ZOOONOOZ
JUNE 2022
A publication of the Seneca Park Zoo Society

SUMMER PROGRAMMING is back!
I have been seeing the phrase “If you know, you know” a lot lately. Often in the form IYKYK, on “clever” social media posts. I am not a fan. Honestly, it makes me squirm, and I’m suddenly back in junior high where I am definitely not sitting at the cool kids’ table, and the inside jokes make me feel all kinds of awkward.

Yet, after eight years at the helm of the Seneca Park Zoo Society, every day I still find a great number of people don’t know what a zoo really is. Too many people still think of zoos as places where animals are held against their will, for the purpose of entertainment.

We cannot simply say, “well that’s okay, because if you know, you know.” The survival of zoos as an industry depends on the public having a greater understanding of what zoos truly are. That’s important not because of the necessity to perpetuate zoos, but to ensure the conservation of all species for generations to come.

It all comes back to the reason Seneca Park Zoo exists: because endangered means there’s still time to act. Our job, every day, is to have our guests and our community fall in love with the living world. When you love something, you want to ensure its survival, and you want to protect it.

Now, I am not so naïve as to think all our members joined because they consider themselves environmentalists or conservationists. We know from our guest studies that the vast majority of people come to the Zoo to have a social experience, outdoors, with wildlife and nature. We also know that most of our members join for the amazing benefit of being able to come to the Zoo as many times as they want.

We are okay with that. The more often you attend, the more chances you have to fall in love. The more likely you are to learn about what’s happening with some of your favorite animals in their natural range. You’ll probably pick up a tip or two on how to help that species, and how to live more sustainably, which helps all species. We also hope you’ll learn what the staff at Seneca Park Zoo is doing to help save your favorite animals from extinction.

Summer – our busy season – has returned. There are different programs happening across the Zoo every day, and giraffe feedings are back five days a week. The tram is running, and the Trailside Café is open! So yes. Come visit. Often. Fall in love with the living world, here at Seneca Park Zoo. Listen to a keeper chat. Talk with a naturalist. Join a nature hike or a beach cleanup.

I think you’ll find the right phrase isn’t “If you know, you know,” it’s “the more you know, the more inspired you are to make a difference.”
Environmental enhancements allow animals to demonstrate their species-typical behaviors and improve their overall well-being.

If you've been to the Zoo, you've likely seen everything from Christmas trees to giant boomer balls to frozen fish ice blocks in habitats. These items are used for environmental enrichment, also called behavioral enrichment, which provides physical and mental stimulation to increase natural and healthy behavior for all the Zoo's animals. Environmental enhancements allow animals to demonstrate their species-typical behaviors and improve their overall well-being. Enrichment is just as important to animal welfare as proper nutrition and veterinary care are.

Keepers implement a variety of species-specific enrichment programs to maintain the highest level of animal welfare. Based on the animals’ natural history, opportunities are provided for the individual or group to express their natural behaviors. This is accomplished by integrating multiple approaches including, but not limited to: varied
feeding strategies, cognitive challenges, social interactions, complex and dynamic environments, and varied sensory opportunities. Providing environmental and behavioral enrichment allows the animal to respond positively to potential stressors and have an active role in making their own rewarding choices.

Hoofstock Zoologist Kat Kleinschmidt tells us rhinos use mud wallows in their natural ranges to cool off and protect their skin from bugs and the sun. “Here at Seneca Park Zoo, we always ensure Jiwe’s mud wallow is filled with the right amount of dirt and water so he can get as muddy as he wants, whenever he wants!” Kat continues, “Giraffes use their very long, prehensile tongues to maneuver around thorns to get to the leaves off some of their favorite trees in Africa. To encourage this natural behavior, we create puzzle feeders that we put produce and hay into, so they are mentally and physically stimulated trying to get the food out.”

Understanding the history of an animal as well as its behaviors in nature is essential to providing the correct type of enrichment. Keepers have a variety of sources to educate themselves, including networking with other facilities, Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), spending time observing the animals, and working together to build new enrichment toys. The options are endless!

For small carnivores, enrichment is quite different. Zoologist Brian Sheets says of river otters, “They really love live prey. This is the best enrichment we can give them because they must hunt for them: a natural behavior.” Brian stops by S&R Bait and Tackle in Irondequoit for a half pound of minnows weekly, which is completely funded by our ZooParent program. “They usually throw in extra because they like supporting the Zoo,” he says.

Enrichments are not provided on a predictable schedule. Brian mixes it up, keeping the animals hunting and searching like they would in nature. “They check the rocks daily to see ‘Did I miss one?’” Brian continues. “They never know when they go out, if there is going to be live fish out there or not. The last thing I want to do is dump the fish out in front of them so they can see – I want them to have to search like they would in their natural range.”

Brian also offers enrichment designed to...
provide comfort, like adding a wood wool substrate to the habitat’s hollow logs to give the otters a nesting place. Keepers also provide ice blocks, shade areas, and fans to keep animals comfortable in all seasons.

“Not every animal reacts to all forms of enrichment,” says Brian. He continues, “Our river otters have never really shown any interest in things like olfactory or smell enrichment as opposed to animals like the big cats which typically love that sort of stuff.”

Just like people, every animal is different and unique in their own way and has their own levels of intelligence, cooperativeness, and physical ability that can make it easier or more difficult to develop different behaviors and skills.

For example, sea lions Mary Lou and Daley tend to pick things up quickly, while Bob can be resistant and harder to work with.

Zookeeper Sue Rae says of Bob, “A lot of his behaviors we captured, meaning he did something and we clicked the training clicker and gave him food.” This begins the process of the animal associating a specific behavior with rewards so that they will start to learn to repeat it. Keepers “capture” a behavior by noticing an animal behaving in a way they want to reinforce, whether it is something that helps in healthcare or an act that is fun or stimulating to the animal, and immediately reacting to it in a positive way.

When it comes to animals that usually means a food reward. This sort of technique is used frequently with animals who are more resistant or stubborn when it comes to husbandry, like sea lion Bob, who will surprise his keepers by doing a behavior on his own terms.

“When you do your enrichment, the goal is to elicit their natural behavior,” says Zookeeper Heidi Beifus. “You may see us use a lot of boxes with animals by placing food inside, because we’re trying to simulate them diving into a carcass and ripping and tearing to get to it.” Heidi continues, “You want to use all the animals’ senses; you don’t want to do the same thing over and over, like always giving them food for enrichment. You want to give them something that they can see, smell, touch, taste, hear and keep cycling through.”

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Welcome New Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Chris McKinney, DVM!

Seneca Park Zoo welcomes Dr. Chris McKinney, DVM, as the Zoo’s Veterinarian. After a comprehensive national search and interviews with candidates from around the country, Dr. McKinney has been chosen to lead animal health care at the Zoo. He is no stranger to Seneca Park Zoo, having worked as a backup Veterinarian and as Interim Attending Veterinarian, working with the Zoo’s collection since 2018.

Dr. McKinney’s diverse background with wildlife in the field and with animals in human care was central to Zoo leadership’s decision to select him for the role. Zoo Superintendent Steve Lacy states that Dr. McKinney’s “broad experience, history of working with a wide range of exotic zoo animals, and ability to build rapport with our team, make him an overall great fit for our organization.”
What about smaller animals?

We caught up with Zoologist Ryan Statt to talk naked mole rat enrichment. “We’re totally hands-off with them. They are pretty sensitive animals,” says Ryan. He continues, “If it’s something that maybe smells too stinky, or if it’s too wet, it’s not good for them; they love paper towels and anything they can shred and burrow into.” Ryan explains, “Paper serves two purposes with naked mole rats: enrichment of the shredding and for privacy to hide under.”

For tips and help when caring for a species, keepers heavily rely on their peers at other zoos and AZA institutions. We are in contact with “Knoxville Zoo, which is where the naked mole rats came from,” says Ryan. “They’ve been a great resource, as is the Smithsonian.” Ryan continues, “Buffalo Zoo and Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse are two regional zoos I often talk to. It is constant networking. We do not rely on just one zoo or two zoos, but all zoos, depending on what we’re trying to find out.”
One of the main strategies and guiding principles animal care staff use to understand and address the physical and psychological needs of animals is what is known as the S.P.I.D.E.R. framework. S.P.I.D.E.R. stands for: Setting goals, Planning, Implementation, Documentation, Evaluation and Readjusting. This acronym is a model that zoos like ours can follow to help ensure the training and enrichment we are doing has real thought and evaluation put into it – it’s more than just giving an animal a treat when you feel like it!

When **setting goals** for animals it is important to consider not only the natural history of the species we’re working with, but also the individual history of that specific animal. This is where keepers must keep in mind variables like more cooperative or resistant animals as is the case with the aforementioned sea lions. We don’t want to set an animal up for failure. Even though we might be working with the same animal species, each individual animal might have entirely different goals and behaviors we’re working towards.

The **planning** step is where keepers brainstorm and produce ideas based on a particular species or animal goal, which then goes on to the approval phase to ensure it is an appropriate and safe idea before it is added into an animal’s care program.

**Implementation** might seem straightforward, but again there is a little more to it than simply giving the animal enrichment. Our animal care staff create and manage unique enrichment calendars for every animal. This helps to ensure that the enrichment any animal is receiving is varied. It is not going to be stimulating if they are getting the same thing and it becomes a routine.

Next comes **documentation**. Every single time enrichment is given to an animal, one of the keepers documents what it was, when it was given, how they set it up, and may even upload pictures or videos. At Seneca Park Zoo we use a platform that is familiar to many zoos and aquariums called ZIMS (Zoological Information Management System). Basically a data tool for animal species, ZIMS is where animal staff documents animal information, which then can be shared with other organizations working on the platform. This is an incredible resource for animal care staff. For example, if we bring a new species to the Zoo, our keepers would be able to go in and search for that species, or even that particular animal, and see what other zoos have done in the past.

The next step of the S.P.I.D.E.R. framework is **Evaluation**. This is a critical step as it forms the basis for improvement moving forward. Evaluating how specific animals react to certain enrichment is crucial to creating a holistic management plan for every animal.

Last is **Readjusting**. Using documentation and evaluation data, the animal care staff are continuously setting new goals, seeing what works and what does not, changing or discontinuing certain enrichments when necessary, and evolving.
ELEPHANT AWARENESS WEEKEND

Did you know that Seneca Park Zoo is the ONLY zoo in New York State with African elephants? Come visit the Zoo’s three female African elephants on August 27 & 28 for Elephant Awareness Weekend! Enjoy special animal experiences with Moki, Lilac and Genny C, meet their caretakers, learn about their daily care, and much more. Learn about the threats that elephants face due to human impact, including the complexities of the ivory trade and poaching, along with human encroachment.

Date: August 27 & 28
Price: Free with entry
Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/elephant22

AUGUST 27 & 28

PANAMANIAN GOLDEN FROG AWARENESS WEEKEND

Join us as we support and celebrate the Panamanian golden frog and some of the culture from their natural range in the Panamanian Rainforest. This fun and festive weekend will feature plenty of great live experiences, fun activities, keeper chats, and more to celebrate and support this amazing species and unique culture from where they hail. This is a conservation and education experience you won’t want to miss!

Date: August 13 & 14
Price: Free with entry
Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/pgf22
**RIVER OTTER AWARENESS WEEKEND**

Mark your calendar to join us in celebrating and supporting otter conservation by coming out to the Zoo this week! Also, some great otter keeper content, demonstrations, and more. Hear directly from animal care staff about what it’s like to care for the Zoo’s three African lions.

**Date:** July 9 & 10

**Price:** Free with entry

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/otter22

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**GIANT GIRAFFE AWARENESS WEEKEND**

Celebrate the longest day of the year with the tallest in the animal kingdom! Following the longest day of the year (June 21), we will have our annual giraffe awareness weekend where we will have plenty of giraffe content, onsite enrichment, and more. Thank you to our presenting sponsor Five Star Bank for supporting our Conservation Awareness Days!

**Date:** June 25 & 26

**Price:** Free with entry

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/giraffe22

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**LION AWARENESS WEEKEND**

Join us for Lion Awareness Weekend to learn all about these amazing big cats through keeper chats, enrichment, training, and more. Hear directly from animal care staff about what it's like to care for the Zoo's three African lions.

**Date:** July 23 & 24

**Price:** Free with entry

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/lion22
After a highly successful sell-out debut, our beer and cider tasting safari will be back in the fall! This event features tasting stations throughout Seneca Park Zoo’s A Step into Africa and Animals of the Savanna regions. Guests will also enjoy delicious food and entertainment, with live music and the opportunity to purchase chances to win some great items in the evening’s raffle.

**Date:** Saturday, September 24

**Learn More:** senecaparkzoo.org/sea-lion-day22

### Apple, Ales & Tails

**Price:** Free with entry

**Date:** June 11 & 12

We love sea lions and we know you do too! Come out and help us support these amazing and incredibly intelligent animals that you can see right here at the Zoo. We will have some great sea lion content, onsite enrichment, activities, and more.

**Date:** June 11 & 12

**Price:** Free with entry

**Learn More:** senecaparkzoo.org/sea-lion-day22

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**Presented By:** Five Star Bank

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**Learn More:** senecaparkzoo.org/sea-lion-day22

**Date:** September 24

**Price:** Free with entry

The evening’s finale is a highly successful sell-out debut, our beer and cider tasting safari in the fall! This event features tasting stations throughout Seneca Park Zoo’s A Step into Africa and Animals of the Savanna regions. Guests will also enjoy delicious food and entertainment, with live music and the opportunity to purchase chances to win some great items in the evening’s raffle. After the evening’s finale, guests will be back in the fall! This event features tasting stations throughout Seneca Park Zoo’s A Step into Africa and Animals of the Savanna regions. Guests will also enjoy delicious food and entertainment, with live music and the opportunity to purchase chances to win some great items in the evening’s raffle.
Everyone’s favorite 21+ happy hour event is back throughout the summer! It’s the only event in town where you can help save elephants from extinction just by attending! A portion of each ticket sold supports elephant conservation. Guests enjoy live music from multiple bands throughout the Zoo, animal experiences, and more.

For the first time ever, get a VIP ticket which includes a guaranteed parking spot in the Cornell Cooperative Extension lot, admission, separate VIP entry, and 2 drink tickets. Any guests who carpool with the VIP ticket holder must purchase a general admission ticket in advance in addition to the traditional in-park entry. We’re back and in-person! Join us Sunday, July 17th for the first of a three-race series to celebrate the transformation of the Zoo and the opening of the new Welcome Center, Education Resource Building and Tropics Complex in 2024. Participate and collect all three medals to create an impressive collection. For the first time ever, we’ll be offering race medals to virtual participants. Virtual participants will not be eligible for race prizes. Please note whenever they choose between June 17th – July 22nd. Please note there will also be a virtual option to participate as we have done the past few years in addition to the traditional in-person option. The medals will interlock to create one impressive medal.

Price: $9.50 in advance; $12 at the door (if available); $45 VIP Sponsors: Lake Beverage, Kinecta Federal Credit Union, Precision Optical Transceivers

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/zoobrew

Date: Sunday, July 17

5K RUN AND WALK
JUNGLE JOG 2022

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/junglejog

Sponsors: Lake Beverage, Kinecta Federal Credit Union, Precision Optical Transceivers

Price: $5.00 in advance; $7.00 at the door (if available); $45 VIP

Date: June 17th – July 22nd

Presenting Sponsor: M&T Foundation

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Price: $5.00 in advance; $7.00 at the door (if available); $45 VIP

Date: June 17th – July 22nd

Everyone’s favorite 21+ happy hour event is back throughout the Zoo. The music from multiple bands throughout the Zoo. Everyone is invited to enjoy food and drink from the Zoo’s many eateries. Guest ticket also supports elephant conservation.

Price: $9.50 in advance; $12 at the door (if available); $45 VIP

Date: June 17th – July 22nd

Everyone is invited to enjoy food and drink from the Zoo’s many eateries. The event will be at the Cornell Cooperative Extension lot. Parking is free.

Price: $15 in advance; $20 at the door (if available); $60 VIP

Date: June 17th – July 22nd

Everyone is invited to enjoy food and drink from the Zoo’s many eateries. The event will be at the Cornell Cooperative Extension lot. Parking is free.
Join Zoo naturalists and members of the community on a hike to learn about and find invasive species in our local area. An invasive species is a species of non-native plant or animal that can disrupt the balance, biodiversity, and overall health of native plants and animals. The Seneca Park Zoo Society has teamed up with the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (FL-PRISM) to find, report, and educate the public about these invasive species by hiking through this area of Rochester that has not yet been surveyed.

**Dates:** June 16, 30 July 14, 21 August 4, 18 Sept. 15 Oct. 8, 29 Nov. 13, 26

**Price:** FREE

**Register:** senecaparkzoo.org/hikes

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**Invasive Species Early Detection Nature Hikes**

**Dates:** June 16, 30 July 14, 21 August 4, 18 Sept. 15 Oct. 8, 29 Nov. 13, 26

Join like-minded neighbors to help clean-up our local green spaces. You'll be amazed at the impact a focused group can make in just three hours. Help us make Rochester a cleaner, greener city! Please dress for the weather and bring water to stay hydrated. Tools, bags, and gloves will be provided and all ages are welcome to attend. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Kinecta Federal Credit Union for supporting this amazing initiative!

**Dates:** July 15, August 20, September 17

**Register:** senecaparkzoo.org/cleanup

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**Community Cleanups**

**Dates:** July 15/August 20/September 17

Join like-minded neighbors to help clean-up our local green spaces. You'll be amazed at the impact a focused group can make in just three hours. Help us make Rochester a cleaner, greener city! Please dress for the weather and bring water to stay hydrated. Tools, bags, and gloves will be provided and all ages are welcome to attend. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor Kinecta Federal Credit Union for supporting this amazing initiative!

**Register:** senecaparkzoo.org/cleanup

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**Community Activities & Events**

Join Zoo naturalists and members of the community on a hike to learn about and find invasive species in our local area. An invasive species is a species of non-native plant or animal that can disrupt the balance, biodiversity, and overall health of native plants and animals. The Seneca Park Zoo Society has teamed up with the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (FL-PRISM) to find, report, and educate the public about these invasive species by hiking through this area of Rochester that has not yet been surveyed.

**Dates:** June 16, 30 July 14, 21 August 4, 18 Sept. 15 Oct. 8, 29 Nov. 13, 26

**Price:** FREE

**Register:** senecaparkzoo.org/hikes
We are so excited to bring back summer programming for animal enrichment, feedings, keeper chats, conservation talks and more so that you can better plan a truly memorable zoo experience. Check that you can select a truly memorable zoo experience. Check out the schedule below to see some of what we have in store for you over the summer. You can get some of what we have in store for you over the summer. You can get some of what we have in store for you over the summer. You can get some of what we have in store for you over the summer. You can get some of what we have in store for you over the summer.
Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.