

A publication of the Seneca Park Zoo Society

# ZOONOOZ

APRIL 2024



## REPORTING OUT SENECA PARK ZOO'S CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN



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

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**General info:** 585.336.7200  
**Nov. 1 – March 31:** 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
last entry at 3 p.m.

**Membership:** 585.336.7212

**Development:** 585.336.7205

**Private events:** 585.295.7399

**April 1 – Oct. 31:** 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
last entry at 4 p.m.

MEMBERS MAY ALWAYS ENTER AT 9:30 A.M.

LETTER FROM

**Pamela Reed Sanchez**  
President and CEO  
Seneca Park Zoo Society

**On My Mind:**  
When the Circle of Life Doesn't Feel Like a Circle

**W**hy is our memory for “bad news” so much longer than our memory for joyful occasions? What is it about us as a species that has us able to immediately call to mind negative events? Is this an adaptation humans have, and if so, what is its evolutionary purpose?

I've been ruminating on this the past few weeks, as our Zoo family works through an extremely difficult loss, compounded by social media keyboard warriors who seem to know a lot about how the Zoo “should” take care of its animals. “Too many deaths at the Zoo,” they write.

Their memories come up short for all the beginnings of life at the Zoo, like Canada lynx cub Stanley, snow leopard cubs Silver and Kenji, and giraffe calves Olmy and Pippi. No recollection of the snowy owl chicks hatched here, the buffalo weaver chicks, or Lucas and Micah, red panda cubs born at the Zoo. Not to mention the prolific African penguin colony, one of the most successful of all AZA Zoos. We announce and celebrate their arrivals.

We then do our part for survival of the species, sending many of them off to other accredited zoos on breeding recommendations, where the circle of life continues. We also receive animals from other zoos for the same reasons. Gary the North American river otter, juvenile male giraffe JP, and Raji, our new female red panda, were placed at Seneca Park Zoo in the last year on breeding recommendations.

We also do our part by having many animals in our care that are beyond breeding age.



Genny C., Lilac, and Moki, our three geriatric female African elephants, and our ancient Amur tiger Katya come to mind. Grey wolves Willow and Timber are getting up there in age, as is, beloved polar bear Anoki. The truth is we excel at taking care of the animals here, newborn and senior, and everything in between. When an elderly animal dies, we grieve the loss, but often “old age” is acceptable to the public, and people are kind. Cancer can take animals prematurely, just as it takes friends and family too early, and people are kind.

But the death of a young animal is different. It depends how we think the circle of life is supposed to go. We look for someone or something to blame, because it's often easier than being reminded that life, disease, and death, are not things we can predict or control. These past weeks, the outpouring of kindness from our members has been wonderful and needed. Thank you, from all of us at the Zoo. You understand our care of the animals here because you love them too. Many of you are here often enough to develop connections of your own with the animals, and you are witness to the extraordinary attention and care they receive from staff.

We will outlive most of the animals in our care; our life expectancy is multiples of most animals here. That we will have more sad news is guaranteed. And we will have happy news. That is the circle in the Circle of Life.

Thank you for being part of the Zoo family, and for sharing our sadness **and** our joy.

A handwritten signature of Pamela Reed Sanchez in black ink.

**grateful** for our members



Julia Schlenker  
Lake sturgeon photo above

# Reporting Out on the Zoo's Conservation Action Plan

By Pamela Reed Sanchez, President and CEO

If you ever watched “The Zoo” on Animal Planet, you undoubtedly were introduced to Jim Breheny, Director of the Bronx Zoo. Jim, a former chair of the board of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), heads a fantastic organization known for its outstanding animal care, guest experiences, and conservation work. At one of the first conferences I attended in the Zoo world, Jim took the microphone, and said, “We can have great guest programs, and the best in animal care, but at the end of the day, why’s the monkey in a cage?”

This question gets to the heart of why zoos exist: to connect people to the animals in our care in a way that inspires them to act on behalf of these species, and the planet. The animals here serve a higher purpose: they are ambassadors for their counterparts in nature, species that we simply **MUST** all care about enough to take action to ensure their long-term survival.

Zoos and aquariums accredited by AZA are required to create and implement a Conservation Action Plan, which essentially is

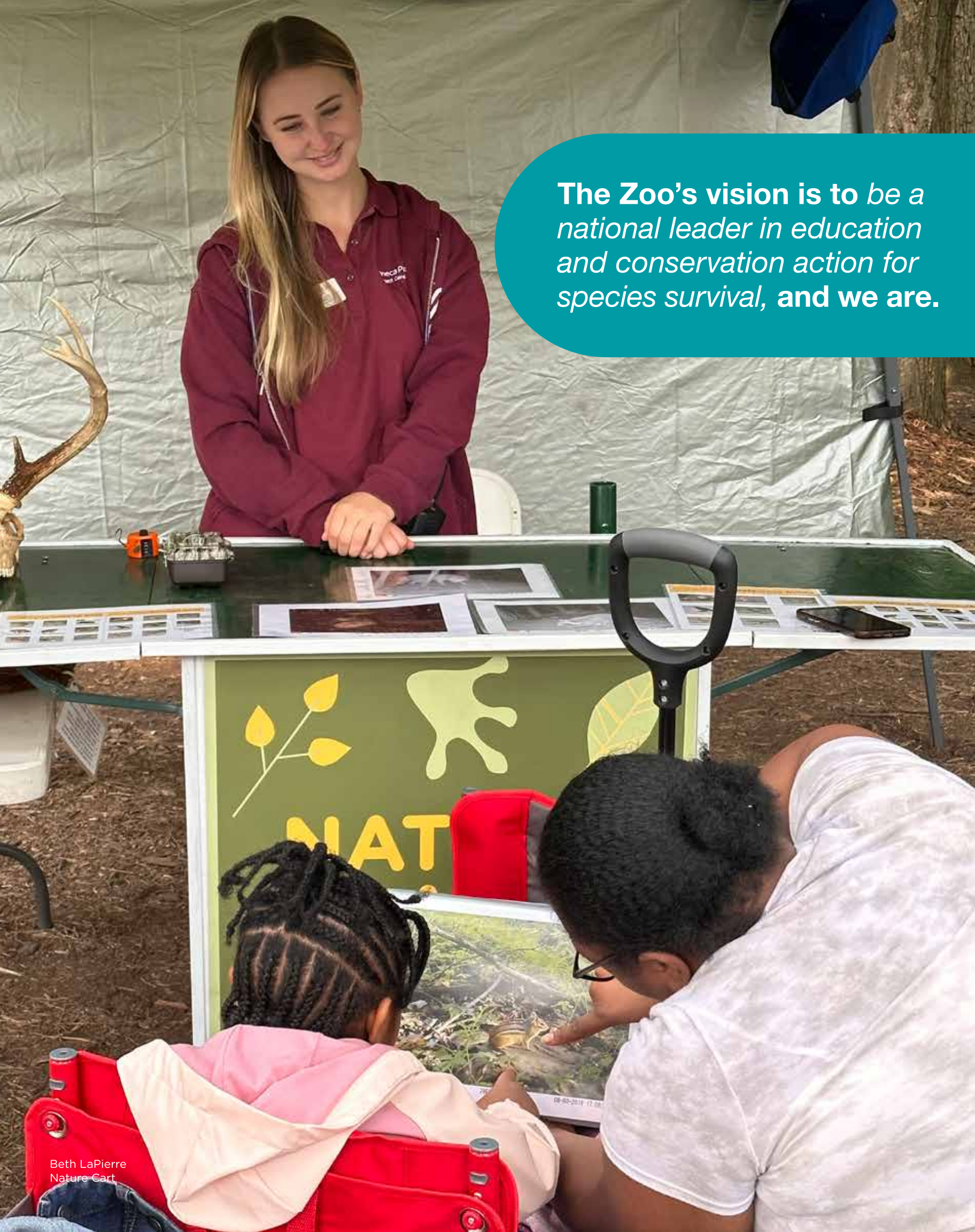
the strategic framework for how the institution accomplishes their mission. At Seneca Park Zoo, the Conservation Action Plan is updated annually, with five-year goals and annual objectives. While many of us on the “inside” are aware of the Conservation Action Plan and how it informs our work, we don’t often report out on it, to you, our members.

The entire plan is a very detailed, dense, document so the outline below gives you an overview of the pillars of the plan, and how we work to enact it.

## **Pillar One: Become known as a conservation organization.**

The Zoo’s vision is to be a national leader in education and conservation action for species survival, and we are. Yet, not a single week goes by when we don’t hear the words, “I didn’t know the Zoo did that” in reference to our conservation work. Many people still know us primarily for being a great place to visit with family and friends and remain unaware that the Zoo is a conservation organization.

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**The Zoo's vision is to be a national leader in education and conservation action for species survival, and we are.**

We work to ensure every touch point with the Zoo reminds you we not only care about the animals here at the Zoo, but we are committed to conservation in our community, regionally, and internationally.

Our guest surveys indicate we're on the right track, with 95% of guests reporting they are aware the Zoo is a conservation organization, aware we are working actively to save animals from extinction, and aware we are working to restore native habitat. We want every guest, to feel hopeful and to have learned something they can do to help save animals from extinction. This year, you'll see more conservation awareness activities at special event fundraisers like Birds, Beers, and Brews, Sustainable Table dinners, and more.

**Pillar Two:  
Be a role model for sustainability.**

In essence, walk the walk, and not just talk. We teach sustainability to our guests, and we want to model that behavior in every way we can. We work to eliminate single use plastics, to recycle and compost, and conserve water. You'll find reusable plates and utensils at Trailside Café, and water in aluminum, not plastic, bottles. These are small, but important, acts of sustainability.

This year, we will be taking a closer look at what it would take to become a zero-waste to landfill organization. We have some special constraints, but the first step in 2023 is to identify barriers and begin to build strategy to remove those barriers where we are able.

**Pillar Three:  
Protect species through  
conservation research and action.**

This pillar speaks to a large set of activities across the entire Zoo aimed at our own efforts to save animals from extinction, as well as empowering others to act.

The work of our Animal Care and Animal Health teams extends far beyond what a guest sees or hears on the news. Many of these efforts are classified as "Science Saving Species". Through collaboration with universities, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, and other zoos Seneca Park Zoo advances the understanding of biology, physiology, and well-being in a variety of species. One key example is assisted reproduction, where Seneca Park Zoo actively works with the scientists at CREW (Center for Conservation Research of Endangered Wildlife) contributing to the science and the species, of lynx, polar bear, and African lions.

The Zoo is actively involved in scientific studies and research that span the activities and species here. In 2023, the Zoo collaborated with scientists at Carnegie Mellon, George Mason University, the University of Rochester, RIT, St. John Fisher, University of Iowa, University of Missouri, University of Oxford, as well as Binder Park Zoo, CREW and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Research included red pandas, African penguins, bats, polar bears, North American river otters, African lions, snakes, giraffe, snow leopards, and the many species that share habitat with us in Monroe County.

*Continued on next page*



Every program we deliver - on site for the public, in a classroom, in a program, or out in the community - is designed to connect people to nature and inspire them not just to care, but to act to conserve wildlife and wild places. We aim to create the next generation of environmental stewards, actively working toward a healthier planet.

In 2023, we added the Nature Cart to our suite of programs. The Nature Cart provides a new experience for guests to have meaningful engagement with nature, including deep dives into biodiversity assessments of water from Trout Pond, discussion of invasive species such as spotted lantern flies, regional species identification, frog calls, and camera trap images. The innovative programming format allowed opportunities for engagement with people of all ages and backgrounds, and we found guests had longer stay time at the Nature Cart than at most habitats. We hope that as a member, you found something new at the Nature Cart on nearly every repeat visit.

**Pillar Four:  
Participate in regional conservation efforts.**

Seneca Park Zoo has been actively involved in species survival in our own backyard for decades. Not only is our own region the place where we can make the most impact, but it's essential that our community understand that conservation isn't something that needs to happen just in Africa or Borneo or Nepal, but that our region faces significant challenges we can all be involved in addressing.

Regionally, our anchor species have been lake sturgeon, North American river otters, Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnakes, and monarch butterflies

**Lake Sturgeon**

Twenty years of collaboration between the United States Geological Survey (USGS), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Seneca Park Zoo underscores how conservation partners and a community bring an indigenous species back from the brink of extinction.

**North American River Otter**

More than twenty years ago, the Zoo participated in relocating North American river otters to the region, as they had been extirpated. Today, general Curator David Hamilton works with partners at RIT to study the presence and genetics of regional otters.

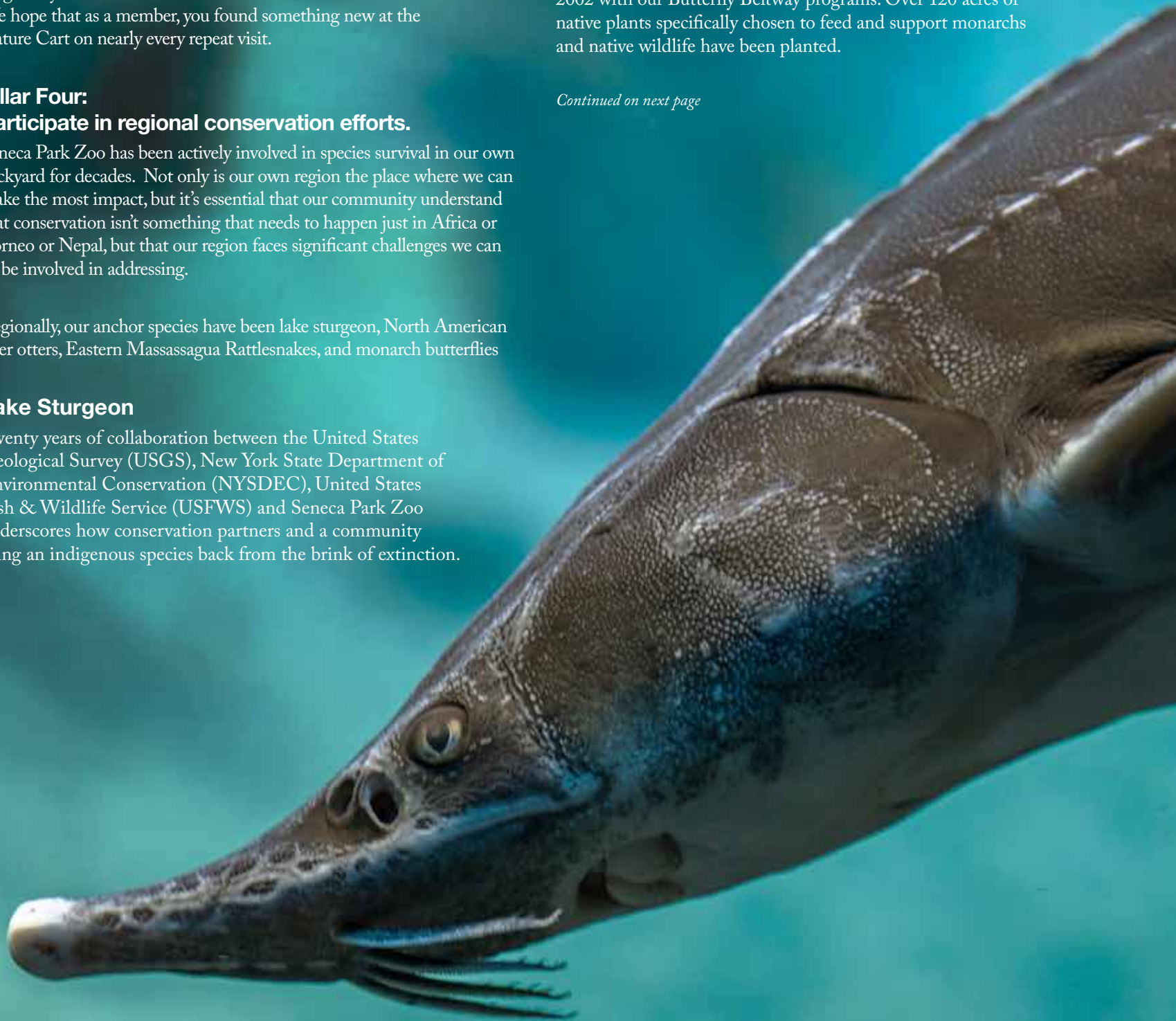
**Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnake**

The Eastern Massassauga Rattlesnake Species Survival Plan (SSP) surveys wetlands looking for rattlesnakes. Each rattlesnake found is weighed, measured and a blood sample is collected.

**Monarch Butterfly**

Seneca Park Zoo has been conserving pollinator sites since 2002 with our Butterfly Beltway programs. Over 120 acres of native plants specifically chosen to feed and support monarchs and native wildlife have been planted.

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We also are a part of the Urban Wildlife Information Network, documenting and reporting on the species sharing habitat with us in Monroe County. We work in partnership with governmental, nonprofit, and academic partners to achieve our work, and we often invite the public to be part of our efforts.

In recent years, the Zoo accelerated its coordination of Community Clean Ups, which now take place at least monthly from March through October. In 2023, nearly 700 volunteers joined us, contributing some 1800 hours of time to remove debris from our beaches, parks, and waterways. In the past five years, Community Clean Ups have removed over 13,000 pounds of pollution.

**Pillar Five:  
Create meaningful partnerships  
for global conservation actions.**

The focus of this pillar is on the word “meaningful”. We hope you’ve noticed the many times the lead article in ZooNooz is written by a colleague from one of our conservation partners, sharing the work they can accomplish because of support from our members, guests, and donors. We consider our grantees our partners in achieving our shared mission.

Here are just a few examples:

**Lemurs and Madagascar**

Our partnership with Dr. Patricia Wright remains steadfast, supporting reforestation and key biodiversity assessments in Madagascar. As was reported in a recent ZooNooz, staff travels to Madagascar on a regular cadence in addition to our providing financial support.

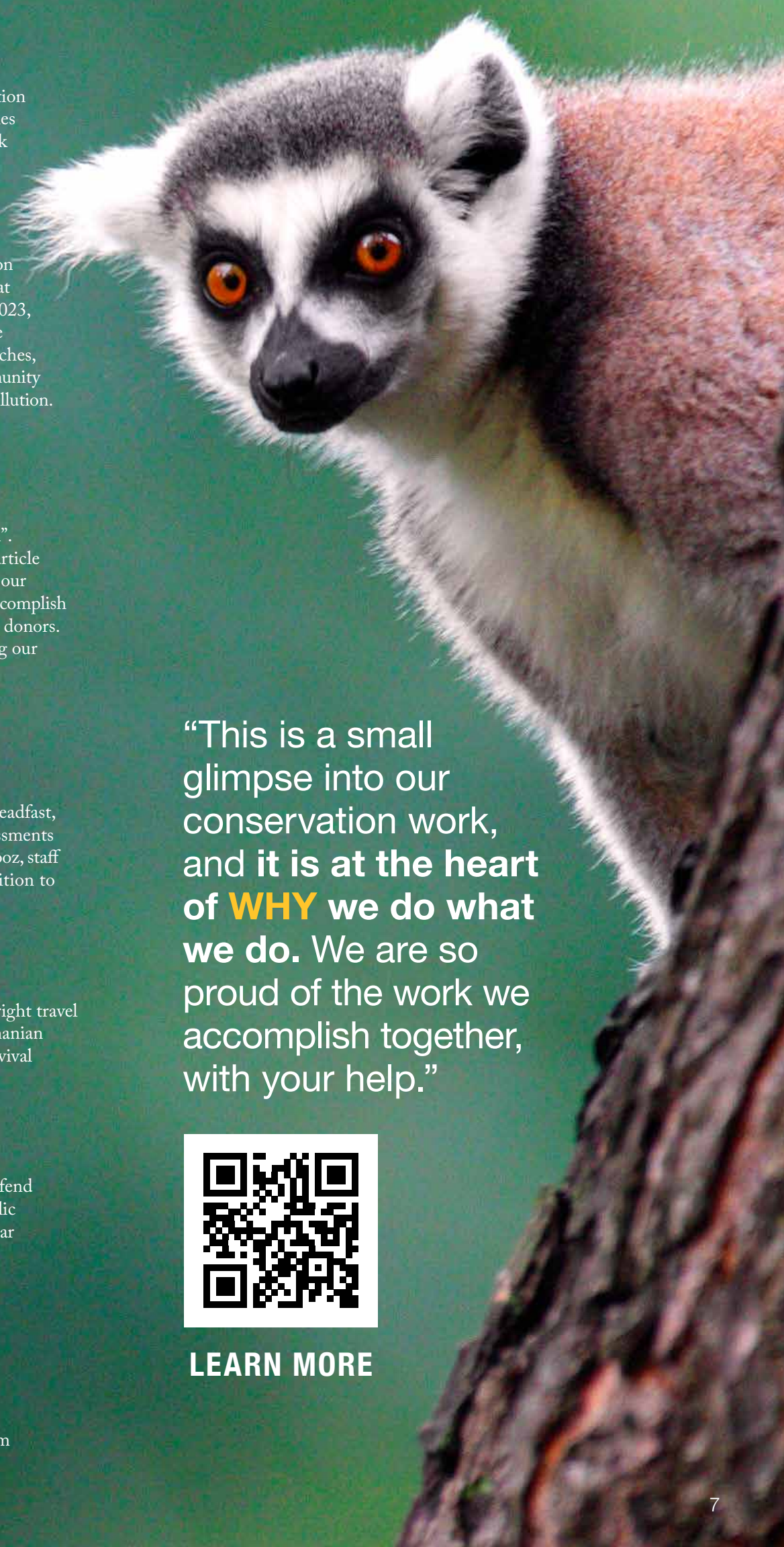
**Panamanian golden frogs**

Our partnership with El Valle, in Panama, saw Curator John Adamski and Zookeeper Catina Wright travel earlier this year to assist with husbandry of Panamanian golden frogs as well as strategy for that species’ survival moving forward.

**Polar Bears**

Seneca Park Zoo, through its multi-year partnership with the Rochester Americans for Defend the Ice, has been able to significantly increase public awareness of the shrinking sea ice upon which polar bears depend. It’s also allowed us to increase our financial support for the maternal den monitoring research at Polar Bears International (PBI).

In 2023, we were also able to send Zookeeper Heidi Beifus to Churchill as part of PBI’s Arctic Ambassador program. In addition, we have been working closely with PBI and other zoos with polar bears to replicate the Defend the Ice program in other hockey markets.



“This is a small glimpse into our conservation work, and it is at the heart of **WHY** we do what we do. We are so proud of the work we accomplish together, with your help.”



**LEARN MORE**

# VOLUNTEER VALUE SHOUT-OUT:

**Our volunteers are a crucial piece of our Zoo family.**

In 2023, we had 1,473 volunteers give us almost 20,000 hours of their time. Using the national average for volunteer hour value, that works out to over \$630,000 worth of peoplepower! If you would like to volunteer here at the Zoo there are plenty of ways to get involved. From helping out at cleanups, photographing animals & events, becoming a Zoo Ambassador and more.



**1,473**  
volunteers



**20,000**  
hours



**630,000**  
peoplepower



Learn more here:  
[senecaparkzoo.org/get-involved/#volunteer](https://senecaparkzoo.org/get-involved/#volunteer)





# Seneca Park Zoo Society Annual Meeting

As a Seneca Park Zoo Society member, you are invited and encouraged to join us at the Annual Meeting at 8:30 a.m. on May 18, 2024, in the Trailside Café.

The Annual Meeting is the one business meeting held each year for the Zoo's members, and the agenda includes:

- Updates from the Zoo Society Board Chair and the President/CEO
- A financial report from the Treasurer of the Society Board of Trustees
- The election of trustees to the Board (yes, you vote!)
- A special presentation about something NEW at the Zoo

Continental breakfast and beverages will be provided. Cart transportation will be available.

Please RSVP at [SenecaParkZoo.org/meeting](https://SenecaParkZoo.org/meeting)



## ► ZOOBREW

JUNE 21/JULY 12/AUGUST 16/SEPT. 6

Everyone's favorite 21+ happy hour event will be back on four Friday evenings 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 will go towards elephant conservation. Guests enjoy live music from multiple bands throughout the Zoo, animal experiences, and more.

**Date:** June 21, July 12, August 16, September 6

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/zoobrew](http://senecaparkzoo.org/zoobrew)



## ► 2024 MEMBER T-SHIRTS

PURCHASE YOURS AT THE FRONT GATE

The 2024 Seneca Park Zoo member t-shirt is available now! This year's featured animal is the mesmerizing zebra. Member t-shirts are just \$12 each and available in both youth and adult sizes.

Ask at the Front Gate on your next visit!

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/member-shirt](http://senecaparkzoo.org/member-shirt)



GET  
YOUR  
MEMBER  
T-SHIRT  
NOW!

# EVENTS

## ► BIRDS, BEES & BREWS

**MAY 10**

Seneca Park Zoo Society is excited to announce our new after-hours tasting event Birds, Bees & Brews! Celebrate the beginning of spring with us as you stroll the Zoo and taste some of our region's best brews – from cider, beer, and mead to coffee and kombucha!

**Dates:** May 10, 2024

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/bbb](https://senecaparkzoo.org/bbb)



## ► 35TH ANNUAL ZOOBILATION GALA

**JUNE 1**

Our largest single-day fundraiser of the year! A gala event, Zoobilation 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. Stay tuned and follow our social media for more information!

**Date:** June 1

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/zoobilation](https://senecaparkzoo.org/zoobilation)



## ► CORDANCIA CONCERT

**JUNE 15, 18**

The Zoo is collaborating with Cordancia Chamber Orchestra and Biodance to present a concert of music about wildlife and nature with original choreography at the Zoo. This is a unique event you won't want to miss! Stay tuned for more information.

**Date:** June 15 during Zoo hours  
June 18 6:00-9:00 p.m.



## ► CONSERVATION AWARENESS DAYS

APRIL 20/MAY 18, 19/JUNE 22, 23/  
JULY 13, 14/JULY 27, 28

We love celebrating and learning about different species as part of our annual awareness weekends! Mark your calendar to make plans to visit us onsite as we will have plenty to do and see for these weekends. Stay tuned to our social media and website for more information as these dates get closer!

**Dates:** April 20 - Earth Day at the Zoo  
May 18/19 - Science Saving Species (Animal Hospital/Health)  
June 22/23 - Animals of the Savanna  
July 13/14 - Frogs!  
July 27/28 - Endangered Species



## ► COMMUNITY CLEANUPS

APRIL 20/MAY 4/JUNE 15/JULY 17/JULY 31/  
AUGUST 10/AUGUST 24/SEPT. 14

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.

**Date:** April 20, May 4, June 15, July 17, July 31, August 10, August 24, Sept. 14

**Register:** [senecaparkzoo.org/cleanup](http://senecaparkzoo.org/cleanup)



## ► “WILD LIFE: UUU X SPZ” - ART GALLERY EXHIBITION

EXHIBITION OPEN THROUGH APRIL 29

We are excited to partner with UUU Art Collective to create a carefully curated exhibition of multimedia artworks that demonstrate care and compassion for the wildlife and wild places in our community.

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/uuu](http://senecaparkzoo.org/uuu)



## ▶ ZOOTEEN PROGRAM

**DEADLINE MAY 2**

The ZooTeen program gives young adults the opportunity to work together with like-minded peers from around the region, as well as with the Seneca Park Zoo education team, to help educate the public about the animals in our conservation care and the importance of saving animals from extinction. Applications for summer 2024 open until May 2!

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/teens](http://senecaparkzoo.org/teens)



## ▶ SUMMER ZOOCAMP

**SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS**

ZooCamp at Seneca Park Zoo immerses kids in wildlife, the environment, and the need to protect and care for both, all in a unique setting: the Zoo! ZooCampers can expect an immersive experience, including meeting animals up close in their classroom, learning about animals they know and love, and spending plenty of time outdoors having fun with kids with similar interests.

**Ages:** 3 to 12

**Dates:** Weekly from June through August  
(see website for dates & camps)

**Register:** [senecaparkzoo.org/summercamp](http://senecaparkzoo.org/summercamp)



# EVENTS

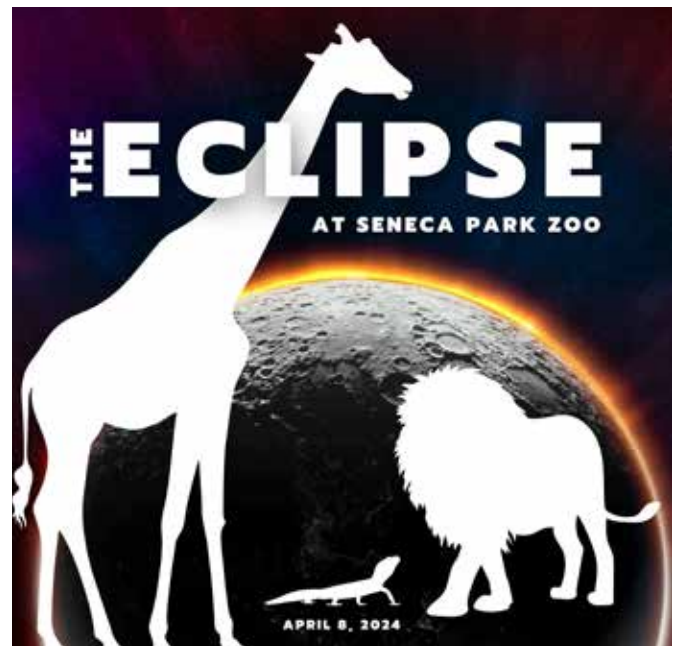
## ▶ SPZ ECLIPSE WEEKEND

**APRIL 6 - 8**

Join us for Eclipse Weekend at Seneca Park Zoo! Eclipse Weekend will feature a range of on-site activities, all included with Zoo admission. Activities will include: demonstrations of hyper-spectral audio recorders to measure animal vocalization behavior during the eclipse, learning opportunities with the Nature Cart & Zoo Naturalists, presentations from conservation partners, and more!

**Dates:** April 6 - 8

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/eclipse](http://senecaparkzoo.org/eclipse)



# EDUCATION

## ▶ KINDERZOO

**SEE WEBSITE TO CHECK AVAILABILITY**

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 availability

**Register:** [senecaparkzoo.org/kinderzoo](http://senecaparkzoo.org/kinderzoo)



Amanda Lindley

## ▶ TREK IN THE TWILIGHT

**APRIL 12, 26/MAY 3, 11 OR REQUEST YOUR OWN DATE (SEPTEMBER - MAY)**

Trek in the Twilight starts by fueling up with some dinner, and then the evening is filled with activities, an animal presentation, and a guided Zoo tour.

**Dates:** April 12, 26, May 3, 11 or request your own date

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

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/trek](http://senecaparkzoo.org/trek)



Jason Abel

## ▶ SCOUT WORKSHOPS

**APRIL 28/MAY 26**

Calling all scout leaders and youth groups – plan your next group outing with us!

**Dates:** April 28, May 26

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

**Learn More:** [senecaparkzoo.org/scouts](http://senecaparkzoo.org/scouts)



Jason Abel

# CALENDAR

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

## ▶ SUMMER PROGRAMMING RETURNS TO THE ZOO!

### ALL SUMMER LONG

One of our favorite activities is back again – scheduled summer programming for animal enrichment, feedings, conservation, and keeper chats! Every day of the week you will find exciting and interesting experiences with a variety of the animals in our care. With different animals scheduled on different days of the week, we mean it when we say there is always something new for you to see at the Zoo!

Stay tuned on our social media and website for more updates on specific animal programming schedules.



## SENECA PARK ZOO SUMMER EXPERIENCES



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:30	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet	Member Animal Meet & Greet
10:30	Snow Leopard Experience	Polar Bear Experience	Vet Chat	Red Panda Experience	Snow Leopard Experience	Polar Bear Experience	Red Panda Experience
11:30						Giraffe Experience	Giraffe Experience
11:45	Giraffe Feeding (\$)			Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)
12:00	Reptile (CRE) Experience	Elephant Experience	Elephant Experience	Frog (CRE) Experience	Elephant Experience		
1:30	Wolf Experience	Sea Lion Experience	Habitats of Savanna Experience	Penguin Experience	Habitats of Savanna Experience	Reptile (CRE) Experience	Sandhill Crane Experience
2:30	River Otter Experience	Crane Experience	Sea Lion Experience	Habitats of Savanna Experience	Sea Lion Experience	Giraffe Experience	Giraffe Experience
2:45	Giraffe Feeding (\$)			Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)	Giraffe Feeding (\$)
3:30	Baboon Experience	Goat Experience	Rhino Experience	Goat Experience	River Otter Experience	Baboon Experience	River Otter Experience

Schedule subject to change without notice.

[senecaparkzoo.org](http://senecaparkzoo.org)

**Seneca Park Zoo Society**  
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senecaparkzoo.org



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**Contributing writers:**

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Beth LaPierre, Director of Marketing and Communications  
Donato DiRenzo, Communications Coordinator

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.**



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**Follow us socially. Visit [senecaparkzoo.org](http://senecaparkzoo.org)**

Suzie Webster  
Masai Giraffe

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