

A publication of the Seneca Park Zoo Society

ZOONOOZ

JANUARY 2022

**SCIENCE AND
EXPERIMENTS:**
Reptile and Amphibian Care

SAVING SPECIES:
Reptile and Amphibian
Conservation

Seneca Park Zoo inspires our community to connect, care for, and conserve wildlife and wild places.

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Private events: 585.295.7399	MEMBERS MAY ALWAYS ENTER AT 9:30 A.M.

LETTER FROM

Pamela Reed Sanchez
President and CEO
Seneca Park Zoo Society

On My Mind:
The Intricacies
of Ecosystems

We took a chance using an image of a snake on the cover of this issue of ZooNooz, as we know some people have such an aversion to snakes that they might avoid the newsletter!

We know. Snakes aren't everyone's favorite - they are among the most underappreciated and feared animals encountered at Seneca Park Zoo and in our outreach programs. It's our job to introduce and inspire everyone to appreciate these much-maligned creatures for the role they play in our ecosystem as predators and prey. They are also fascinating animals with amazing adaptations. For example, who hasn't wished at some point they could shed their skin?

It is true that the majority of people who visit Seneca Park Zoo are coming to see the iconic mammals here, including African lions, Amur tigers, and polar bears. More guests find themselves inspired by coming nose-to-nose with a fluffy snow leopard, or an inquisitive giraffe, than a python or a viper or a rat snake. (Sorry snake aficionados, but it's true.)

Our mission isn't to convert you to becoming a snake lover.

It's to convert you to become an environmental steward, to foster an appreciation of nature and wildlife, in all its forms.

We can't just save the iconic, beloved-by-all species. Everything is connected. Remove snakes from our ecosystem and we would be overrun with rats and other rodents. Remove snakes and you remove a food source for fox, raccoons, coyotes, and bears. There is a balance in nature that must be maintained; each insect, arachnid, amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal plays a role.



As David Attenborough said, "It is that range of biodiversity that we must care for - the whole thing - rather than just one or two stars." In other words, to save elephants and rhinos, or lake sturgeon and river otters, we must save entire ecosystems, entire food webs of intricate biodiversity.

... become an environmental steward, to foster an appreciation of nature and wildlife, in all its forms.

Remove one string from the fabric of an ecosystem, and the entire cloth begins to fall apart. Further, we don't always know which string it is that can cause the system to collapse the fastest.

Our hope with this issue of ZooNooz is that you come to at least appreciate the role of snakes in an ecosystem, and that you begin to recognize how much nature is out there that is deserving our best efforts.

As a side note, all the snakes you'll see at Seneca Park Zoo are housed in our indoor habitats, which is a reminder that your Zoo is an ideal place to visit year-round!

See you at the Zoo,

Pamela Reed Sanchez



John Adamski

Reptile and Amphibian Care

Science and Experiments

Herpetology is the branch of zoology concerned with the study of amphibians (including frogs, toads, salamanders, newts and the gymnophiona) and reptiles (including snakes, lizards, amphisbaenids, turtles, terrapins, tortoises, crocodilians, and the tuataras).

Seneca Park Zoo has 14 reptile and eight amphibian species in our care. Reptiles include the African bush viper, African pancake tortoise, ball python, Burmese python, Dumeril's ground boa, East African spiny-tailed lizard, giant daygecko, great plated lizard, Henkel's leaf-tailed gecko, Madagascar tree boa, New Caledonian crested gecko, red-eared slider, spotted turtle, and western rat snake. Amphibians include the African bullfrog, fire-bellied toad, hellbender, marine toad, Mueller's clawed frog, Panamanian golden frog, Borneo eared frog and three species of poison dart frogs.

Part science and part experimentation...

The Seneca Park Zoo's herpetology department is full of amazing species. Their care is extremely unique and is part science and part experimentation. Herp keepers are responsible for the daily care, feeding, and enrichment of amphibians and reptiles. This includes the preparation of daily diets, monitoring of water quality, and habitat maintenance. On some days, it may also include carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work needed to build new habitats, install water features, and ensure misters and heat lamps are functioning correctly. On others, it may include breeding fruit flies. (continued.)



Fruit flies bred at the Zoo by Assistant Curator John Adamski

Keepers also build strong relationships with other zoos and the keepers who care for the same species. Outside of zoos and natural range, many reptile and amphibian species aren't in conservation care. This means knowledge about care and husbandry is not largely available. Seneca Park Zoo's keepers often work with their counterparts at other zoos to share learnings, create programs that increase populations, and get tips and tricks on animal care.

One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been the increased adoption and improvements made in communication technologies. Keepers can take a quick photo with their phone and text it to a colleague in the field or at another institution and receive immediate feedback. Assistant Curator John Adamski uses text, email, and WhatsApp to communicate with peers in Panama to better understand natural range habitats. This allows the herps team to create Panamanian golden frog habitats here at the Zoo based on those found in Panama.

Working with herps requires a careful eye and a special patience. It is much easier to notice and remediate an issue with an elephant or other large animal than it is to detect problems with smaller species like frogs and geckos. Zoo Keeper Catina Wright has become the 'herp whisperer', often detecting issues with animals before they become noticeable. Careful observation is imperative when working with amphibians and reptiles. Small changes in behavior, weight, and eating habits can be crucial to catching issues before they become big problems. The next time you are at the Zoo take a moment to slow down, peer through the glass into the eyes of a leaf-tailed gecko, see if you can catch the Panamanian golden frog waving, or find the hellbender tucked away under a log. Each small habitat is a whole world waiting to be explored.





New frog habitat tanks recently built by our Zoo staff




Ron Kalasinskas



Wayne Smith

Saving Species: Reptile and Amphibian Conservation



Reptile and Amphibian Conservation

Amphibians are one of the most threatened groups of animals worldwide. In the past four decades, scientists have observed large population declines and many disappearances of numerous amphibian species. They are among the foremost taxonomic groups threatened with losses, with about 1/3 of amphibian species at risk of extinction. Leading factors include invasive species, habitat loss, and chemical pollution. Amphibians are often referred to as ‘canaries in the coal mine’ due to their reliance on both aquatic and terrestrial systems, moist permeable skin that acts as a respiratory organ, and their importance in food webs.

Many reptiles are very sensitive to changes in temperature due to their reliance on ambient temperature to maintain key physiological processes. Lizards may be highly vulnerable to climate change as

their reproduction is tied directly to narrow bands of time in spring and summer when temperature and moisture levels are ideal. Snake species are closely related to lizards, and as a result, these effects impact them as well. Consider there is a window of time during the day when temperatures are suitable for reptile activities. Climate change appears to be shrinking this window, reducing the activity times of reptiles, and as a result, affecting their reproduction and their survival.

Climate change is also impacting aquatic species, such as turtles. Mostly aquatic, turtles may encounter changes in habitats, water availability, and water temperature. Turtles have temperature-sensitive sex determination, meaning cooler temperatures may produce nests of only males, with warmer temperatures producing only females. As a result, future reproduction and evolutionary impacts are likely to occur.

For many species, breeding programs managed by zoos and aquariums are working as stopgap measures for species faced with extinction. Seneca Park Zoo works to ensure the survival of several amphibian and reptile species through our participation in the Species Survival Plan (SSP). The Species Survival Plan is a coordinated initiative to plan for and manage breeding of animals across all AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums to ensure genetic diversity and species sustainability in human care. Reptile and amphibian SSP species at our Zoo include the Henkel’s leaf-tailed gecko, Panamanian golden frog, and pancake tortoise. By visiting the Zoo, becoming a member, or donating to conservation, you are helping to save species from extinction. You can also help protect species in their natural ranges by living more sustainably and reducing your carbon footprint. Together, we can ensure future generations can enjoy the wonders of these extraordinary animals.



Kristen Matteo

Welcome new penguin chick **Tonka**

Penguin chick Tonka

We are excited to announce the hatching of the 114th penguin chick at Seneca Park Zoo! The Zoo team is proud to have one of the most successful breeding colonies of African penguins over the past 20 years. The new chick named Tonka hatched on October 10, 2021. The sex of penguin chicks is determined after molting out of their down, when a feather can be sent for DNA sexing. Tonka's parents are 15-year-old Twiggy (F) and 25-year-old Blanca (M). Twiggy was hatched here in 2006. Blanca was hatched at the Maryland Zoo, in Baltimore but came to us when he was about a year old, so both parents are long term residents of the Zoo. Welcome Tonka!



Kevin Blakely

Transplanting a 70-POUND snake



Elessa Kim

Moving Mr. Slithers

Transplanting a 70-pound snake

In December 2021, our resident Burmese python, Mr. Slithers, was relocated to his new home at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado. Seneca Park Zoo had been looking to make additional space for our young Burmese pythons, Garrett and Caulkins in the E.C.O. Center. Garrett and Caulkins, named after our now-retired and beloved vet tech, are the offspring of Mr. Slithers and the Zoo's other Burmese python Abby, who died in 2021. Both Garrett and Caulkins have been ambassador animals for outreach programs since 2016 and had outgrown their ability to be used on ZooMobile programs. The two snakes are slowly being acclimated to their new habitat in the E.C.O. Center and we look forward to introducing them to all Zoo guests very soon.

As you might assume, relocating a 70-pound snake requires a lot of logistical planning. The first step was deciding what type of container would provide the most comfortable environment for Mr. Slithers. Assistant Curator

John Adamski and his team decided on a large animal crate and reinforced and padded it with special foam. When they are transported, the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) recommends snakes be placed in snake bags. Zoo staff ordered the largest we could find, but they were too small for our 12-foot-long Mr. Slithers. Our own Zoologist Tina Fess is also an amazing seamstress. Tina was able to sew two large bags together, creating an incredibly strong and comfy snake bag. With the crate completed and bag sewn, a call was made to FedEx. A few weeks later, John and team met at the Zoo at 4:30 a.m. to load Mr. Slithers into his bag and crate and delivered him to the FedEx location at the Rochester International Airport. Total weight? A whopping 150 pounds. He wasn't too pleased waking up early but got to catch extra Zs on the short flight. Mr. Slithers arrived safe and sound and is settling into his new home nicely. Garrett and Caulkins are being acclimated to each other and will be introduced to their new home in the ECO Center in the coming weeks.

Zoo Keepers Allison Becker and Catina Wright moving Mr. Slithers.



John Adamski



John Adamski

AWARENESS WEEKENDS

► AWARENESS WEEKEND: INTERNATIONAL POLAR BEAR DAY

FEBRUARY 26 & 27

Join us in celebrating and supporting the conservation of polar bears! We will have some great polar bear content to share, a fundraiser and there will be live enrichment/demos going on throughout the weekend!

Dates: February 26 & 27

Time: Varies

Price: Free

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/event/polar22



Wayne Smith

A Look Ahead at Some of Our Biggest Events for 2022

Stay tuned for more information as we get closer!

ZooBrew 2022, everyone's favorite 21+ happy hour event will be back on five Friday evenings throughout the summer!

Dates: May 27, June 17, July 22, August 19 and September 9

33rd Annual ZOOblation Gala, our largest and most important fundraiser, will be back onsite! A gala event, ZOOblation is not only a celebration, but one of the driving forces that supports education and conservation programs for people of all ages in our community and beyond.

Date: Saturday, June 4

Jungle Jog 2022 5k Run and Walk, our annual 5k will be held in-person at Seneca Park!

Date: Sunday, July 17 (Registration to open April 15)

Apples, Ales & Tails 2022, This event features beer and cider tasting stations, delicious food and entertainment throughout Seneca Park Zoo!

Date: Saturday, September 24



Coming soon! The 2022 Seneca Park Zoo member t-shirt, featuring a sandhill crane. Member t-shirts are just \$12 each and available in both youth and adult sizes. Ask at the Front Gate on your next visit!

2022 MEMBER T-SHIRTS

► WINTER BREAK ZOOCAMP

FEBRUARY 21 - 25

Take a break from school and sledding to spend some time at the Zoo! Winter break is full of animal stories at the Zoo. Come learn about fables and the incredible animals from around the world that inspired these stories in this fun camp.

Storybook Adventures, for ages 5 through 9

Dates: February 21 - 25

Full-day: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Half-day: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Price: Members: \$150 for half-day; \$245 for full-day

Non-members: \$170 for half-day; \$270 for full-day

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/winterbreak22

After care is available! The ZooCamp day ends at 4 p.m., but you can choose to extend your child's day at the Zoo with after care until 5 p.m.. The fee is \$25 for the week.

► DEFEND THE ICE WITH THE ROCHESTER AMERICANS

FEBRUARY 26

Seneca Park Zoo is partnering once again with the Rochester Americans to help create awareness for polar bears and the sea ice they depend on! Follow us on social media or visit our website for updates on this month-long event!

Game time: 3:05 p.m. on Saturday, February 26

Join us to cheer on our home team as they take on the Toronto Marlies!



▶ HOMESCHOOL ZOOCLASS

MARCH 10, 17, 24 & 31

Finding ways to stay connected to the community can be difficult with the pandemic on top of schooling from home. Homeschool ZooClass is a four-session series of classes designed for homeschool families and based on our most popular thematic programs. Projects worked on throughout the four sessions encourage both individual and group learning, while providing students with the opportunity to take an extended and interdisciplinary look at the wonders of the Zoo!

Spring Dates: March 10, 17, 24, 31 from 12 – 4 p.m.

Price: Members: \$90 per student

Non-members: \$110 per student

(Cost includes all four classes. Dates not sold separately.)

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/homeschool-programs

▶ DAY-OFF ZOO CAMP - MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

JANUARY 17

School is on break and it's the perfect time for a fun day of learning at Seneca Park Zoo! Join us for Day-Off ZooCamp as we spend the day looking at all different classes of animals that Seneca Park Zoo has to offer. It's like Summer ZooCamp in a single day!

Ages: 5 through 9

Dates: January 17

Full-day: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Price: Members: \$45 for full-day

Non-members: \$55 for full-day

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/dayoff-milk



Jessica Hays



Brittany Wood

▶ TREK IN THE TWILIGHT

**JANUARY 21, 29/FEBRUARY 12, 18/
MARCH 19, 25/ APRIL 16, 29/ MAY 6, 21**

Trek in the Twilight is just like our popular Bunk with Beasts program but without the overnight! We provide dinner, a guided tour of the Zoo, and an animal presentation, but participants get to go home and sleep in their own beds at the end of the night.

Dates:

January 21, 29

February 12, 18

March 19, 25

April 16, 29

May 6, 21

OR

Pick Your Own Date!

Time: 5:45 - 9:30 p.m.

Price: \$25 per scout, \$20 per chaperone

A \$50 deposit is due two weeks after booking.

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/trek-twilight

▶ KINDERZOO

SEE WEBSITE FOR AVAILABILITY

When it comes to conservation and animal education, we say, "start them young and allow the passion to grow with them!" KinderZoo is a program for preschoolers and their grown-ups to play, discover, and learn in a fun, interactive way. Join us as we explore different animals and habitats, using games, BioFacts, and engaging, age-appropriate activities. Each class will also include the opportunity to meet an ambassador animal up-close and learn all about them! Limited slots available.

Ages: 18 months – 2 years & 3 - 5 years

Dates: See website to check date availability

Price: \$8 for members, \$10 for non-members

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/kinderzoo



Tricia Chapman



Tricia Chapman

SCOUT WORKSHOPS

VISIT SENECAPARKZOO.ORG/SCOUTS

Calling all scout leaders – plan your next group outing with us! Seneca Park Zoo offers an array of workshops for all levels of scout troops. Programs are designed to meet badge requirements and build skills. The Zoo offers both in-person and virtual workshops for Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Scouts BSA Merit Badges. Have fun and learn something new at the Zoo!

In-person workshops range from two-and-a-half to three-hour sessions while virtual workshops range from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Scouts BSA – Merit Badge Workshop:
Bird Study (in-person) – March 20, 2022

Additional dates are available for plan your own workshops. For more information, including pricing and requesting a date, visit senecaparkzoo.org/scouts

WILDLIFE ACTION CREW

JANUARY 12, 19, 26 & FEBRUARY 2, 9, 16
MARCH 2, 9, 16 & APRIL 6

Wildlife Action Crew is one of our most fun, informative, and productive programs designed especially for teenagers interested in animals and conservation. This six-week, once-a-week program centers around a conservation case study that teens will conduct themselves. Through their case study they will learn about and discuss a conservation issue, the animals that are affected, and what is being done to help. They will select an action that addresses the conservation issue and work in groups to create a campaign to promote their message to the world.

Ages: 13 to 18-year-olds
Price: \$55 for Zoo members; \$60 for non-members

When: Wednesdays 6 – 8 p.m. (6 weeks)

Dates: Winter Session: Parrots & the Pet Trade — January 12, 19, 26 and February 2, 9, 16

— **Spring Session: Lions & Habitat Loss**
March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6

March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/wildlife-action-crew/



CALENDAR

Mark your calendars for what's next at your Zoo.

► BECOME A ZOO AMBASSADOR

VISIT SENECA PARK ZOO.ORG/VOLUNTEER

Do you have an interest in wildlife that you would like to share with others? We are now recruiting volunteers for our new Zoo Ambassador opportunity! Zoo Ambassadors are enthusiastic, outgoing individuals who will help enhance the guest experience by sharing their wealth of knowledge about nature and the Zoo. Sharing information about the animals and their ecosystems supports the Zoo's mission to inspire our community to connect with, care for and conserve wildlife and wild places. Ambassadors must be at least 18 years of age, friendly and enjoy interacting with guests of all ages and backgrounds.

This is a wonderful opportunity for anyone who loves animals and is looking to get involved in the world of conservation and wildlife. Whether you're considering a career in a related field or just want to spend some time around nature and sharing knowledge with your community, this is a unique opportunity that you won't want to miss!

Scan the QR code below or visit senecaparkzoo.org/volunteer to complete the volunteer application.

MORE
INFO
HERE!



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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.

senecaparkzoo.org | 585.336.7200 | The Zoo is open 362 days a year.



Follow us socially. Visit senecaparkzoo.org



Wayne Smith

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