

FALL/WINTER 2025

Zoo Review

VIRGINIAZOO.ORG

CONSERVATION CORNER

Learn about all the important conservation work the Zoo has been doing!

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GIFTS THAT GIVE BACK

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OTTER-LY AMAZING ANIMALS!

Meet the Virginia Zoo otters and learn more about local conservation.

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Kirby, the white-faced saki

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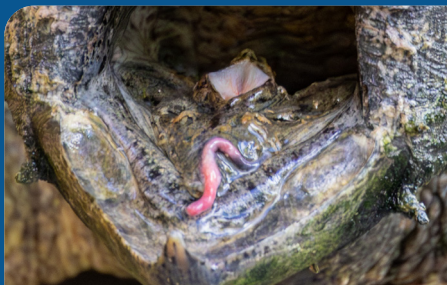
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CAN YOU GUESS THIS ANIMAL?

This photo is a close up of an alligator snapping turtle's mouth. These turtles have a "lingual lure" in their mouth that mimics a worm to lure in their prey.

3500 Granby Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23504

ZOO HOURS:

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Do you have any questions or ideas for the next issue of the Virginia Zoo Review? We'd love to hear from you. Email info@virginiazoo.org.

Newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

THE CITY OF
NORFOLK

FROM THE DIRECTOR



NEW VIRGINIA ZOO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHRIS JENKINS

Greetings, Virginia Zoo fans and supporters!

I am so excited to join this amazing team and to introduce myself to the Hampton Roads community as I step into the role of Executive Director of the Virginia Zoo.

Originally hailing from San Diego, California, I have been in the professional animal care world for over 25 years. A summer job that I took as a lark at Sea World San Diego while in high school was my first opportunity to network with people who were lucky enough to get to care for and train animals every day (and get paid for it!), and it pointed me in a direction that led to my undergraduate work in Psychology at the University of California at Davis, and later to the Exotic Animal Training and Management program at Moorpark College. After about a year working with a small company doing educational wildlife outreach in the greater Los Angeles area, I moved across the country to work for a company called Natural Encounters, Inc. (NEI), where I started as an animal trainer and presenter at their bird show at Disney's Animal Kingdom, and over the course of 20 years my duties expanded to take on in-person and online workshops about animal training and behavior, staff and animal training consulting for zoos, aviaries, and aquariums around the world, and eventually executive level leadership as the company's Chief Operating Officer.

For the past 15 years, I have mainly been focused on working with people on the "human side" of what we do in zoos - communication, collaboration, and building high-functioning teams. I have seen time and time again that the level of care we provide for animals is directly tied to the health of the teams of humans who have the privilege to care for them, and I am humbled to join the thriving team at the Virginia Zoo to learn what I can do to not only support the staff here, but also to partner with the Virginia Zoological Society and the City of Norfolk to be the best steward I can to help make the Zoo an engaging, exciting, and welcoming place for all.

It really is an honor to be entrusted with this role as the Zoo prepares to enter its 125th year - please come by and say hello, I'd love to meet each and every one of you!

Chris Jenkins, Virginia Zoo Executive Director

NEW AT THE ZOO

A

Our Animal Ambassador program has been looking for new friends, and these two girls fit the bill! **Isla** and **Iggy** are Von der Decken hornbills. They are sisters and both 1 year old. Isla (pictured) can be identified by her blue leg band, while Iggy has a red one. We are excited for them to take our Animal Ambassador program to new heights soon!



B

Welcome **Franklin**, our new ornate uromastyx! Franklin is 3 years old and a part of our Animal Ambassador program. While he lives behind the scenes, we hope he will be part of our education programs and special events very soon!



C

This summer our white-faced sakis returned to their former habitat in our World of Reptiles Conservatory with the peafowl. **Jackie** and **Kirby** can now be seen across from our cape porcupine!



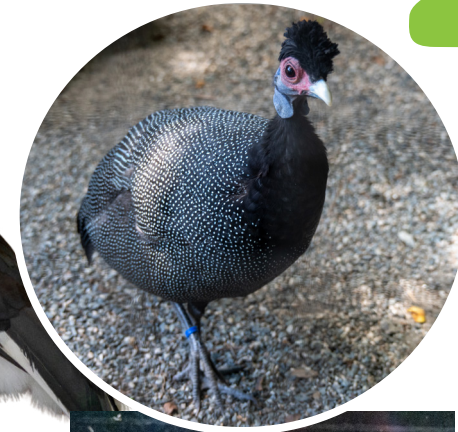
D

It's now easier than ever to be green at our Gift Shop! We now offer three new reusable totes featuring photos of our animals. Plus, everyone who brings a reusable tote with them to the Gift Shop will receive 10% off on their purchase!



E

New bird on the block! We recently welcomed a new Kenya crested guinea fowl to our habitat. Her name is **Jewels** and she can now be seen with our male guinea fowl, **Ernie**, in the ZooFarm!



F

BOO! Sorry we didn't mean to scare you, we just wanted to introduce you to our new bamboo ratsnake, **Boo**. She is a year old and a part of our Animal Ambassador program, so she currently lives behind the scenes.



G

We've brought some color to the Zoo with our new maps! All animals featured on the map have an important conservation story to tell. The map can also be found on our website to help you more easily navigate on the go!



H

This lucky lady is **Clover**, and she is our new Eastern mountain bongo on the African Safari Trail! She comes to us from Brevard Zoo and has been getting along great with our other female bongo, **Charlie**.



Conservation Corner

Story by Michelle Lewis and Hayley Fier

The Virginia Zoo is committed to engaging our community to take action to save the world's wildlife and their ecosystems. We believe that practice begins at home, which starts with our staff. To further connect our staff with on-the-ground conservation projects, the Zoo developed a Staff Conservation and Research Grant in 2024 that is available on a quarterly basis. This grant allows staff members to apply for funding of up to \$20,000 to participate in field conservation projects around the globe. Since its inception, we have had 5 staff recipients of the award whose projects have ranged from giraffe conservation projects in Namibia to salamander surveys in North Carolina and beyond. We believe these opportunities strengthen our ability to carry out our mission and provide the best experience and education possible to our guests.

Our staff will continue taking part in these wonderful conservation initiatives and we encourage you to follow along on their journey through our blog at virginiazoo.org/blog.



Namibia

Tiffany

In March 2025, Africa Keeper Tiffany visited Etosha Heights Game Preserve in Namibia to volunteer for 12 days with the **Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF)**, the leading conservation and research organization for giraffes in Africa. She participated in data collection and analysis, contributing to GCF's giraffe population surveys. Each day, Tiffany, the GCF staff, and another volunteer drove through the reserve along a pre-determined route using a GPS tracking app on a tablet. When they saw a giraffe on their route, the team stopped to mark the exact coordinates of the sighting, took a photo of the animal's left and right sides (if possible), estimated the individual's age, and determined whether the giraffe was male or female to the best of their abilities. After all routes through the preserve were covered, the team used an identification guide containing photos of giraffes known to live in the reserve to determine which individuals they observed. Each giraffe's coat markings are a pattern as unique to them as a fingerprint is to us, so Tiffany was tasked with matching the coat markings of photos collected on surveys to those in the identification guide. Through these population studies, Tiffany learned more about giraffe social structures. Giraffes live in fission-fusion systems of social organization, where individuals or small groups may readily merge or split from the herd. Tiffany was fascinated by seeing all the different types of giraffe social groups that may exist in the wild.



South Africa



Emily

Assistant Curator of Africa Emily visited South Africa in August with an organization called **Global Protagonist**. This organization's mission is to connect people who are looking to travel with purpose to those engaging in frontline conservation efforts around the world. Emily's project involved assisting with rhino dehorning efforts in Selati Game Reserve, alongside expert researchers and wildlife veterinarians.



Dehorning a rhino is no easy feat! To detect rhinos, the reserve uses thermal drones and planes or helicopters. The rhinos are then darted by vets from the air and followed by three teams on the ground until they were fully anesthetized. Rhino of all ages, including calves, then get their top and bottom horns removed and blood samples taken for research. Calves also received ear notches for easier identification. Ideally, rhinos are dehorned every 2-3 years, since unlike an elephant's tusks, a rhino's horn is made of keratin and can grow back. In just two days on Emily's trip, her team successfully dehorned 5 black rhinos and 11 southern white rhinos! Dehorning does not harm the rhinos and is an important method for protecting them until anti-poaching efforts can be more effectively increased.



North Carolina



Keegan

Herpetology Keeper Keegan traveled to North Carolina this past July to assist with population surveys of hellbender salamanders. Every year, the **North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC)** surveys hellbender populations in the New River for at least one week. Following the devastation of western North Carolina by Hurricane Helene, the NCWRC was interested in measuring the impact of the storm, so this year there were four weeks of hellbender surveys!

To conduct this important research, volunteers were divided into teams: divers, lifters, and catchers. The divers were responsible for snorkeling and looking for flat rocks on the muddy bottom of the river where hellbenders might be. The lifters walked behind the divers with a pry bar to lift the rocks, and the catchers were downstream with a sieve net to catch any salamanders that came out from under the rock when it was lifted. Each salamander was then brought to the data canoe, where researchers scanned the hellbender for an existing PIT tag (like a microchip for your dog or cat), measured their tip to tail length, determined if the animal was male or female, and checked their body for external parasites. In the future, Keegan would like to go back to North Carolina to participate in more hellbender surveys and hopes to expand the surveys into Virginia, since the New River continues northwards into Virginia.

The Virginia Zoo Gift Guide

Gifts that give back this holiday

This holiday season is the perfect opportunity to give to your loved ones while also giving back to wildlife and your local community! Check out some of our featured gifts below or visit virginiazoo.org to learn more.



Animal Enrichment

Looking to give a Zoo animal a gift for the holidays? Well, our animals have a list! Our zoo keepers have compiled an Amazon wish list of enrichment items for all the animals in the Zoo. This list includes items ranging from maracas for our monkeys, to cologne for our lions! Enrichment is a crucial part of animal wellbeing and your contribution to this list will only add to the exceptional care they receive! **Scan the QR code to check out their list.**



Safari Camp

Give the gift of inspiration to the next generation of wildlife conservationists! There's always something new to learn at the Zoo; our Safari camps offer ed-ZOO-cation for different ages all year, including Winter, Spring, and Summer Break camps. Plus, members can register a week early and receive an exclusive discount!



Virginia Zoo Membership

Members get more all year, and the holiday season is the perfect time to share that with someone special! From discounted events and education programs, to membership swaps with other local museums and cultural institutions, there are so many perks they won't want to miss. And with each membership purchased, \$6 goes towards the Virginia Zoo's Conservation Fund, meaning every membership benefits the conservation of wild animals in wild places!



Bird-Friendly Coffee

Your daily dose of caffeine is typically grown in mountainous tropical rainforest environments that house high biodiversity of birds. Purchasing certified bird-friendly coffee is one way to protect these amazing avian species and their habitats. Bird-friendly coffee beans are grown in agroforests, or farms with a mixture of coffee shrubs and different types of trees, mimicking the birds' natural habitats by providing canopy cover. These shade-grown beans also do not require nearly as many harmful pesticides to grow!



Locally Sourced Gift Shop Items

Cut down your carbon footprint by shopping local! Our Gift Shop sources several items from local small businesses, including nature-themed cross-stitch kits, Zoo exclusive scented candles, crocheted plushies, and more. Stop in and see what you can find during your next visit!

Behind the Scenes Tour

Give the gift of a unique experience this holiday season by purchasing a Behind-the-Scenes Tour! We offer tours with our Aldabra tortoises, birds of prey, Eastern mountain bongo, Malayan tapirs, Masai giraffes, moon bear, two-toed sloth Animal Ambassador, Southern white rhinos, and more. Virginia Zoo Members even get an exclusive discount on these tours! Plus, proceeds from all tours go directly into our Keeper Fund, benefitting the animals you meet on your tour and the keepers that care for them everyday.



Zoooption

Bring your favorite Virginia Zoo animal home this holiday season with a Zoooption! This gift allows you to symbolically adopt any Zoo animal and learn more about their species. With a variety of physical and digital adoption packages and over 150 species to choose from, this gift is sure to delight any member of your herd this holiday season! And you'll know you're making an impact because a portion of every Zoooption supports the Virginia Zoo's Conservation Fund and Keeper Fund helping animals at the Zoo and around the globe.



Moving a Massive Mammal

Story by Assistant Curator of Africa, Emily Spence

Why did the giraffe herd downsize?

The Virginia Zoo had a very successful breeding program for Masai giraffes for several years until the passing of our adult male, **Billy**, in January of 2023. At that time, Billy began to struggle with age-related mobility, and it was determined that for his own welfare, the best course of action was to humanely euthanize him. This left our herd with two adult females, **Noelle** and **Imara**, as well as Billy's offspring, **Mchanga** and **Tisa**. Billy's final offspring, **Henry**, was born in August 2023. Mchanga and Tisa remained at the Zoo until November of 2023 when they moved on to other facilities to start their own families. Henry stayed at the Zoo until May 2025 before moving on to his new home. Now, Noelle and Imara are the only giraffes still residing at the Virginia Zoo for the time being.

What age does a giraffe leave?

Ideally, giraffes are transported to their long-term home when they're about one to three years old. Juvenile giraffes can be moved at about 6 months old, when they are weaned off their mother's milk, meaning once a juvenile giraffe starts eating their own hay and exploring their habitat independently, they are ready to be moved on to another herd.

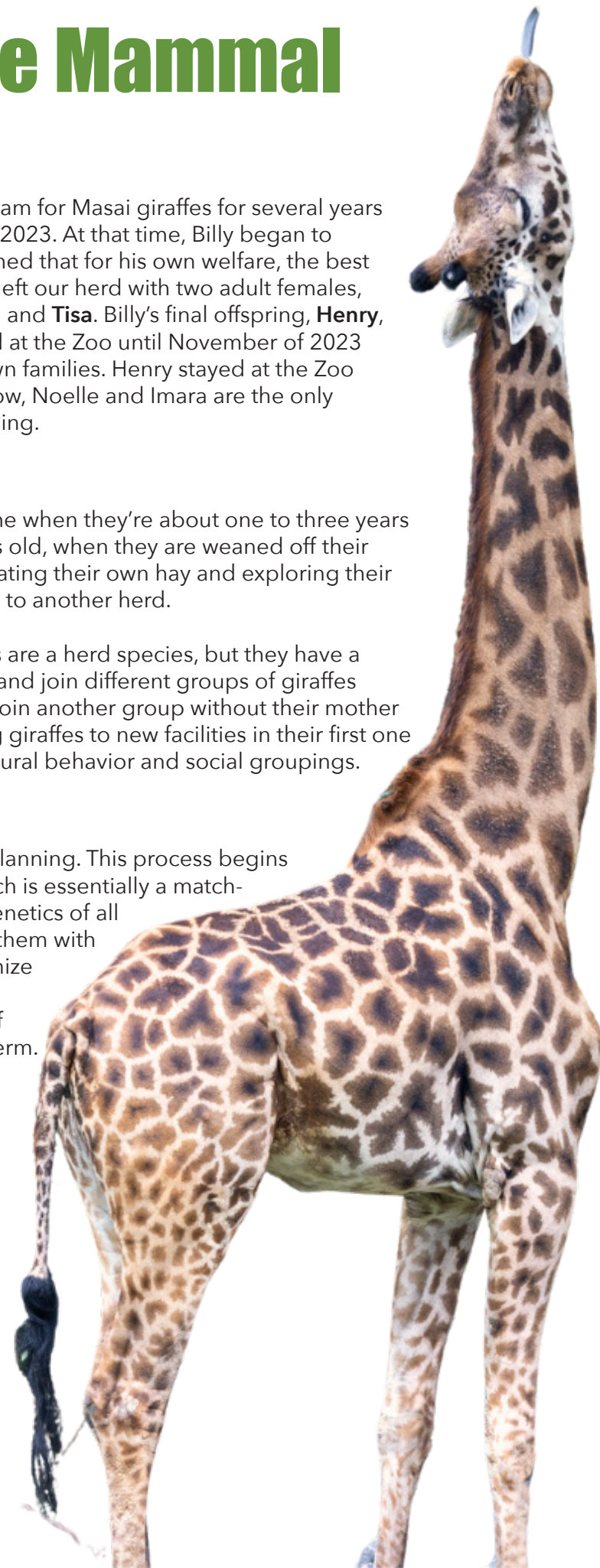
In the wild, giraffes do not stay in a family unit. Giraffes are a herd species, but they have a fission-fusion social structure, meaning they break off and join different groups of giraffes throughout their life. It is natural for young giraffes to join another group without their mother once they are older than six months. By moving young giraffes to new facilities in their first one to three years of life, we can effectively mimic their natural behavior and social groupings.

How do you move a giraffe?

Moving a giraffe is quite difficult, and it takes a lot of planning. This process begins with the Masai Giraffe Species Survival Plan (SSP), which is essentially a match-making service for zoo animals. Experts analyze the genetics of all giraffes in human care around the country and match them with potential mates based on which breeding pairs maximize genetic diversity. These measures are in place to help sustain the population of giraffes across Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited facilities long term.

Once the experts decide on matches, the SSP establishes breeding and transfer plans. After the plan has been accepted and communication begins between animal care teams, we have to find a shipper for the giraffe. Giraffe trailers are very large horse trailers that are specially built to move large animals. They have built-in air conditioning and cameras, so drivers can monitor the giraffe as they're moving.

We are currently working diligently with the SSP to find the perfect match for our giraffes. The Virginia Zoo is dedicated to furthering the population of this species in human care, but the welfare of our resident giraffes takes top priority over introducing new individuals.



Feline Loses a Canine

What happens when a 280-pound tiger gets a dental procedure? Let's find out!

Story by Kirstin Pendleton

Our 14-year-old Malayan tiger, **Christopher**, took a trip to our Animal Wellness Campus on May 28th for a dental exam. During Christopher's routine annual exam in January, our veterinary team observed signs of dental disease and scheduled a follow-up exam with a specialized veterinary dentist. It is not uncommon for tigers to experience dental issues as they age. A tiger's diet in the wild consists of up to 70 pounds of raw meat per meal, which can naturally cause wear and tear on their teeth over time, leading to this type of damage. Here at the Virginia Zoo, Christopher gets about 5 pounds of meat per day including rabbits and ground meat.



Once it was determined that Christopher needed to see a dentist, our veterinary team reached out to Dr. Mary Buelow of Animal Dentistry and Oral Surgery to perform Christopher's necessary dental treatments. Dr. Mary Buelow typically works on domestic animals at her practice in Leesburg, Virginia, but she also applies her expertise to zoo dentistry in her spare time.



Upon examination, it was found that Christopher had 2 infected teeth and 1 tooth with sharp points that could cause irritation to his tongue and cheek. His procedure involved extracting the two infected teeth and filing down the third tooth. One of his infected teeth was his lower right canine, which a tiger uses to tear up food. Without intervention, eating could have become painful for Christopher, but luckily this tooth was removed before he showed signs of pain with eating. The procedure took a total of 3 hours and the help of 13 animal and veterinary care team members, but Dr. Buelow was successful in removing the two infected teeth and filing down the third tooth.



After being cleared by the doctor, Christopher returned to his night house behind the scenes to recover. He was given a diet of chopped meat for two weeks following the treatment to allow his mouth to heal. After this recovery time, Christopher returned to his regular diet which includes whole rabbit carcasses. His keepers say he is doing well with his recovery and was able to go out on habitat 2 days after his procedure.

We are extremely grateful for Dr. Mary Buelow's expertise and the work of our animal care and veterinary teams that helped make Christopher's dental visit a success!

About Malayan tigers:

Malayan tigers are one of the smallest tiger subspecies weighing between 165 - 300 pounds. These tigers will live on average 10 to 15 years in the wild and up to 20 years in human care. Tigers are solitary animals that live and hunt alone, except for a female and her cubs. Malayan tigers are listed as "Critically Endangered" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of species that are threatened by extinction with less than 300 remaining in the wild.



The Malayan Tapirs

Photo by Eileen Murphy McCallum

Malayan tapirs are the world's largest of four species of tapir, weighing up to 700 pounds and growing up to 6 feet long, and the only species found in Asia.

Malayan tapirs have a different number of toes on their front and back feet! Their front feet have four toes each, while their back feet have only three toes.

Malayan tapirs can spray their urine up to 10 feet away from their bodies!



VIRGINIA
ZOO
in Norfolk

www.virginiazoo.org

FAN PHOTOS

@LUIA_JUSTINE



Family photo at giraffe statue

@ODUPIKES



Fraternity volunteer day at the Zoo

@MRS.CHIRSTYANN



It's Tango the tiger's birthday

@SLOW_AND_STEADY_JONES



A cousin trip to the Zoo

@SMURF_N_TURF



Capturing the Zoo's pollinators in action

@MRS.LORILEWIS



Baby's first Zoo trip with the fam

@EMILYLOVESMUSIC13



Behind-the-scenes tour with Sibindi the white rhino

@RPLAQUETA



Rocking out with Tango at ZooGrooves: Pop Punk

@ALLYWASH_



Celebrating turning 2 at the Zoo

Celebrate 125 Years with Us

The Virginia Zoo is celebrating 125 years of engaging our community in taking action to save the world's wildlife and we want you to celebrate with us!

By Brittany Coolbaugh

Visit virginiazoo.org/125th-anniversary/ for more information about anniversary activities.

Did you know Lafayette Park began caring for animals in 1900, but it wasn't until 1901 that the site officially became the Lafayette Zoological Park, when it was designated a city park by the City of Norfolk? In 2026, we're proud to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Virginia Zoo! This milestone is a chance to honor our roots, share our stories, and create new memories together with you, our Zoo family.

The party kicks off at our **Noon Year's Eve** event on December 31, 2025, when we'll begin using our special 125th anniversary logo and launch the brand-new Virginia Zoo Trading Cards. These collectible cards highlight animals, conservation wins, and fun behind-the-scenes facts. We'll release 20 cards throughout the year, and there will be lots of ways to collect them. So keep an eye out, because we think they'll be a hit with kids and adults alike!



And that's just the beginning!

Throughout 2026 you'll see the anniversary everywhere:

- **Special anniversary merchandise** - from t-shirts to limited-edition plush and pins, perfect for Zoo fans and collectors.
- **A refreshed Zoo calendar** - pairing today's animals with fascinating stories from our past.
- **Throwback Zoodoptions** - you can "adopt" animals we no longer have here, like elephants or sea lions, as a fun way to honor our history.
- **Staff & volunteer spotlights** - meet the people who've kept the Zoo thriving for generations.
- **Behind-the-scenes peeks** - on social media and at select events, you'll get closer than ever to the care, science, and teamwork that make the Zoo run.

There will be special surprises all year long!

Of course, all your favorite Zoo traditions are still on the calendar too! From **Breakfast with the Animals** to **ZooGrooves** concerts, **Member Nights**, and our signature seasonal celebrations like **ZooBoo**, you can count on the events you love returning in 2026, with a special 125th anniversary twist. Whether you're here for the music, the food trucks, or just the fun of exploring the Zoo after hours, this year's lineup will be bigger and more memorable than ever.



And because this anniversary isn't just about looking back, it's about all of you. We want to hear your stories! Share your favorite Zoo memories, photos, or fun "remember when" moments through our online form. We'll feature some in newsletters, social posts, and even around the Zoo itself as part of our living history project.

2026 is shaping up to be a year full of fun, nostalgia, and connection. We can't wait to celebrate 125 years of your Zoo with you and to start building the next 125, together.



Party all 2026 at the Zoo!

with our special events

A new year means new events and we have an incredible lineup planned to satisfy everyone in your herd! From our fan favorite, ZooBoo, to a celebratory 125th anniversary event, you're sure to have a wild time. Scan the QR code to see the full lineup!



Meet the Otters

Story by Kirstin Pendleton and Michelle Lewis

This past year, we welcomed two new Asian small-clawed otters, **Elbe** and **Jilin**, to our Zoo! Since their introduction, the pair have been getting along swimmingly with each other and their keepers. It's now time to introduce them to our Zoo Fans!

Jilin

Our male otter, **Jilin**, is 11 years old and comes to us from Denver Zoo. Jilin is very smart and engages with his keepers during training, but he tends to be more cautious about changes in his environment. His keepers say he is an expert interior designer because you can always find him rearranging the furniture throughout the exhibit. With his thumb, Jilin is able to grab objects around his habitat and rearrange them as he pleases. Wherever Elbe is, Jilin wants to be. He can often be seen following Elbe around their habitat or vocalizing when he can't find her - talk about being smitten!



Elbe

Elbe is our 4-year-old female otter, and she joined us from SeaWorld Orlando. Her keepers say she is energetic, bold, and loves the water. She is something of a home builder and while she is quieter than Jilin, she is very passionate about building the perfect nest. One fun quirk about Elbe is that she doesn't use her hands while eating- what lovely manners she has! Above all else, Elbe's real passion in life is swimming. You can frequently find her swimming around her habitat, and she especially loves to splash around in the waterfall. She is extremely fast in the water so stop by and see if you can spot her!



Otter-ly in Love

Elbe and Jilin joined the Virginia Zoo based on a breeding recommendation from the Asian Small-clawed Otter Species Survival Plan (SSP). On August 25th, the pair welcomed their first litter together and the first otter pups born at the Virginia Zoo! The 3 male pups currently live behind the scenes with their parents and will slowly be introduced to the outdoor habitat. Stay tuned for updates!



Different Otter Species

While the Virginia Zoo is home to Asian small-clawed otters, there are 13 other otter species around the globe. The Asian small-clawed otter is the smallest species while the giant otter is the largest reaching up to 6 feet long. Other species of otter include the sea otter, North American river otter, Eurasian otter, smooth-coated otter, hairy-nosed otter, neotropical otter, South American river otter, marine otter, African clawless otter, Congo clawless otter, and spotted-necked otter which all possess unique characteristics and live in different regions. However, the only two species of otter that can be found in the United States are sea otters and North American river otters. Here in Coastal Virginia, you can spot North American river otters in bodies of water such as the Lafayette River next to the Zoo!



- Asian small-clawed otter**
- **Size:** 2-3 ft and 4-11 lbs
 - **Habitat:** swamps, streams, and marshes in south Asia
 - **Characteristics:** the smallest otter species with hand-like paws



- North American river otter**
- **Size:** 3-5 ft and 17-24 lbs
 - **Habitat:** freshwater throughout North America
 - **Characteristics:** naturally playful and adaptable



- Sea otter**
- **Size:** 2-5 ft and 50-60 lbs
 - **Habitat:** coastal waters from Alaska to California
 - **Characteristics:** has dense fur and tool-using abilities



- Giant otter**
- **Size:** 4-6 ft and 50-75 lbs
 - **Habitat:** the Amazon River
 - **Characteristics:** the largest otter species with a distinguishable white patch on their necks

Otter Spotter with Elizabeth River Project

We all love our Asian small-clawed otters, Jilin and Elbe, here at the Virginia Zoo, but did you know that we have other otters right here in Hampton Roads? The North American river otter makes its home in the aquatic and wetland adjacent habitats found in our area. River otters were once a rare sight in the Elizabeth River due to their preference for unpolluted water with a minimal human disturbance. However, with the efforts of groups like the **Elizabeth River Project** who are working hard to restore the waterways of Hampton Roads, these playful animals can once again be seen in our waters. Have you ever seen one? If so, you can help scientists track otters by recording that sighting with the Elizabeth River Project's Otter Spotter program. Check out their website for more information and to report your spotted otter today!

elizabethriver.org/community-science/



CREATURE FEATURE

We're Not Kidding About Goats!

Have you ever noticed that goats have horizontal, rectangular pupils? This unique adaptation serves an important function: giving goats nearly panoramic vision, with a range of about 320-340 degrees. Wide, horizontal pupils allow goats' eyes to take in more light from at or below eye level, instead of above their heads. This stops the sun from blocking their view of the grass around them and allows them to see predators from almost any angle except directly behind them. Interestingly, a goat's eyes can also rotate more than 50 degrees per eye to make sure their pupils are parallel to the ground, even when they look down to eat!

Kara the Nigerian dwarf goat

Which Virginia Zoo goat are you?

Learn more about each of the 8 goats that calls the Zoo home below and see whose personality aligns the most with your own!

Melanie is a natural born leader and lets everyone know it! She is confident and headstrong, always marching to the beat of her own drum. You can often find Melanie snuggled up with her two daughters, Lucy and Beth.

Miley is one big kid. She loves to play, and when she is feeling mischievous, she instigates herd zoomies around the Goat Yard. Miley also enjoys rolling around and laying in gravel. We'd bet this makes for satisfying scratches!

Kara is highly food motivated (more than any of the other goats!), which means that keepers love training sessions with her. She is smart and sassy with her keepers, but a total sweetheart with guests. She also savors good scratches!

Molly is a calm, easygoing girl who prefers to observe the Goat Yard from above on the climbing structure. She likes to snack on the leaves of the Chinese elm tree in the Goat Yard and does some creative maneuvering to reach them!

Zoey is energetic and eager to participate in training sessions. She loves to receive head rubs. You can typically find her curled up next to her mom, Miley, because she's a total mama's girl.

Beth's favorite activity is relaxing while being brushed from the comfort of her climbing structure. She also loves cuddling and playing with her mom, Melanie, and sister, Lucy.

Lucy is an attention hound, or more accurately, an attention goat. When she is not being doted on (brushed) by her adoring guests, Lucy can be seen playing with her sister, Beth, or snuggling up to her mom, Melanie.

Peyton is a shy girl with a spicy side! Affectionately nicknamed "Princess Peyton" by her keepers, she tends to be less social with guests, but with a little patience, she can be a real sweetheart. Peyton has also mastered the art of acrobatics - she can often be seen standing on just her tippy toes as she reaches for the heights!

Goats also have large, rounded stomachs, because they are ruminants and an important step in their digestion is fermentation. Ruminants are animals that "ruminate," or chew their food repeatedly, because they eat roughage, like grass and hay, which are high in fiber. This fiber is difficult to digest, so goats have four large, specialized stomach chambers. When a goat first eats, the roughage travels to the rumen and undergoes the fermentation process. Fermentation produces gas, so you may commonly see goats burping to release it. This step in digestion can also contribute to a goat's rounded or bloated appearance.

Teaching the Future Wildlife Warriors

By Kristine Werner

Camps at the Virginia Zoo are a truly wild experience. Whether the Zoo Detectives are solving another case or Zoosquatch has just made a sneaky appearance in our Myths and Monsters camp, the joy in every camper's face lights up the Zoo. Laughter is heard across the plaza as our campers play field games and relay races. Guests talk in awed tones when they see camp kids inside an animal habitat with a zoo keeper. Eyes go wide when a parrot talks right next to you, or when you get the chance to touch a snake!

Memories like this are a daily occurrence at Virginia Zoo Safari Camps. These once-in-a-lifetime experiences fill up fast during the summer, but the fun doesn't have to end just because summer has!



During Winter Camp this year, our popular Zoo Detectives will still be on the case as the Arctic Agents scour the globe for new animal recruits for missions around the world. From the freezing arctic to the sweltering heat of the desert, our Agents will be learning all about the adaptations that animals have to help them survive. Don't miss "Arctic Agents: The New Recruits" available on our website now for 1-5 grade and taking place from December 29 - January 2.

Early next year, our Spring Break campers will get to explore the beauty of the natural world in their own backyard as we trek through the wilderness and learn about the wildlife of our National Parks in our "Wild America" 1-2 and 3-5 Grade camps from April 6 - April 10. Camps go on sale starting December 1 for members and December 8 for the public.

Help us keep the fun going with our Winter and Spring Break Camps. Join us for these 2 wild weeks full of up-close animal encounters, exclusive behind the scenes zoo keeper experiences, STEM challenges and a rhino-ton worth of fun.

Member perks for ed-ZOO-cation

Being a Member of the Virginia Zoo gets you more than just Zoo entry, you also receive discounts on many of our education opportunities! This discount includes Winter Break, Spring Break, and Summer Safari Camps PLUS our new homeschool programs. The fun doesn't stop there though because with your membership you can attend our Zoo Tales, Wild Tykes, Little Zoo, and Wild Babies programs for free with your Zoo admission. Learn more about all our ed-ZOO-cation opportunities at virginiazoo.org!



THANK YOU!

Join today, virginiazoo.org/leadership

LEADERSHIP SOCIETY (AS OF SEPTEMBER 2025) Leadership Society members support the Zoo's daily commitment to animal care, enrichment programming, wildlife conservation, education and research initiatives across our community and beyond.

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Kay Abiouness | Maria & David Cundiff | Ameet Habib | Burt & Sandi Prestridge | Janet Thompson |
| Caroline & Chad Ballard | Bess Decker | Sandy & Eleanor Harris | Juanita Raisor | Goody Tyler III |
| Vern & Nancy Barham | Liza Delpierre | Dr. Josh & Erica Howell | Melissa Ramsey | Barbara & Ben Unkle |
| Truman & Jacquelyn Baxter | Susan Donn | Patrick Kelly | Dustin Rinehart | Bob & Angie VanDyke |
| Reese Beeler | George Doumar | Vicky & William Kernazitskas | Susan Roady | Scott & Debbi Waitzer |
| Boyd Family | Blair Durham | Kiger Family | Conrad Shumadine | Alex Walsh |
| Carolyn Betz | Kelly & Tim Faulkner | Jacqueline Limerick | Jim & Elizabeth Shumadine | Elise Walthall |
| Richard & Anna Boykin | Christabelle Fernandez | Gregory & Mary Beth Marshall | Susan & Robert Smallwood | Christina & Lee Westnedge |
| Edward & Linda Bradley | Beth & Paul Fraim | Jason Martens | Holly Smith | Judith Williams |
| Alan & Deborah Budlong | Christina Goode | Mr. & Mrs. W Sheppard Miller III | Kendron Spring | Rolf & Beth Williams |
| Carr Family | Martha Goode | Dr. Scott & Annie Miller | St. Remy Family | Victoria Wittmann |
| Lawlor-Caron Family | Susan & David Goode | Carol & Tom Mueller | Bernard & Sharon Strohmeye | Dr. Ann Marie Woyma & CDR Timothy Woyma |
| Nicole Carry | Andrew & Victoria Gorczyk | Maria & Michael O'Hearn | Dr. Kurt Strosahl | Jake Young |
| Lynn Cobb & Warren Richard | Dick & Jane Gresham | Brian Pennell | Margo Taylor | |
| Erik Cooper | Peter & Laura Griffin | Glenda & Gary Philbin | Stephen Taylor | |

NEW ZOOPARENTS

Every animal at the Virginia Zoo is available for adoption, starting at \$25. Proceeds benefit various Zoo programs, including the Act For Wildlife Fund. Visit our website for more information.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| AFRICAN LION
Robbie Lam
Mackenzie Bryant-Little | Blumka*
Hank Butler | VIRGINIA OPOSSUM
Rick Mikulski |
| AMERICAN MINI PIG
Michelle Leigh Lompe | PREVOST'S SQUIRREL
Tonya Hays | WHITE-CHEEKED GIBBON
Modi Grandsoult
Kayla Hill
Thomas Briggs |
| ASIAN SMALL-CLAWED OTTER
Avery Rose Smith
Madison Mellis | RED PANDA
Amelia Wheeler
Phoebe VLK
Richard Rearch
Savannah Grace Smith
Julianne Sharpton
Aria Richards
Riley Modlin | ZEBU COW
Michelle Leigh Lompe |
| BINTURONG
Daniel Phoenix | BISON
Caleb Marmol
Holly Smith
Courtney L. B. Worrall | ROCK HYRAX
April May
Marcus Dublino |
| CHEETAH
Madison Q Meier | SIAMANG
Gabi Friedman | SIAMESE CROCODILE
Crawford Harding |
| MALAYAN TIGER
Sullivan Whitney
Giana Tyler | SOUTHERN CASSOWARY
Adrian Escamilla | TOCO TOUCAN
Ramsey Yaghi |
| MASAI GIRAFFE
Skylar Budgell | TWO-TOED SLOTH
Janie Gentry
Alani Rivera | |
| MINI WESTERN HERITAGE COW
Rebecca Boyle | | |
| ORANGUTAN
*In Memory of Paul | | |

Prepare for special events all winter long!

Visit virginiazoo.org/events for more information.

Holidays in the Wild: Holiday Market

December 6 from 11am - 3pm

Get your holiday shopping done at the Zoo and support local small businesses! Free with general admission.



Noon Year's Eve

December 31 from 9:30am - 12:30pm

Celebrate the New Year without staying up late! This event also kicks off our 125th anniversary celebration year. Free with general admission.



Kiss & Tail

February 8 from 9:30am - 12pm

Bring your love bird or best mates to this 21+ walking brunch event! Enjoy some tasty bites while learning about mating and dating in the animal kingdom. Tickets on sale soon.



CORPORATE PARTNERS



Become a Corporate Partner and reach the Zoo's members, visitors and tourists in a way traditional advertising cannot: by incorporating your message into their lifestyle. For more information, visit virginiazoo.org/become-corporate-partner



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