

ESSEX COUNTY
TURTLE BACK



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

Turtle TALK

Summer 2021

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Photo of the Season!

Keeper Erica

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

UPCOMING EVENTS



Summer Camp

No plans this summer and looking for something fun for the kids? Join us for summer camp! Each 1-week camp includes animal presentations, games, activities, zoo tours, and more! For age 5/entering Kindergarten - 8th grade, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3uc1x9g>.

NEW! Zooventure Box

TBZ's new activity box is coming to your door! Our Zooventure boxes are designed for ages 5-8 and includes hands-on science experiments, arts-and-crafts, zoo tour videos, and more! Stay tuned for pricing and more details on our Eventbrite: <https://bit.ly/3eahKWJ>.



Party for the Planet

Earth Day may have passed, but the party's still going! Join us to discover how you can advocate for wildlife and their habitats around the globe, from Australia's fragile Great Barrier Reef to the regal Rocky Mountains of the United States. Check out our free scavenger hunts and conservation videos here, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3eRzhlC>.

Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers

2nd/4th Sundays monthly, with some exceptions FNC is continuing into summer! Join us to get out and explore nature, just in time for our beautiful weather! Recommended ages 6+, bring the whole family! Learn more: <https://bit.ly/330ZyZp>.

Sophisticated Science

Multiple Dates

Oooh how fancy! Join our educators for seminars covering topics including animal anatomy, habitats and conservation, animal careers, and more. These programs are perfect for those interested in discovering animals, science, conservation, and nature in a relaxed atmosphere. Recommended for ages 14+, learn more: <https://bit.ly/2RsLYLR>.



Wonders of the Wild

Multiple Dates

Wonders of the Wild is taking a break this June, but we'll be back in July! Join us and the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society to discover Earth's amazing habitats near and far. Recommended for ages 6-12; program includes zoo trips, animal presentations, nature walks, and more! Stay tuned: <https://bit.ly/3sqlwiu>.

Turtle Trot

Step Up For The Wild! Join our virtual run/walk, Turtle Trot! Turtle Trot is a family friendly activity to encourage people to step up for the wild. Visit www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/turtletrot for more info!

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.

Early Childhood

In-person Explorers classes are continuing this summer! Your little learner will enjoy zoo tours, fun science lessons, arts-and-crafts, animal presentations, and more! For ages 4-5, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3gPdhdJ>.

ZOO NEWS

Taj the West African dwarf crocodile (*Osteolaemus tetraspis tetraspis*) has a new habitat!

Our horticulture and reptile keeper teams worked together to create this naturalistic redesign, featuring live plants. Naturalistic habitats create more opportunities for animals like Taj to utilize their natural and learned behaviors.



Mini-golf, Treetop, and paddle boats are open for 2021!

Check out the links below to plan your visit:

Mini-golf: <https://bit.ly/3e4cUdw>

Treetop: <https://bit.ly/2RbFVv4>

Paddle boats: <https://bit.ly/3xETcwl>



Peaches the American alligator is out!

Ah springtime: the birds are singing, the flowers are blooming, and the alligator is swimming! With warmer weather, Peaches the American alligator is enjoying the great outdoors in his habitat near our otters. Stop by for a visit!



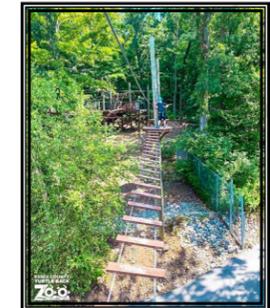
Suki's Birthday Bash!

On May 28th, we celebrated the 19th birthday of Suki, the Northern white-cheeked gibbon! Our Primate Keepers set out to make this a special one: filled with snacks, streamers, and a lovely time for our gibbons. Check out our Facebook livestream from the day to see just how fun the celebration was!



Turtle Back Zoo is open 10am-4pm daily for the season!

Have you made it to the Zoo yet this year? Purchase your tickets online to guarantee your spot! <https://bit.ly/3gQk1Z1>. The park remains open for 1 hour after last admission. The Zoo is open rain or shine.



Woohoo: giraffe feed and pony rides are open for the season!

Meet our herd of ponies at Essex Farm and our Masai giraffe in African Adventure. Not included with admission, call Turtle Back Zoo guest services at (973)-731-5800 ext. 111 or 112 for more information and for availability on the day of your visit!



North American river otters are back!

Speaking of otters...our North American river otters are back on exhibit too! After a habitat redesign, our lovely duo has a larger pond and stream to enjoy; come by and visit our otters, Han and Shelby!



Student Conservation Spotlight

Rhianna and Violet are two students in the West Orange school district who are inspiring others to make a difference for Planet Earth and our diverse wildlife. As lead representatives of the R.M.S. Environmental club, Rhianna and Violet demonstrated near Northfield Avenue to raise awareness for the climate justice movement, Fridays for Future, created by Swedish Activist Greta Thunberg.

In addition to holding school campaigns like the Plastic A.R.T campaign to “recycle your part, make some art”, the RMS Environmental club was invited by the West Orange Environmental Commission to their 2021 Earth Hour event at Thomas Edison National Historical Park Museum. This event encourages everyone across the world to turn off their lights for one hour. Check out our interview below!



Let’s learn a little bit about you, when you aren’t volunteering with the RMS Environmental club, what do you enjoy?

Violet: I enjoy playing soccer, I am on a travel team...and I also really love nature. I have four pets so I spend time hiking in the woods with my dog.

Rhianna: I also play a lot of sports, currently I’m on the West Orange travel softball team. I enjoy reading books and writing, so I’m trying to write a book series. It’s difficult, but I love being creative.

If you could visit any ecosystem in the world, where would you go?

Violet: Probably a jungle: there’s so much

biodiversity and different species that thrive there: it would be really cool to experience that.

Rhianna: The snow-capped mountains with pine forests surrounding it, like a Bob Ross painting. I really enjoy winter and the snow: I was born in December, so I love the cold. Just being at a mountain and smelling and all the pine, it’s a beautiful scent.



What is your role as the lead representatives of the RMS Environmental Club? What do you think is the most important part of your positions?

Rhianna: We created that role because in the beginning of the year, there weren’t many environmental enthusiasts at our school. We founded the Plastic ART campaign and send emails to the principals and our subscribers. We’re pretty tech savvy people.

Violet: We also created our club’s website and worked with our new members to create different pages and topics on the website. We also manage we post on social media: Rhianna takes on the Twitter account, and I Instagram.

How did Greta Thunberg inspire you to take action in the climate justice movement?

Violet: Her work inspired me, I can relate to her because she started as just a young girl our age trying to make the world a better place. That was super inspirational because she’s making a huge global impact. It’s really inspirational to know that if we work really hard and keep believing in our cause, then we can make a big change like her.

Rhianna: Yeah, definitely she inspires me. I’ve done a lot of school projects on her: every time I

Student Conservation Spotlight Continued...

researched her, I learned something new. By being in the RMS club, we’re doing our part to create a better future for ourselves and all the other kids in the world. Yeah, she’s definitely been a big motivation.

The Plastic A.R.T project is a really creative idea: what inspired this project?

Rhianna: In the past, the club did a lot of gardening but not district-wide campaigns: so I thought we should do should make a big impact. We googled plastic art and went down a Pinterest hole of beautiful art made from trash in the ocean. They made sea life out of it, like sharks and whales: I thought we could do this, but on a more manageable scale. We got rolling with the DIY videos and branched out from there.

Violet: Yeah, our focus was always on getting the community involved. It was cool to branch out into the West Orange public schools and have a district-wide campaign that students of all ages could participate in and make their impact.

What would you like to say to others your age who might be unsure how to get involved in climate action and environmental activism?

Rhianna: I would tell them to start in your town and your community; start small and join your school’s environmental club. This is the biggest kind of activist project I’ve done and that’s all because of the Roosevelt Environmental Club. So definitely join clubs or committees, or something that’s environmentally focused. We protested for [Fridays for Future] alongside Northfield Avenue. That’s a huge part of being an activist: getting out there and using your voice for change.

Violet: When I joined the club this year, I wasn’t involved in the environmental movement yet. I knew I wanted to have an impact, so I started doing more research and learning more than I had in the past. Research is a good first step: it doesn’t have to be very in depth: run a quick Google search and find 10 ways to make an impact in my community. Talk to your parents about stuff that you can do, even if it’s as simple like switching off the lights: if you’re

not using them, it adds up.

What message would you and the RMS Environmental Club like to share with our readers?

Violet: If you can, even if it’s 20 minutes, do something that you’re passionate about and see how you can make a difference. No matter what age or where you are, just try to get started in any way you can. I think that it’s really important to acknowledge the issues that you can help to solve and know that you’re part of something bigger.



Rhianna: Once you inform yourself, you can make a bigger change. We all have the capability to change the world: we are motivated to make a better future and Earth a better home. It’s all about community: your relationships with people. We would have never gotten to the Earth Hour and other televised events if we hadn’t reached out, which was one of the most important emails I’ve ever sent. It’s all about getting together to make a difference. I know that’s hard with the pandemic at hand, but virtually getting together like this zoom interview is definitely still making a difference.

Thank you again to Rhianna and Violet from the RMS Environmental club. Learn more about the Environmental club at <https://bit.ly/3aWZTk6> and follow them on twitter and instagram @ [RMSEnviroClub](#) to support their mission!



LETTERS FROM CAMPERS



CONSERVATION EDUCATION

by Educator Katie Fenyar

Like Rhianna and Violet, our campers got inspired this month and wanted to share how and why we should take steps to protect our planet. Check out their powerful letters and let's #PartyforthePlanet! Learn more about how you can get involved to save our diverse wildlife: <https://bit.ly/3e4gVif>.

Earth month has come and gone, but let's keep the party going! There's a lot of ways we can protect the home we share, so here's our question for you: how do you protect Earth and its inhabitants? We would love to see what gets you inspired to protect nature, tag us @TurtleBackZoo on Facebook and Twitter or @OfficialTurtleBackZoo on Instagram and Tiktok for a chance to be featured in future newsletters and on social media!

which increases the risk of predation and habitat loss due to human activity such as accidentally driving over or stepping on nests. Fortunately, they are protected by volunteers and biologists who place barriers around their waterfront nesting sites. If you visit the beach this season, keep an eye out for the piping plover protection signs! As a bonus, learn more about the research surrounding reef-safe sunscreens and how we can protect our oceans, which shorebirds and more rely on for food sources. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/2PDTuTB>.

Meanwhile, let's get started...here's a few things that our staff want you to know:



Turtles, salamanders, and opossums oh my! Wildlife don't just live in forests, grasslands, and natural habitats: they live in our backyards, farms, and other urban spaces. With roads blocking their route, migrating wildlife often find themselves in danger from traffic. While many places are creating bridges, tunnels, and using anti-bird window strike stickers to protect wildlife, it's up to us to use, share, and create these and new solutions for wildlife. In the meantime, if you find injured wildlife near you, contact your local rehabilitator for the next best steps, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3xSfijl>.

In March, two Bald eagle chicks hatched at Dukes Farm in Hillsborough, NJ! In recent years, bald eagles have dramatically rebounded and can now be found in every county in NJ, according to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey. It's important to keep an eye out for how the actions we take as individuals and a country affect our wildlife, like the chemical DDT which nearly caused Bald eagles to go extinct in the 1970's. We can all keep up the good work for eagles and our ecosystems by lobbying businesses and lawmakers to research, fund, and create eco-friendly initiatives.

The most important thing we can do is have hope. Together, our actions can shape the world for the better, and it all starts with one change. No matter what you decide to do, we invite you to take action for the planet we all share and remember: we're all in this together. Visit our website to learn more about sustainable actions you can take to protect Earth's amazing biodiversity: <https://bit.ly/3e4gVif>.



One way to respect the planet is to have a garden so the worms can help the plants so they can grow to make a beautiful garden. Another way is to start a club where you have meetings once or twice a week and what you do is the president of the club can get new ideas for it. So then what you do is you get in a car and you drive around the town you live in and collect all the pieces of garbage that could be anywhere and include everyone who wants to join in. Don't throw it out because it will end up in the ocean where the animals will eat it and maby die or get very sick or hurt. So then you will wash the garbage and make it into useful things like a cool water bottle.

I hope you got a few ideas to make the earth better!

Madelin

To me Earth is very special. I mean, we on it! Earth is the planet that keeps us alive. To me, protecting the earth means a lot. Some ways you can protect earth is you can stop littering, pick up trash, if you can, maybe even start your own garden. Thank you Earth.

Justin

To help the environment by not polluting oceans and helping the sea turtles so they don't get sick. I also like the earth because there are animals and national parks that you can go and care for. We should not keep throwing trash where animals and plants are so we don't make the animals endangered.

Ella

conservation is important. We only have one planet and if we wait our descendants to live on it, we need to protect it. We should stop littering the beach and start helping to clean up it. The earth is important because we and animals live on it! We need to preserve and protect it. We can stop littering and stop using so much plastic materials.

The Amur Leopard is in trouble. Only about 30 of its kind is left out in the wild. We need to discourage buying land to develop malls or public areas by saying that we are taking land belonging to animals and plants. We can do so much to help conserve the earth, because after all, we'll live on it forever. The earth means a lot to everyone.

From, Caroline

This is an African Penguin.

Earth is a good planet because it's the only place that has animals and people can live. If we keep littering, polluting, and harming the earth, it will not be a beautiful place anymore.

Reduce, reuse, recycle! The possibilities are endless; how do you prevent plastic pollution? Take a moment to look through your home: do you have things you can reduce your use of, like plastic bags? Can you reuse anything, like bottles or food containers? How many things can you recycle? The RMS Environmental club in West Orange, NJ has some fun ways to reuse everything from plastic bottles to toothpaste tubes. What will you create? Check out our interview with Violet and Rhianna of the RMS Environmental club on pages 3-4 and get inspired: <https://bit.ly/3u9QJZ0>.

It's Piping plover season, and these charismatic birds are busy at the beach! Along with black skimmers, these shorebirds lay their eggs directly on the sand,

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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