: Sunday, 4/10 at Branch Brook Park in Newark, NJ

Earth Day Festival: 4/23 at the Essex County Environmental Center in Roseland, NJ

Earth Day Party for the Planet: 4/23-4/24,

Endangered Species/World Turtle Day: 5/21-5/22, and World Oceans Day: 6/11-6/12 at TBZ.

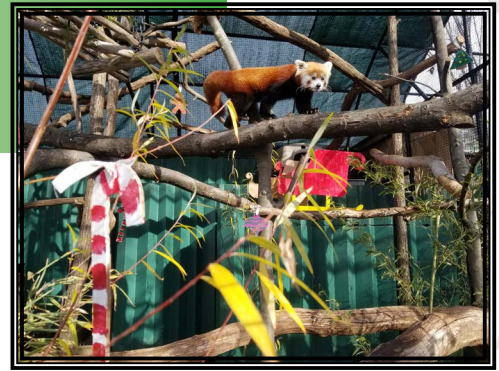
## Outreach Programs

Missed us? Book us for outreaches to your school, virtual programs, or birthday parties and on-grounds programs at Turtle Back Zoo! Programs available for all ages with topics tailored to your group. Email our Education Curator, Marguerite Hunt, at [mhunt@parks.essexcountynj.org](mailto:mhunt@parks.essexcountynj.org) for more information. Stay up to date with Turtle Back Zoo's upcoming events: <http://bit.ly/2vmMAEd>.

# ZOO NEWS

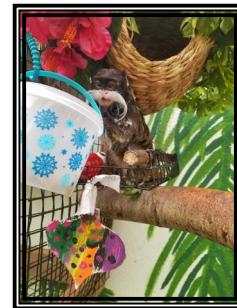
## Amazing Asia construction underway

Construction on our Amazing Asia exhibit, featuring Clouded, Snow, and Amur Leopards and Red Pandas, is underway with a current completion date of Spring 2022! Our Red Panda Jerry has taken up residence next to our Northern White-cheeked Gibbons for the duration of the construction.



## Holiday funsies

Though the holidays are behind us, you can still celebrate the New Year with these lovely holiday photos from our keepers!



## Our first ever Christmas Bird Count

Turtle Back Zoo staff took part in our first ever Christmas Bird Count! This National Audubon Society citizen science project is a nationwide initiative to get out and help researchers collect crucial population data for bird species from finches to ducks and beyond. Learn about our initiative and how you can get involved to save our declining songbird populations across America in the conservation section on page 3.



## Winter Scavenger Hunt

Stop by Turtle Back Zoo to participate in our scavenger hunt, included with admission! Bring a phone or device that connects to the internet to join in on the fun and learn some fun facts about our zoo's ambassador species. Once you're done, hop online for a free storybook activity to do at home. Stay tuned: <https://bit.ly/3GKIol0>.

**Nandi the Cheetah is outside for her first winter ever! Her keepers outfitted the outdoor habitat with a heated indoor space so that she can have the option to run around with Bowie, her companion labrador retriever, or rest indoors. You can stop by to see her and Bowie across from the Australia yard unless the weather is too cold for them to come out that day.**

While Bowie is a calming support dog for Nandi at the zoo, in the wild the relationship between dogs and cheetahs is a lot different. As livestock are hunted by predators in the evening, cheetahs, who are more often seen near farms, are often shot by ranchers who need to protect their families and financial livelihood. Here's where the dogs come into play: the Cheetah Conservation Fund started the Livestock Guarding Dog program in 1994, which first introduced Kangal and Antolian shepherds to ranchers in Namibia. In this program, dogs are bonded with their herd animals at a young 8 weeks old, leading to a lifetime of protection for ranchers. In this win-win conservation success, CCF funds the food, care, and medical bills of dogs while also providing non-lethal cheetah conservation practices to its community. We can support organizations like the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) and Turtle Back Zoo's education initiatives by supporting the Zoological Society of NJ's conservation fund <https://bit.ly/3ItPcDV>. Learn more about the CCF here: <https://bit.ly/33JN5Nt>.

# CONSERVATION EDUCATION

by Educator Katie Fenyar



As part of the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) SAFE North American Songbirds Action Plan, Turtle Back Zoo is not only exploring ways to make our zoo bird-friendly, but also participating in critical research projects. On December 18th, 2021, 5 Staff and Docents (volunteers) set out on a rainy day to partake in an important citizen science research project: The Audubon Christmas Bird Count! This annual count seeks to survey birds across the Western Hemisphere. Hundreds of dedicated people get out in rain, snow, sunshine, and other weather to count our national bird population. In our case it was rain and fog, but the show must go on! Throughout the morning, we observed a total of 221 individual birds across 22 species, from songbirds to waterfowl, right here in Essex County, New Jersey. We're happy to have a Pied-billed Grebe, who is endangered in New Jersey, stop by the reservoir. How amazing would it be if we can make our town even better for these elusive birds? Below is a summary of the species we found and how you can help our native wildlife thrive:

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Canada geese           | • Blue jays               |
| • Mallard ducks          | • American crow           |
| • Pied-billed grebe      | • Tufted titmouse         |
| • Great blue heron       | • White-breasted nuthatch |
| • Ring-billed gull       | • Carolina Wren           |
| • Red-tailed hawk        | • Northern Mockingbird    |
| • Rock doves             | • European starling       |
| • Mourning doves         | • Song sparrow            |
| • Red-bellied woodpecker | • White-throated sparrow  |
| • Downy woodpecker       | • Dark-eyed junco         |
| • Northern flicker       | • House sparrows          |

#1 Plant Native Foliage: Native birds have evolved to rely on specific insects and plants for food and shelter: without them, many species are in decline or at risk in the future. Check out Garden for Wildlife, an AZA partner, for tips and tricks to encourage native wildlife in your yard: <https://bit.ly/3B9mNAx>.

#2 Citizen science: Did you know you can help monitor bird populations? You can participate on your own or at local nature centers. To get started on bird identification, purchase a bird field guide like the Peterson Guide for your region or download free apps on your phone such as the Merlin birding app. To record your local sightings, we recommend eBird or iNaturalist, both of which scientists use to collect data. Check out the Merlin Bird I.D. app here: <https://bit.ly/3mg4ZwS>. Tag us @TurtleBackZoo to share your findings with us!



#3 A Bird Friendly Home: Did you know one of the leading causes of bird deaths are window strikes? Birds can't always see clear panes of glass and will crash into windows, facing severe injury or even

death. By purchasing or creating your own anti-bird strike clings and stickers for your windows, you can help prevent strikes, but if you do find an injured bird, contact a wildlife rehabilitator like Raptor's Trust for assistance. Check out the National Audubon Society for more birdy information and learn how to make anti-strike gear here: <https://bit.ly/33YsGok>.

#4 Finally, Keep Our Habitats Clean: This can help all birds, but is especially important for our waterfowl like Great Blue Herons, Mallards, and Pied-billed Grebes. When visiting a natural space, leave no trace. Aquatic animals can accidentally ingest plastic or get entangled in fishing line, which can cause injuries or death. Some things that we can do at home are switch to reusable products, participate in local cleanups, and encourage other states to make single-use plastics like straws only available upon request like NJ is doing.





# LIFE OF A ZOO REGISTRAR

by Educator Katie Feyar



The work of a registrar is an essential job in the day-to-day operations at AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) facilities like Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. Alyssa, our zoo's registrar, has the complex task of maintaining and organizing records for Turtle Back Zoo's over 400 residents, from the smallest budgie bird to the biggest bison. Check out our interview to discover this unique position and Alyssa's take on the job.

## What does a day in the work of a registrar look like?

Truly no two days are the same, but they all start with emails. At any given time, I might be in contact with zoo managers, keepers, other zoos, transporters, government agencies, or all of the above. Once I'm caught up on anything outstanding, the rest of my day is usually split between entering data from keeper reports and working on various projects. Right now, for example, I'm working on our annual inventory and permit renewals. It's a busy time of year.

## How did you become a registrar?

I kind of fell into it by happy happenstance. I did two internships at the Staten Island Zoo while I was in college studying to be a teacher. I've always loved animals, but it was at Staten Island Zoo that I learned about all the possibilities within the zoo field. I first worked as a keeper and later as an Education Animal Care Manager and then I worked for a company that works with museum collections. I combined the experiences in animal care with collections management and landed my ideal job as Zoo Registrar.

## What is the most important tool in your day-to-day work?

My most important tool...is probably post-its (laughs). I use post-its for everything; they help keep me organized and I make a lot of lists. In a practical sense, ZIMS (Zoological Information Management system; a software made by Species 360 for maintaining animal husbandry information) is very important for registrars working at any facility because that's where we enter animal data to monitor their health and wellbeing. Lots of zoos use ZIMS, which makes it really easy to share information when animals move from zoo to zoo.

## How has COVID impacted your work?

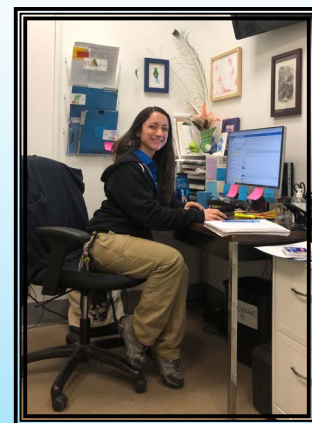
There were definitely disruptions caused by COVID: airline restrictions tightened for animals flying on planes and government agencies are still pretty tough to get ahold of. They're working through a pretty big backlog of work, so I have to plan accordingly when I need to secure permits from local or federal authorities, because they're still working with delays.

## For those who are interested in other zoo career paths, what would help them work in a position like yours?

I would suggest internships or volunteering! If you have the chance it's a great way to get a feel for the field or for a particular facility. When professional opportunities do arise you've already gained valuable experience at that location. For skill sets I would say it does take organization because there are a lot of animals to keep track of, and it also takes flexibility because you often need to shift gears at a moment's notice and not lose sight of the original task at hand.

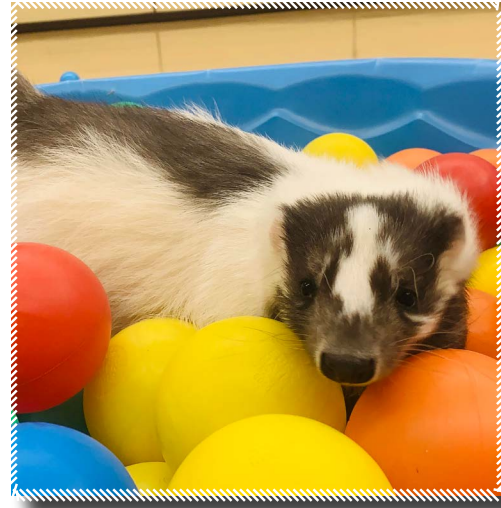
## Walk us through what it's like when an animal is coming to the zoo: what's your role in preparing?

There are a lot of moving parts when new animals come in. Before anything, we establish a plan, map out where the animal will be housed in the zoo, what its needs are, and whether we are best suited to meet them. Every animal also goes through a quarantine period when they arrive, so we look at our space availability to narrow down a transfer date. I work very closely with the sending facility as they share the animal's medical history and husbandry information so that we can replicate that here. If all goes according to plan, transfer day comes and it's a flurry of activity. I'm involved every step along that way, documenting everything.



# 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](http://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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