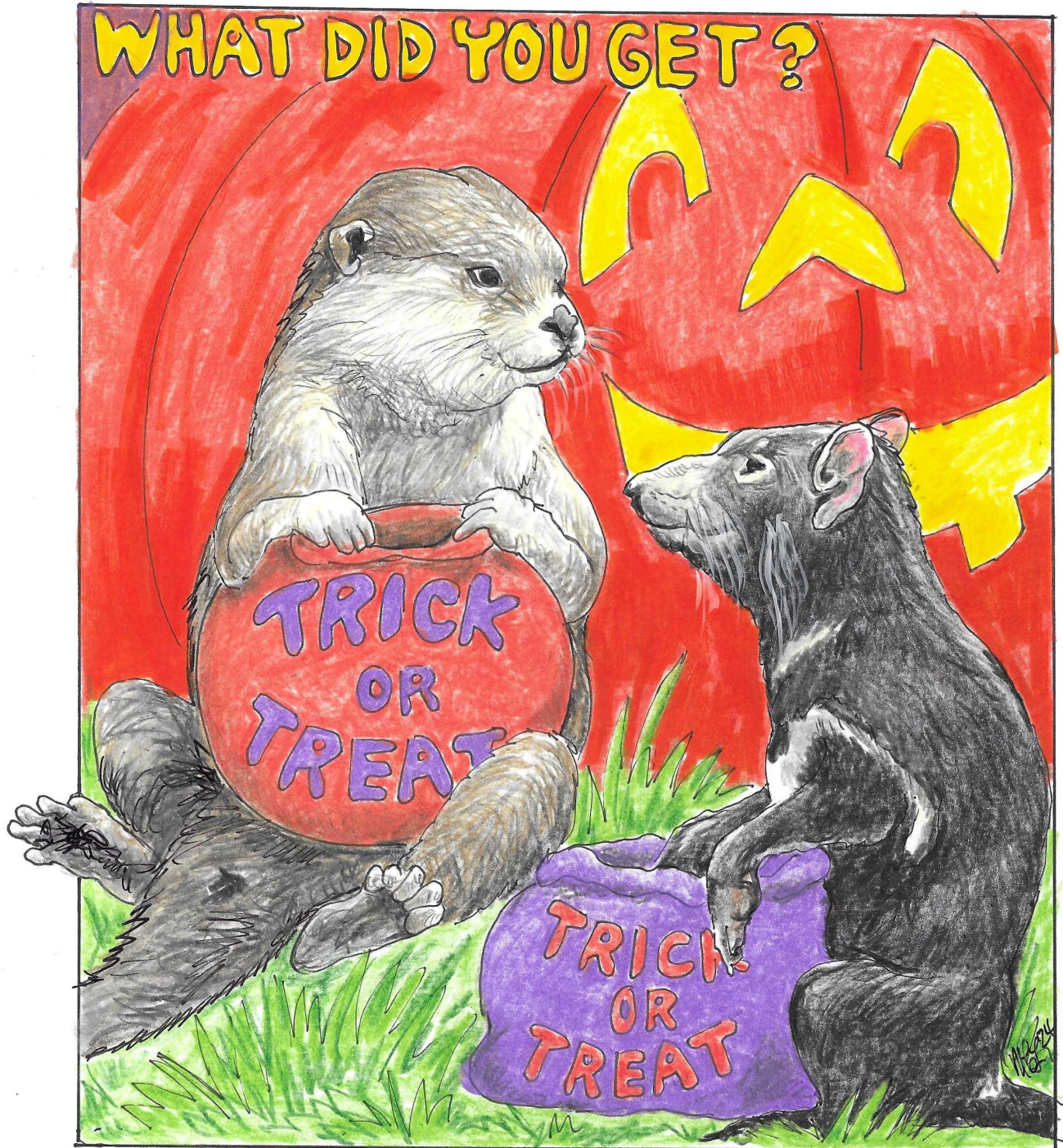


Volunteer Newsletter

The Columbus Zoo
and Aquarium
Volunteer Newsletter



October 2024





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The mission of the Volunteer Newsletter is to promote awareness, education, preservation and conservation of our natural world.

To submit an article, please email us at: cbuszooneews@gmail.com

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Bison Conservation and Preservation: The Wilds, Wildlife Restoration Foundation, InterTribal Buffalo Council, and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Achieve Milestone

By: Jen Fields, Director of Communications



The Wilds, Wildlife Restoration Foundation (WRF), InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC), and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe successfully relocated 74 bison from The Wilds to the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. This significant transfer marks the first major achievement for The Wilds' steps in a new bison conservation plan and exemplifies a robust and collective commitment to both ecological and cultural preservation.

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"The transfer of these bison is a crucial step in our mission to restore this keystone species to its native range while respecting the profound cultural connections many tribes and communities have with the bison," said Vice President at The Wilds Dr. Joe Smith. "This collaborative effort underscores the vital importance of bison in maintaining the health of prairie ecosystems and in supporting cultural heritage."

The Wilds, in collaboration with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, is leading the way in bison conservation through the establishment of the North American Center for Bison Conservation. This initiative leverages the expertise of The Wilds staff, WRF, ITBC, and various federal, state, and tribal entities, private conservancies, and zoological facilities to manage large-scale bison herds to further bison conservation both in professional care and in wild protected areas.

Conservation and Cultural Significance

The American bison is a keystone species, essential for the health and diversity of prairie ecosystems. Once spanning over 142 million acres across the United States, these prairies are now one of the most endangered ecosystems, with less than 5 percent of its previous distribution remaining. Bison play a crucial role in maintaining native vegetation through their grazing, adding nutrients back to the soil, and even creating shallow wetlands through wallowing that benefit amphibians and birds, as well as a wide range of other plant and animal species.

Culturally, the bison holds immense significance. It is the National Mammal of the United States. Bison is also a species that has played a foundational role in the lives of Tribal nations across the Great Plains who utilize bison for food, shelter, clothing, and in traditions and spiritual rituals.

However, the near extinction of American bison due to over-hunting and westward expansion not only affected the grassland ecosystems but severely impacted the tribes that had deep connections to bison. Efforts to restore bison populations are not just about conservation but also about reclaiming cultural identity and traditions.

A Model for Bison Conservation

Working with partners, The Wilds is championing a comprehensive approach to bison conservation. With help from WRF, The Wilds is transitioning its herd of approximately 150 bison on 600 acres into a prototype conservation herd managed by a zoological institution. This involves:

- Maintaining natural herd structures and behaviors
- Ensuring genetic diversity and quality
- Implementing advanced herd management and health strategies
- Restoring native grasslands
- Enhancing public education and guest experiences

Milestone Transfer Details

After months of careful and collaborative planning to ensure that all went smoothly, on May 9, 2024, 74 bison were successfully moved to the Cheyenne River Reservation, home to the four bands of the Titunwan People of the Plains.

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To perform a traditional CRST ceremony giving thanks for buffalo, CRST Tribal Elder Ivan Looking Horse traveled to The Wilds for the day of departure. Involving The Wilds staff, the moving ceremony was held before the bison departed on their journey to their new home. It included tribal prayers in the native language of the CRST and burning of the sage.

"The bison are happy and content in their natural habitat on the plains of South Dakota on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation," said [Jayme Murray, CEO, Cheyenne River Buffalo Authority Corporation](#). "They will remain isolated from our main herd for about 30 more days per our herd health protocols at which time they will be integrated into our herds to promote genetic diversity. Thank you to The Wilds and everyone who made this possible."

In addition to helping to restore bison to their prairie habitats, the Tribe also plans to utilize the bison for cultural education, community events, and nutrition. Some bison may be harvested through traditional field methods as part of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe's Farm-to-School program, supported by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants, which aims to provide bison meat at affordable prices to local schools, enhancing both nutrition and cultural education.

Looking Forward

"It was great visiting The Wilds' facilities and staff. We can tell how dedicated they are to the health and wellbeing of all of the animals in their care," said ITBC Technical Services Assistant Thomas Peters. "The transfers to Cheyenne River went splendidly and the buffalo are enjoying their new home. We look forward to continuing this partnership with The Wilds."



Continued on page 5

This partnership represents a significant step towards sustainable bison conservation and cultural revitalization. As The Wilds continues to refine its Strategic Implementation Plan, the focus remains on amplifying wild bison traits, improving herd health, and fostering collaboration with conservation and tribal entities.

"The Wilds is proud to collaborate with our esteemed partners on this vital initiative. Together, we are not only working to restore a species that plays a crucial role in our ecosystems but also upholding a cultural tradition that enriches important heritage for Tribal nations," said Dr. Smith. "This effort exemplifies our organization's mission of Empowering People. Saving Wildlife., and we are committed to making a lasting impact for both nature and communities."

"Restructuring, diversifying and improving the genetics of The Wilds bison herd is what we were brought on to help do," said WRF president Julie Anton Randall. "We are thrilled to have worked with ITBC to place all the dispositioned bison with the CRST near the Cheyenne River, South Dakota!"

My Very First Volunteer Shift

My very first Adult Volunteer shift is one I'll never forget. I was scheduled to work in the Kangaroo Walkabout on a Sunday at 9:00 a.m. There were NO guests there yet. I walked into the double doors. While standing just inside the entrance I felt what felt like a child's hands around my left leg. I looked down and there was a kangaroo right behind me embracing my thigh. Not knowing what to do (because we're not allowed to touch!!!!), I backed up very slowly and she let go. I got back between the doors. A few minutes went by and I saw a keeper coming my way. She could tell that I was flustered and asked what had happened. I told her. With a big smile on her face, she said, "Oh, you just got a Caroline Hug"!!

The moral of the story is NEVER turn your back on a kangaroo!!



—Deb Poling



I Found an Injured Animal— What Should I Do Now?

Most of us have or will come across an injured or orphaned animal. The first response is a desire to help, but how to do so is not always clear, and our initial instincts to help may not be well founded.



Fortunately, a local veterinarian by the name of Donald Burton, DVM (1951- 2014), had a passion for Ohio native wildlife. Early in his career, and in addition to his veterinary practice, Dr. Burton began providing care for sick and injured wildlife in his home garage. This small side practice eventually grew into the Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC), which is now recognized as an authority on the care and rehabilitation of wildlife and is one of the largest such organizations of its kind in the United States. Each year OWC cares for more than 8500 injured animals from over 200 species and provides ongoing community programming and education in central Ohio. OWC is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, having provided services since it was founded by Dr. Burton in 1984.

OWC Contact Information:

“Found An Animal” helpful steps: <https://ohiowildlifecenter.org/found-an-animal/>

OWC Wildlife Information Line: 614-793-9453

OWC Facebook Page (Send Message): <https://www.facebook.com/ohiowildlifecenterrescueandresponseteam>

OWC Wildlife Hospital: Open Daily 9AM – 5PM

2662 Billingsley Rd.

Columbus, OH 43235

The Ohio Wildlife Center (OWC), a 501c3 nonprofit, provides a rich set of easy-to-navigate resources to help answer questions about what to do (and not do) when we encounter injured wildlife. A good **first step** when finding an injured animal would be to use the resources provided on the “Found an Animal” site listed in the OWC contact list below. Alternatively, one can call the OWC “Information Line” or send a message from the OWC Facebook page.

Continued on page 7

OWC has a long history of rehabilitation and release, demonstrating its commitment to “fostering awareness and appreciation of Ohio’s native wildlife.” When rehabilitative services are deemed necessary, OWC operates a non-profit wildlife hospital with on-site veterinary care. The OWC hospital has permits from the *Ohio Division of Wildlife* and *U.S. Fish and Wildlife* (for migratory birds) allowing them to treat, rehabilitate and release animals back into their native habitat.

A Happy Ending

One example of a wildlife rescue is that of a young raccoon found with a jar stuck on his head (Figure 1). This is not uncommon for animals as they search for food in human trash. When this little raccoon was brought to OWC, he was sedated, the jar was successfully removed from his head, and, after observation, he was released back into the wild (Figures 2 and 3). This is an example of the care offered by OWC and also carries a message for humans regarding the careful, responsible disposal of trash.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Some things to consider when encountering orphaned, injured or sick wildlife:

- It is important NOT to feed an injured animal since that may cause irreparable harm. First, seek guidance from a licensed rehabilitator in your area. A list can be found on the Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitator’s Association (OWRA) site: <https://www.owra.org/find-a-rehabilitator> as well as the ODNR site (below).
- When dealing with mammals, it is important to be aware of two diseases that can affect humans and pets: rabies (bats, raccoons, skunks, woodchucks) and canine distemper virus (CDV) (raccoons, skunks)
- In Ohio, it is illegal to rehabilitate orphaned or injured native wildlife without a permit from the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Minimum standards and a list of current permit holders can be found on the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) site: <https://ohiodnr.gov/buy-and-apply/special-use-permits/wildlife-specialty-permits/wildlife-rehabilitator-volunteer#:~:text=There%20are%20two%20categories%20of,the%20Division%20of%20Wildlife.>
- A permit from U.S. Fish and Wildlife is required for the rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned migratory birds (3-200-10b). A "Good Samaritan" provision allows for a person who finds an injured migratory bird to transport it to a permitted facility for rehabilitation. <https://www.fws.gov/service/3-200-10b-migratory-bird-rehabilitation>

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OWC and the Columbus Zoo

OWC has a close relationship with the Columbus Zoo. Many of the Zoo administrative and animal care staff have served or currently serve on the OWC Board of Trustees and participate actively in the center's educational programming.

In 2014, Dr. Burton was named Trustee Emeritus at the Columbus Zoo, and the same year, the Eagle Habitat in the North America region was dedicated to Dr. Burton and his wife Susan.

For more information about how the Columbus Zoo supports OWC, please visit the Zoo's website at <https://www.columbuszoo.org/conservation/ohio-wildlife-center>.

—Sally Rudmann

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OWRA. <https://www.owra.org> Retrieved August 29, 2024

Discover more about the learning opportunities and the animal ambassadors on the website for the Ohio Wildlife Center. These events are held at the center at 9000 Dublin Road in Powell, Ohio.

<https://ohiowildlifecenter.org/>

Ohio Wildlife Center is also on Facebook.

Lorikeets

Did you know that lorikeets
mate for life?



Tide Pool Encounters

Did you know that a
horseshoe crab's blood is
blue?

Zoo School is Too Cool!



If you have been on grounds on a weekday since school started, you may have noticed students wearing yellow or purple shirts around the Zoo. These are the high-school juniors and seniors who participate in the Zoo School program.

The program is a satellite of the Delaware Area Career Center (DACC). Students spend half their school day at the Zoo and half at their home high schools. Emily Cunningham heads up the program. Before coming to the Zoo, Emily taught Biology and Environmental Science at a high school in Chicago. She has run the Zoo School for twelve years.



The two-year program is designed to take 50 students - 25 juniors and 25 seniors. Usually, between 50 and 60 students apply for the 25 junior spots. This year, students came from 20 high schools. They are chosen by lottery, and the only requirement is that they must provide their own transportation to the Zoo.

JUNIOR YEAR

The juniors (wearing their yellow shirts) spend mornings at their home high schools and are at the Zoo from 12:30-3:00. Their time at the Zoo is divided between alternating days of classroom work and days on grounds, following the Career Center model of Career Tech Observation Research. The classroom portion of the

program includes Math and Science: Zoology, taught by Emily, and Intro to Statistics, a college-level class taught by the DACC staff.

Their observational studies include observing animals and collecting data around the Zoo.

For the first few months, they all work on a project devised by Emily. This year's topic is "Is there a significant relationship between weather and animal activity level?" This is often their first topic, and this year's variable is the UV index. They will also be working on a variety of other projects that get

them on grounds from the start of the school year. Their summer project is to create their own map of the Zoo so that they are ready to go on day one.

For their second project, students author research proposals, and Emily takes them to the staff. Keepers might also offer topics they would like to see covered. All topics must be approved by a curator or assistant curator. Once topics have been approved, students get to rank their first and second choices, are assigned their topics, and get to work. Of course, if a student's own proposal is accepted, they get to work on that project. From December to April, the students can be seen in every region of the Zoo working on their research topics. They might be studying habitat use, especially in a new

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or renovated habitat; observing animal interactions; doing water quality testing in Shores; or conducting observations of a new animal. We can definitely expect to see students observing Johnson the elephant, for example.

SENIOR YEAR

In the Classroom

The seniors, in their purple shirts, are at the Zoo from 7:30 -10:00, so we are less likely to see them around the Zoo. They spend two days each week in the classroom, studying Zoology and working on various projects designed by Emily. One of these projects involved designing and writing hypothetical keeper talks. Guest speakers, keeper presentations, and theme-based independent learning round out their classroom experience. They document their experience in a journal, maintain time sheets and learn job skills as part of their senior year experience.



Around the Zoo

The seniors spend the other three days as interns. They work in every area except with pinnipeds, venomous animals and the great apes. Most years, a student might choose to work at the Ohio Wildlife Center or the Columbus Zoo's Watters Aquatic Conservation Center.

They do essentially everything a college intern or entry-level seasonal might do involving animal care: food preparation, enrichment preparation, habitat maintenance, etc. They may have the opportunity to observe animal training and medical procedures.

Emily's enthusiasm for her program is evident, and she describes it as "win-win." Some students choose to pursue a zoo-related career path. Others, who may go in different directions, have had a "really cool" experience and have learned valuable research skills. "Every adult I talk to," said Emily, "is jealous and wishes they could have done this in high school!"

Many thanks to Emily Cunningham for taking the time to talk with me about the Zoo School program.

—Kathy Goldsmith



If you know a freshman or sophomore who might be interested in this two-year program, they can get more information and apply directly on the DACC website. Students apply their sophomore year.

Photos courtesy of Emily Cunningham

A "FIVE-STAR" HABITAT FOR THE BONOBOS

After a long wait, the newly renovated bonobo building is finally open to the public. The building, now called the Claudine André Bonobo Indoor Habitat, was dedicated on August 27, 2024. Claudine, the founder of Friends of Bonobos and the Lola ya Bonobo sanctuary in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was there for the dedication.



Curator Audra Meinelt graciously took the time to tell us all about the new "digs."

The bonobos moved into the new building on July 15th and 16th. According to Audra, the move went smoothly. All the bonobos were hand-injected for the move. Audra noted that "The team did an incredible job getting them ready for the day, and while the bonobos did not follow our plan, the team was able to adjust, and all bonobos ended up cooperating. Every bonobo received a full examination, including a cardiac scan and a CT. Information was collected for seven different research projects as well."

I asked Audra several questions about the new habitat.

What are some significant features that you would like us to notice or point out to visitors?

- The building has a ton of skylights, and it feels very light and airy.
- The new mulch in the dayrooms provides a softer surface for the animals to live on. In addition, they are really enjoying foraging in the mulch.
- We have a chute system that connects spaces throughout the building. The bottom of the chutes is 7' off the ground, and they really like being up high. They are choosing to make nests in here daily.
- There are a ton of firehose throughout the spaces so the bonobos have a lot of pathways they can choose to take to get from one space to another. There are also plenty of eye bolts for use with hanging enrichment.
- The building has a humidification system throughout the space. Currently we have over 80% humidity in the back area---nice for the bonobos but a little high for the keeper staff!! We will eventually get this down to about 50-60% daily. The building itself is kept around 70 degrees.
- Like the last building, this new indoor space is extremely flexible. All rooms connect to at least two other rooms, which makes fission/fusion easier.



*Photo courtesy of Graham S. Jones
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium*

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How tall is the new viewing window, and how large is the viewing area?

- The new building has a lot more height than the previous one. The new dayrooms are 26' tall, and the back rooms go from 15-18' high. (They are) definitely tall! We put lots of firehose up so the bonobos can use the entire space of the room. The bonobo love being able to be up high and it is nice to make the space more natural for them since they are arboreal animals.



How have the bonobos responded to their new area? Were any changes made to the outdoor yard, and how did the bonobos react to being out there again?

- The hotwire was removed from the former hog yard.
- The waterfall had leaks repaired, and a tweak was made to the bottom pool, so it is running much better now.
- They are really happy to be back in the outdoor yard.
- They have been eating a lot of plants and I saw one of them climbing in the middle of a lush tree. It made me very happy to see this.
- They are not as sure of the hog yard now that it does not have their old roommates. Jimmy is willing to go in, but the others still seem to stand outside it and stare. Kibibi was also fine going in this space since she did not know any better, but she quickly followed the lead of the other females and has not been going in there. I think Kibibi and Bob are enjoying this space since it was brand new to them, and the others are happy to have a large outdoor space again.



Photos courtesy of Harvey Castner

Note: Since Audra wrote this, more bonobos are spending time in the hog yard, to the delight of visitors.



*Photo courtesy of Graham S. Jones
Columbus Zoo and Aquarium*

The bonobos are not the only ones who love the new building. Keepers have said that "shifting is a dream." They love the many enrichment options the new space makes possible and agree that the bonobos were relaxed and comfortable from day one.

When Claudine spoke at the dedication, she called it a "five-star habitat," and summed up her impression of the new building in one word: "Wow!"

—Kathy Goldsmith



We have some new kids on our block - American river otters and Tasmanian devils. They have had a little time to adjust to us and our keepers to them. So now we know some fun specifics about them that guests might like to hear.

Tasmanian Devils

These two girls came from Save the Tasmanian Devil Program (STDP) in Tasmania which we have partnered with since 2019. Their journey was long as it took them 72 hours to fly into the Toledo Zoo where they were quarantined for 30 days. They are here as important ambassadors for their declining population.

Tori, the one-year-old, is the smaller of the two and fluffy. She is easy to tell as she has a white stripe across her chest. Emily Grumney who provided this information says keepers remember her by Queen VicTORia has a pearl necklace. Tori is super spunky but also cautious about new things. She loves a good tug of war with her toy on the pole in her yard.



Tori



Layna

Layna, the “chill pill,” is our less fluffy and larger two-year-old. She has a white spot above her right leg and is very laid back about her keepers and new surroundings.

Both girls picked up on training right away, going on the scale and understanding that the sleigh bells mean it is feeding time. They love their little rabbits, chicks, quail and chunked meat. They enjoy a good afternoon siesta so the best viewing time for them is from Zoo opening to about noon.

Photos courtesy of Juliann Breeding

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American River Otters

The otter boys came from Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, CT. Two of them got their names from commercial personalities and River was named by guests at Beardsley. They are litter mates and just over a year old. They do have a sister named Flo from Progressive Insurance who is living with their mom in Connecticut.

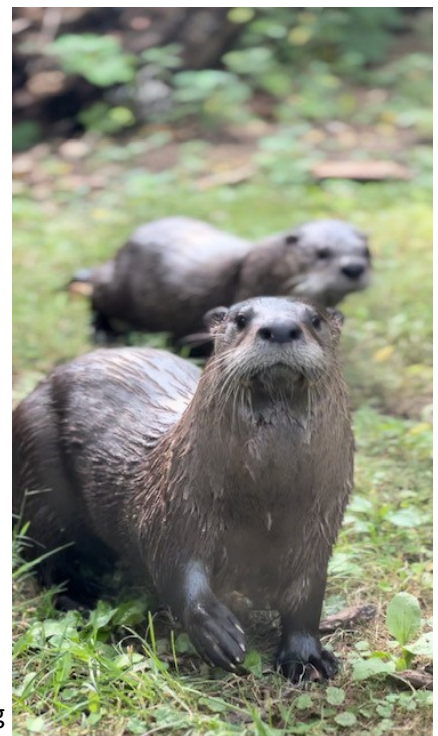
Wilford, named for Wilford from Liberty Mutual, is very food motivated and interactive with keepers. He is the heaviest and does look chubby. Wilford is the dominant male and gets jealous if his brothers get a treat before him. He is the last to investigate new spaces and enrichment. If on his hind legs, he will cross his front paws.

River is the most independent and was at the bottom of the hierarchy when he arrived but after moving into the otter habitat he has been asserting himself. This may be because he is the first to venture into new areas and test out new toys. He likes the keepers but if he is on a mission he will ignore them. He likes to train but is cautious of behaviors like hand injection. River is the tallest of the boys and when standing on his hind legs shows a silvery or whitish coloring on his neck.

Mayhem, named for Mayhem from Allstate Insurance, lives up to his commercial namesake well in that he tries to open doors in back holding, sits in doorways to prevent them being closed, destroys enrichment and moves furniture among other activities. He is great at training, picking up behaviors quicker than his brothers. He holds his mouth open while standing up to observe people and things. Mayhem typically stays in the back of the group. He has a little “milk mustache” you might see if down on his level.

The girls and boys are fun to visit and get to know so check them out.

—Juliann Breeding



Photos courtesy of Barb Emmets

Sources: Thank you to our Australian keeper Emily Grumney and our North American keeper Stephen Frey for their help in writing this item.

Ohio Center for Wildlife Conservation

In the new Ohio Center for Wildlife Conservation (OCWC) in North America, Zoo guests will be able to learn about the Zoo and The Wilds' local conservation initiatives, like projects dedicated to saving hellbenders, plains garter snakes, freshwater mussels, and American burying beetles.

Here are some animals that the Zoo returns to their native habitat:

Hellbenders:

<https://www.columbuszoo.org/raising-hellbenders-conservation-odyssey-ohios-waters>

Wolves

<https://www.columbuszoo.org/blog/mexican-wolves-something-howl-about>

Manatees

<https://www.columbuszoo.org/news/eight-rehabilitated-manatees-flown-ohio-zoos-back-florida-facilities-prepare-release-back-home>

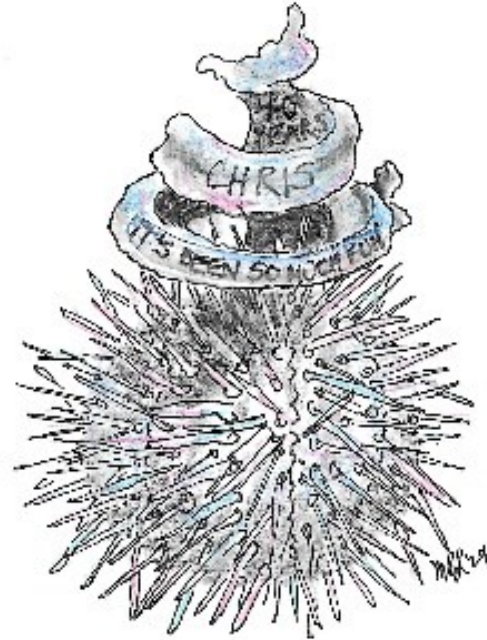


Empowering People. Saving Wildlife.

Thank You for Your Dedicated Service!

40 year Docent Award

Chris Lutmerding



40 year Docent Award

Lindsay McKinleyDay

40 year Emeritus Docent Award

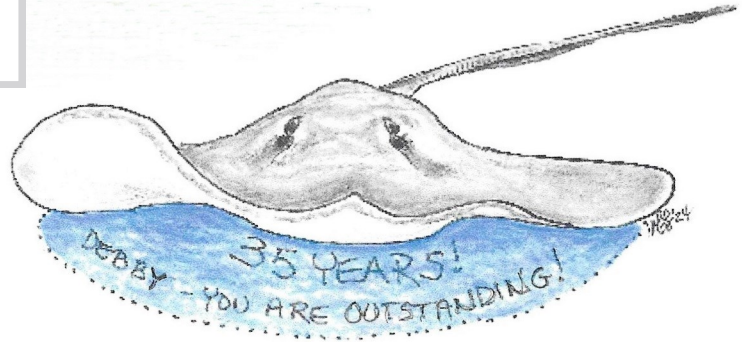
Sue Kiebler

Empowering People. Saving Wildlife.

Thank You for Your Dedicated Service!

35 year Docent Award

Debby Stokes

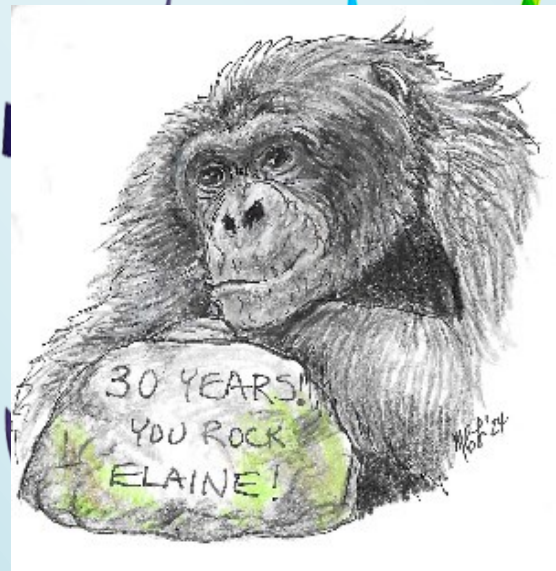


30 year Docent Award

Catherine Bremer

30 year Docent Award

Elaine Nicol

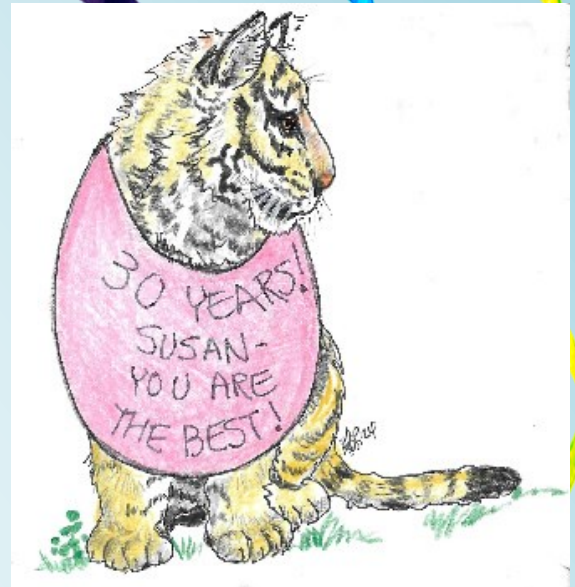


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Thank You for Your Dedicated Service!

30 year Docent Award

Susan White



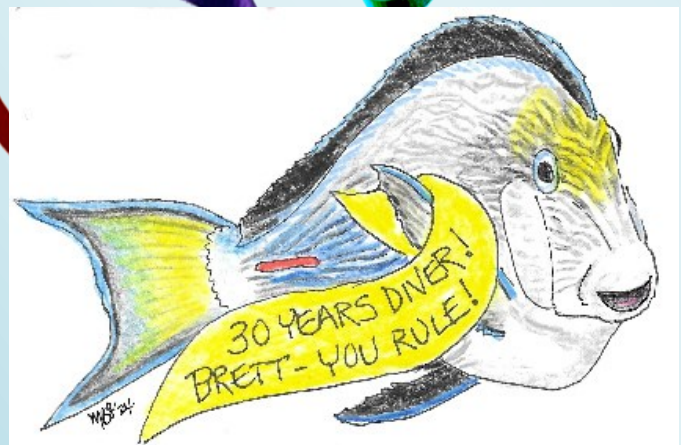
30 year Emeritus Docent Award

Norma Dodge

Susie Gray

30 Year Diver Award

Brett Call



Empowering People. Saving Wildlife.

Thank You for Your Dedicated Service!

25 year Docent Award

Amy Ferguson

Michele Newbauer

Carol Arns (Emeritus)

20 year Docent Award

Linda Ayers

Jill Baltes

Carol Bichler

Linda Castner

15 year Docent Award

Erin Bartlett

John Gruenbaum

Paula Lombardo

Terry Payne

Larry Smith

Margie Wheeler (Emeritus)

10 year Docent Award

Jon Briney

Wayne Fowler

Tom George

Sue Grubaugh

Peggy Heffelmire

Nancy Lafyatis

Suzi Pfening

Kathy Ragsdale

Phyllis Turner

Linda Yost

Lydia Medeiros (Emeritus)

10 year Adult Volunteer Award

Mike Archer

Deb Poling

Kevin Skehan

Empowering People. Saving Wildlife.

Thank You for Your Dedicated Service!

5 year Docent Award

Pat Burger	Laurie Chase	Roxanna Giambri
Amanda Heade	Barb Hermann	Charlie Horton
Laurie Kaps Keller	Ellen Miller	Patricia Morgan
Carley Petch	Carrie Williams	Linda Zelms

5 year Adult Volunteer Award

Nancy Ballenger	Pam Beier	Marcia Bennett
Georgia Brown	Jennifer Comstock	Linda DiBlasi
Cathy Frederick	Tammie Gorsuch	Kathleen Hartley
Steve Hinshaw	Christine Hirschfeld	William Knight
Janis Kooser	Lorrie Lewis	Mary Jo Mastin
Tom Mastin	Bridget McDaniel	Lisa McMullen
Katie Miller	Kate Morton	Carene O'Connor
Ann Remely	Mandy Robek	Jan Simek
Chad Spring	Taylor Stone	

5 year Diver Award

Brianna Badenhop	Denny Stephens
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