

ESSEX COUNTY
TURTLE BACK



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

Turtle TALK

Winter 2022

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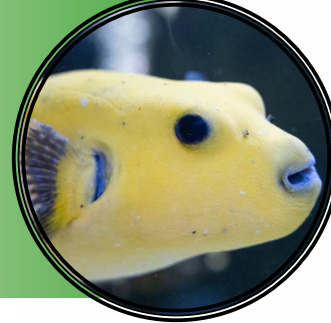


Photo of the Season!

Kreative Keepers Contest, Greg Pallante

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

UPCOMING EVENTS



Behind-the-Scenes Tours

Select Saturdays & Sundays

Ever wondered what happens behind-the-scenes at the zoo? Join us for a guided tour to discover what goes into the day-to-day of caring for our zoo animals and meet the staff who make it happen. Current tours include our brand-new Amazing Asia and Giraffe Barn, including close-up encounters with our zoo residents. Our new barn, which was collaboratively designed between our animal curators and zookeepers, features a 20+ foot tall training wall, which can be used by our Clouded leopards, Red pandas, and other residents (except the Vietnamese pond turtles, of course) for daily exercise and enrichment. Add on a giraffe tour for an up-close encounter with the residents of our mixed-species Africa exhibit, featuring our Masai giraffe bachelor herd. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/2RF2FA4>.

Docent & Volunteer Applications Opening Soon!

Volunteer at the zoo with our docent program (18+), Ages 14-17 can volunteer with our summer camp volunteer program. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/2sJvd2p>.

Early Childhood

Select Sundays & Mondays

Discover our popular Tots (2-3 years w/ caregiver) and Explorers (4-5 years w/out caregiver) programs at Turtle Back Zoo! Introduce your young learners to the natural world through gently structured play, art, stories, animal visits, and more. Tickets sell fast, learn more: <http://bit.ly/2NLJW5J>.

FNC: Family Nature Club

Select Sundays @9AM-11AM, 10AM-12PM, 1PM-3PM

Ready, Set, Bird! Join us for the great Christmas Bird Count, an annual citizen science project that helps researchers understand our bird populations and make changes to help birds across the country. Join us on 11/27 or 12/11 to learn how-to bird and 12/17 for the count! FNC nature hikes will return starting Sunday, 1/8. Recommended for ages 6+, all minors must be with an adult, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3zcGTtc>.

Sophisticated Science

Select Saturdays @1PM-3PM

Take a deep dive into scientific topics, from zoo careers to animal anatomy and beyond! Includes a powerpoint presentation, zoo tour, animal presentation, and more! Recommended for ages 13 - 103, Fall registration is open, learn more: <https://bit.ly/3yl9Ukw>.

Mini-Camps

December 27-29, January 16, & February 20-21 @9AM - 4PM

Winter mini camps are the most wonderful time of the year! Discover the natural world with our mini camps, themed Animal myths and legends (12-27-29), Survival of the Fittest (1/16), and Animal Acrobats (2/20-21). Camp includes animal presentations, zoo tours, age-appropriate crafts, scientific lessons, and more! Register for one or more: <http://bit.ly/2GvNm70>.

Holiday Storytime & Winter Workshop

Multiple Dates & Times

Don your favorite seasonal sweaters and pajamas for a winter storytime! Join our educators for a family-friendly holiday story with beverages, snacks, and an animal meet-and-greet included. Recommended for ages 8 and younger, all children must be accompanied by an adult. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/3TA6ZzL>. Join us for our Winter Workshop to make animal enrichment for our zoo residents on Sunday, December 4 @11AM - 2PM! Stay tuned: <http://bit.ly/3JMGmaf>.

Holiday Lights

Friday, Saturday, Sundays starting November 18, then every night starting December 9

Visit Turtle Back Zoo after-hours to see thousands of lights across the zoo and visit your favorite zoo residents! No admission or advance registration required, but we suggest a food or coat donation for those in need.

Happy Holidays!

TBZ will be closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Years Day. Join us in the new year for more events and programs at TBZ! Happy (almost) 2023!

ZOO NEWS

Kreative Kreeper Winner: Tatu the three-banded armadillo

Straight out of the graveyard comes the gravedigger herself! Tatu the armadillo is known for sleeping under her mulch bedding, making this graveyard, filled with animal puns like "Just playin' Possum" perfect for our wonderful ambassador. While you can't find Tatu in the zoo, those who come to our camp and educational programs are well acquainted with her high-energy exercise routine as she explores every inch of her habitat.



Island Giants Construction Begins!

As an extension of our World of Water exhibit, TBZ is expanding our zoo to include upgraded exhibits for our Komodo dragon and crocodilians, including Peaches the American alligator! These new exhibits will allow for year-round viewing of our zoo's largest reptiles and expand our conservation efforts for the endangered Komodo dragon. Our goal is to increase our involvement with the Komodo SSP program, which will connect us with over 200 AZA facilities researching and creating a sustainable backup population of at-risk species while working with international organizations to conserve their wild habitat.

Thank You Educators!

In recognition of International Day of Zoo & Aquarium Educators, we are excited to showcase our educators here at the Zoo! Based in the Berson Learning Center, our education staff works consistently throughout the year to develop classes and programs for wildlife education and nature conservation efforts. Working with wildlife enthusiasts of every age, our education team is vital to our community outreach efforts for wildlife education. A special thanks for putting in the work that helps shape the wildlife activists and enthusiast of tomorrow! Check out the seminars and classes being offered and developed today by following this link to our Zoo's education programs: <http://bit.ly/3r7RYbh>.



Welcome to TBZ: Skye the Amur leopard!

All the way from Utah's Hogle Zoo, Skye the Amur leopard has arrived! By recommendation of the Amur leopard Global Species Management Plan program, Skye (born March 2020) is a potential future mate for Nadya, our Amur leopard who was hand-raised here at TBZ. Behind-the-scenes, animal transfers are a lot of work. Our zoo registrar is involved from start to finish, securing permits and coordinating the transfer while zookeepers from both sides work together for a seamless transfer.



MORE ZOO NEWS

Hold the date! Stay tuned on our social media and website for more info.

Job Fair: January 7 @ 10AM-2PM: Visit our TBZ Job Fair for positions including seasonal/part-time cashiers, maintenance, guest experience keepers, horticulture and more!

Groundhog Day: February 2: Check our social media for a (hopefully) early winter and Superbowl prediction!



Amazing Asia open

Who's been following the Amazing Asia habitat? Stop by and visit our Clouded leopards, Red panda, and Vietnamese pond turtles at their new exhibits in the zoo. Our keepers have been busily howdyng our Clouded leopards, meaning that they are introducing our leopards to each other so they can share their exhibits and be involved in future SSP breeding programs, of which our zoo's director Jilian Fazio is the program coordinator for. Join our Asia zoo tours to go behind-the-scenes at our Clouded leopard and Red panda habitats and talk with our zookeepers about their conservation work at TBZ. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/2RF2FA4>.



Future plans: Hospital Extension

Our next plan at TBZ is to expand our hospital exhibit to include a publicly viewable surgery and procedure room. This extension will be an amazing educational opportunity and update our hospital to continue our zoo's growth. TBZ's veterinary team will visit the state-of-the art hospital at Nashville Zoo for inspiration for our future expansion. Stay tuned for more information coming soon!



Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. and Louis LaSalle display an artist rendering of the new Amazing Asia Habitat during the groundbreaking ceremony at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. With them are members of the Zoo Docents. DiVincenzo dedicated the habitat to LaSalle for his longtime activism on behalf of the Essex County Parks System and Turtle Back Zoo.

Chilly weather is here, but never fear!

Though the weather is getting cold, TBZ is still open! Our hours have changed to our off-season schedule of 10AM-4PM, with last admission at 3PM. See you at the zoo!



Do you have a good or service you would like to donate?
The Zoological Society of New Jersey is seeking in-kind donations to include in our upcoming auction. For more information please reach out to acaserta@zoologicalsocietyofnj.org.



CONSERVATION EDUCATION



The Everything Bagel

Hi! I'm Tina and I'm a zookeeper.

I'm often met with oops and aahs when I mention my job, but the questions that follow, leave me puzzled about how much this career is misunderstood. Do you go in with the lions? Do you hang out with gibbons? Do you swim with the otters?

Recent media, such as the Tiger King, hasn't helped, with many thinking we play all day with lions and tigers and bears. Oh my. I once made the mistake to sit in the front row at a comedy club, and well...you can imagine the rest. Therefore, it might be time to explain what it's really like being a zookeeper.

Aspiring zookeepers share a passion for wildlife for the entire animal kingdom, beyond pets and farm animals. Our academic backgrounds can vary, as we earned undergraduate and more often graduate degrees in biology, wildlife management, zoology, veterinary science, animal science, etc. Nonetheless, many climb the path from unpaid internships and volunteering, to seasonal and part-time positions, to finally full-time positions.

The day-to-day is far from a regular 9 to 5. Raking, sweeping, scrubbing, and hosing are daily chores, Saturday and Sunday are regular weekdays, and overtime is a normal occurrence. Zookeepers are multitaskers; we juggle cleaning, diet prep, keeper chats, cleaning again, setting up enrichment, training, meetings, restocking, cleaning again, and record keeping.

Zookeepers wear many hats often associated with other animal careers. In simple terms, we are the everything bagel.

We are not veterinarians, but we work closely with the vet team to monitor the animals' health status. Zookeepers observe and record animal behaviors daily such that we are the vet staff's first point of reference when analyzing signs of injury, illness and/or disease. We're there when the animals enter the zoo hospital, and often participate in basic procedures.

We are not field biologists, but we spend the workday in every element; freezing, sweating, soaking wet, muddy, and of course, sporting great farmer tans in the warmer months. We carry fancy

equipment such as waterproof notebooks, pocket pens, pocket sharpies, and multi-tools. We go through way too many boots, shoes, and rain boots, but our motto is if duct tape can fix it, then duct tape will fix it.

We are not academic researchers, but we research and write standard operating procedures, breeding recommendations, diet changes, training procedures, enrichment proposals and safety drills. Each item needs review and updating every time there is a necessary change. Some of us write for other organizations because we enjoy writing! (Ok...maybe just me).

We may not be teachers, but zoo education programs and events that we participate in aim to educate our guests, especially the youngsters, about the species they love to visit. We describe the natural history of the animals; what they eat, where they live, their behaviors and awesome evolutionary adaptations. Most zoos are partnered with schools and summer camps so that local students can attend zoo trips and learn about wildlife.

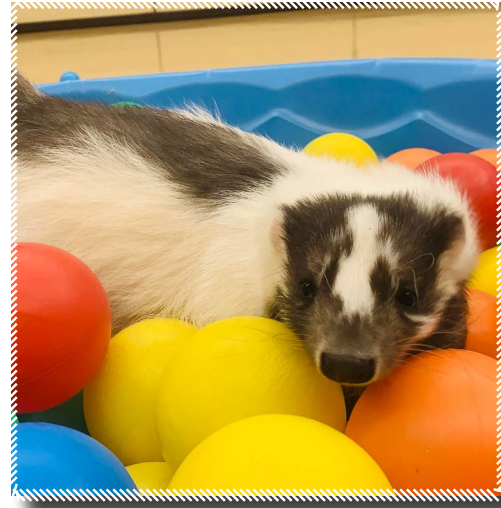
We may not be conservationists, but we are conscious of our carbon footprints and try to minimize where we can. We work on zoo programs focused on composting, recycling and educational posters/signs to get our communities involved. Keeper chats always save the last 5 minutes for the species' conservation. We strive to share information on conservation projects being done in-situ (within an animal's natural habitat) and ex-situ (at zoos, aquariums, etc...).

Despite all that, the moments we cherish the most are the ones spent building relationships with our animals. This can be anything from training with jaguars in protected contact (where we work with an animal from outside their habitat), to sitting with a macaw while you try to write up daily records. From taking an armadillo out for a hallway stroll so it can have a smelling good time, to giving the sloth a much-needed scratch behind the ear.

That's what being a zookeeper is all about. It is hard work, but soul fulfilling. We serve an important role in the zoological community, working hand in hand with other animal professions to save species and ecosystems, one individual animal at a time.

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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www.turtlebackzoo.com
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Questions or comments about this publication or the information contained within it may be directed to:

560 Northfield Ave, West Orange, NJ 07052

PH: 973-731-5800

info@zoologicalsocietyofnj.org

To see other Zoo Communications, please visit
<https://bit.ly/2SDw0OR>