

A publication of the Seneca Park Zoo Society

ZOONOZ

JANUARY 2025

CONSERVATION IMPACT
in our community and
around the world

Kristen Matteo
African Penguins

 Seneca Park
Zoo

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

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10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
last entry at 3 p.m.

Membership:
585.336.7212

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

Development:
585.336.7205

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:
Resolutions, Habits,
and Caring

It's that time of year again, when we are setting intentions and resolutions, mostly for our own well-being (a new diet, a new hobby, a new fitness regime). What about also making a resolution to benefit the planet, and wildlife?

If you knew that changing one habit could save African penguins, would you change that habit?

If you had evidence that turning the furnace down in winter, and the AC down in the summer, could help save the sea ice polar bears need to survive as a species, would you?

This issue of ZooNooz delves into several species your Zoo is working to conserve, including what their counterparts in nature are experiencing, and how we are working to ensure these species survive for generations to come.

What do these species have in common? They are all negatively impacted by a warming climate. While there may be disagreements about what is causing climate change, there is little disagreement that our climate is changing. Some say climate change is a normal thing, which is true. We've had warming and cooling, ice ages, and times of higher temperatures. In recent years, however, the rate at which global temperatures are rising has spiked, alarming scientists.

Polar bears have been used often as the face of climate change, as the shrinking sea ice is one of the most visible effects of a warming climate. There are other indications as well, including unprecedented weather events, droughts in some places, and floods in others. We see shifts in bird and monarch butterfly migration, and even the range of wild bees has changed significantly in the last decade. Species like red pandas are finding their range shrinking as they occupy habitats within very narrow temperature ranges. As temperatures rise, they adapt by moving to higher elevations.



Yes, many animals are adapting to climate change. And so can we.

We can also resolve to make it a little easier for the survival of the animals we care about it, by learning more about what's happening, and adopting some new habits that can make a difference.

Why? Because we care. And caring for the animals here at the Zoo means working to conserve these species in nature. Sometimes conservation looks like contributing money to field research or reforestation; sometimes conservation looks like keeping our waterways clean by picking up garbage or ensuring we don't put fertilizer or pet waste into our storm drains.

Sometimes conservation looks like changing habits. A single household turning down their thermostat won't do it. One person trading their auto commute for a bike ride won't do it. But there is power, and hope, in collective action. So take action, and talk about it with your friends and neighbors. Maybe even brag a little about becoming a hero for conservation and let them know what you're doing and why they should, too.

Let us know what action you're taking. Because you care.

See you at the Zoo,

Pamela Reed Sanchez



CONSERVATION IMPACT

in our community &
around the world

By Beth LaPierre, Director of Marketing and Communications



Marie Kraus

Seneca Park Zoo is our region's largest conservation organization, reaching more than 600,000 individuals each year through our conservation education and action programs. The Zoo is also heavily involved in species survival, raising critical funds and awareness for the many threatened species whose continued existence relies on positive, collective human action. This issue of ZooNooz focuses on just a few of those species, including one you'll only find visiting the Zoo during the summer months – the monarch butterfly.

Monarch Butterfly

The Butterfly Beltway is a cornerstone project for Seneca Park Zoo, embodying our commitment to species conservation and habitat preservation. Beyond its ecological impact, this initiative serves as a vital platform for fostering scientific inquiry and sustainable practices. We believe that healthy ecosystems are integral to healthy communities, and our public gardens in Corn Hill along the Genesee River and the Tyshaun Cauldwell Memorial Garden offer welcoming spaces for community scientists and those seeking a serene connection with nature.

Over the past year, the project has made significant strides in habitat restoration. Seeded restoration efforts have expanded to include up to 5 acres in SUNY Brockport and another 5 acres at RIT, where these habitats are part of a long-term study exploring pollinator networks, public health benefits, ecosystem services, and the efficacy of different seeding methods.

Since its inception in 2002, the Butterfly Beltway has rehabilitated and restored over 125 acres of habitats and 350 gardens. Our expanded

Continued on next page



Marie Kratus

spzs.myshopify.com/collections/butterfly-beltway



TJ Harrison

Learn about our region’s pollinators and how they impact growing at our Birds, Bees, and Brews event on May 9. Learn more at senecaparkzoo.org/bbb

native seed offerings now include 10 specialized mixes tailored for specific conditions, such as soil challenges, grow height preferences, and deer resistance, ensuring accessibility and effectiveness for various landscapes.

In 2024, we enhanced our community outreach through pollinator-focused programming at our onsite Nature Cart. Over the summer, we engaged with more than 10,000 guests in meaningful conversations, distributing nearly 1,000 flower seed packets to empower individuals to act in their own backyards.

This ongoing work exemplifies the Zoo’s mission to inspire our community to connect with, care for, and conserve wildlife and wild places. Through innovative partnerships, impactful education, and a shared vision for sustainability, the Butterfly Beltway continues to thrive as a model for conservation leadership.

To learn more visit senecaparkzoo.org/butterflybeltway

You can get involved! Seneca Park Zoo’s Butterfly Beltway program allows individuals to purchase and plant native pollinator gardens. Your Zoo offers a variety of seed mixes. Unlike the seed mixes you see in box stores, our mixes are carefully chosen and geographically focused to our

area. We take great care to include native species that are best suited to thrive in our local environment, ensuring the highest chances of success.

By choosing our seed mixes, you can help support the conservation of local wildlife and create a beautiful, sustainable landscape, as well as supporting our Butterfly Beltway project with sales proceeds.

**See QR code to purchase a seed mix of your own.*

The summer is also a great time to see one of the Zoo's most beloved species, the African penguin. Guests crowd the viewing area just to catch a glimpse of these birds swimming or on penguin beach. Summer Programming also provides guests the opportunity to come face to face with one of our ambassador African penguins to connect with this endangered species, learning about the care they receive from their keepers, their species adaptations (what makes them so amazing), and how to conserve their counterparts in nature, who are critically endangered.

African Penguin

Africa's sole native penguin species has been officially classified as critically endangered in a recent assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In the mid-1950s, an estimated 141,000 breeding pairs—or approximately 282,000 mature individuals—were primarily found on small islands off the coasts of Namibia and South Africa. By 2023, this number had plummeted by 93%, leaving only about 9,900 breeding pairs, or 19,800 individuals.

As of the IUCN's latest assessment in July 2024, the population is estimated at just 1,200 breeding pairs in Namibia and 8,750 pairs in South Africa. The IUCN warns that this downward trend “shows no sign of reversing” and emphasizes the urgent need for immediate conservation efforts.

Many of the extreme weather events we've witnessed in recent years—such as droughts, wildfires, and extreme weather events—are directly linked to climate change, with projections indicating they will only become more frequent and severe. These changes are reshaping ecosystems, including the marine environments of Africa.

The report spotlights African penguins as a stark example of a species deeply affected by climate change. These iconic birds face mounting challenges as their food sources dwindle due to reduced fish stocks, shifts in ocean temperatures and currents, and intense competition with fisheries. Rising sea levels and storm surges are threatening their breeding habitats, while extreme heat and powerful storms endanger their eggs and chicks.

In response to the declining penguin populations, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums rallies its member institutions to champion the fight for African penguin survival. These efforts include building artificial nests to boost penguin populations, developing disaster response plans for oil spills, and tackling critical threats like overfishing, habitat loss, and pollution.

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Seneca Park Zoo is working toward saving African penguins from extinction right here at the Zoo. The Zoo has been a prolific breeding facility, having bred 115 penguins since 1999.



Walter Brooks
African Penguins

In partnership with global allies, AZA institutions including Seneca Park Zoo are driving the mission to Save Animals from Extinction (SAFE) - a comprehensive effort to halt the species' decline. With much of the focus centered in South Africa, where access to penguin colonies is more feasible, the program is addressing the most pressing challenges to these incredible birds' survival. From equipping first responders with essential tools to stabilize and rehabilitate penguins, to setting up specialized disaster plans, support is sent right to the field.

Together, AZA and Seneca Park Zoo are rewriting the future for African penguins, blending science, passion, and global teamwork to ensure these charming seabirds thrive for generations to come. Seneca Park Zoo is working toward saving African penguins from extinction right here at the Zoo. The Zoo has been a prolific breeding facility, having bred 115 penguins since 1999.

You can support African penguins just by visiting the Zoo. Funds are raised at the gate and the Zoo Society donates to the orphan chick programs and other parts of the AZA SAFE program. Seneca Park Zoo also supports the Southern African Foundation for Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB). SANCCOB's mission is to reverse the decline of seabird populations through rescue, rehabilitation, and release of ill, injured, abandoned, and oiled seabirds like the African penguin.



Sandhill Crane

At the Zoo, guests can view and learn about another avian species: sandhill cranes. Sandhill cranes are a migratory bird species that are facing increasing environmental pressures. Historically, they have spent spring breeding season and summer in the northern regions and flown south for the winter. During migration, cranes will assemble at established staging areas and stopover points. The largest such location is the Platte River in the valleys of Nebraska, which hosts an estimated 3/4 of the breeding sandhill crane population from Alaska and Canada. Research suggests that the roosting habitat of the Platte River valley is declining and the migration patterns of sandhill cranes have been adjusted as a response to climate change. We are even seeing this species in our region as they look for new roosting habitat. You can now see these gorgeous birds at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge or even Rochester during migratory periods.

Sandhill cranes are vulnerable to changing precipitation patterns, rising sea levels, erratic weather, wetland drainage, food loss, as well as the conversion of wetland habitat into areas used by humans. Reports of sandhill cranes arriving at their spring migration sites have occurred progressively earlier in recent years. This change in pattern could lead to competition for resources with other migratory waterfowl species in habitats that are being diminished by the effects of climate change. The National Audubon Society projects that the wintering range of sandhill cranes will decline by 58% by 2080 due to climate change. Protecting and restoring wetlands is essential for both humans and wildlife. Wetlands improve water quality by naturally filtering pollutants, control floodwaters, protect from erosion, and store a large amount of carbon dioxide, keeping it out of the atmosphere. Restoring these habitats will help the beloved sandhill crane but also the future of our planet.



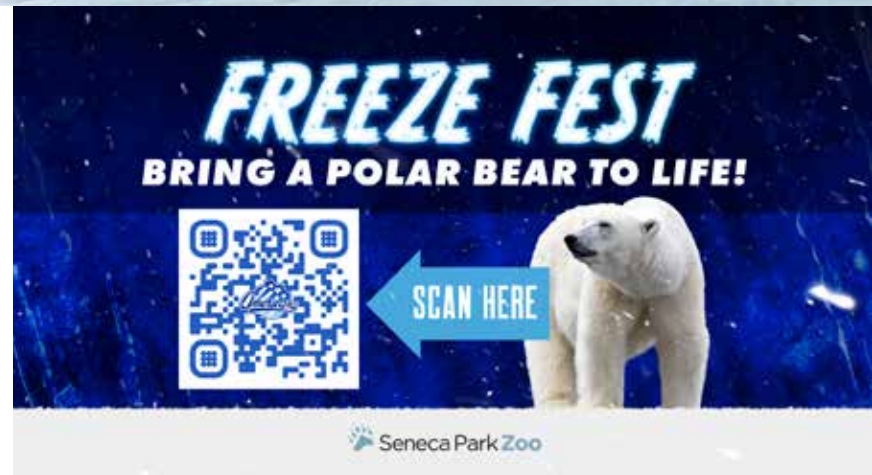
Sandhill Crane



Polar Bear



Watch Polar Bears International cams here!



Polar Bear

Climate change is also impacting the Arctic where polar bears at Churchill, Canada end their summer fast by venturing out on sea ice to hunt and eat seals. As of November 2024, no sea ice had formed in the Hudson Bay region, meaning the bears were still on the shore waiting to end their fast. Churchill's mayor remarked that the bay had never iced over this late. In 2024, polar bears had been off sea ice for more than 100 days. The fasting season for polar bears, the time spent off the shore and away from seal prey, has lengthened substantially in the past decade. An important fasting threshold is around 180 days, the limit at which up to 21% of adult males and 63% of cubs could starve to death.

Seneca Park Zoo supports Polar Bears International (PBI), a non-profit dedicated to helping secure a future for polar bears across the Arctic, through our yearly Defend the Ice partnership with the Rochester Americans hockey team. Zoo Naturalists and volunteers staff tables in Blue Cross Arena, educating fans on PBI, arctic sea ice loss, and what they can do to help. Join us at an Amerks home game this February to learn more.

Arena graphics feature the Zoo and facts about polar bears and sea ice conservation. In the winter of 2024, we even put a polar bear on the ice during home games throughout the month of February! Check it out by scanning the QR code.

Over the past decade, Seneca Park Zoo has donated more than \$300,000 to conservation partners and projects around the world. In addition, the Zoo's conservation education programs work to create the next generation of environmental stewards right here in our community. No other organization in the Greater Rochester Region offers the same breadth of conservation-focused teaching. The Zoo contributes to world-class science including nation-wide studies on urban wildlife diversity, cutting-edge science on plastics pollution, successful collaborations that have repopulated river otters and sturgeon in the Genesee watershed, and transformative initiatives that protect wildlife and biodiversity around the world. Through hands-on habitat remediation, conservation science, and broad, accessible education, the Zoo helps prepare the greater Rochester region for a sustainable future and for the impacts of climate change.

Thank you to the many corporate, foundation, and organization partners who make our Education and Conservation Programming and our Special Events possible. Thank you for investing in us and all the important work we do!

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Visit senecaparkzoo.org to see how your company can get involved.

CALENDAR

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

► 2025 MEMBER T-SHIRTS

AVAILABLE NOW

The 2025 Seneca Park Zoo member t-shirt is available now! This year's featured animal is a swimming 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. This summer, the Zoo's Urban Ecologists used eDNA technology to test the Genesee River and its tributaries for North American river otter DNA. The river otter is bioindicator and their presence can help gauge ecosystem health, which is wildly important to conservation in our region.

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



► MARCH MEMBER BRING-A-GUEST WEEKENDS

MARCH 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, 30

Share your love of the Zoo by bringing a friend. Every Saturday and Sunday in March, you can bring one additional guest per membership. *If your guest joins as a member during their visit, we will add one extra month to both of your memberships!*



North American river otter

GET YOUR 2025 MEMBER T-SHIRT NOW!

EDUCATION

► KINDERZOO

[SEE WEBSITE](#)

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 – 3 years & 3 - 5 years

Dates: See website to check availability & register

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/kinderzoo



► WILDLIFE ACTION CREW

**MONARCHS & HABITAT LOSS -
JAN 8, 15, 22, 29, FEB 5, 12**

**BENEFITS OF BIODIVERSITY -
MAR 5, 12, 19, 26, APR 2, 9**

Wildlife Action Crew is a 6-class series for teenagers interested in animals and conservation. Teens conduct a conservation case study, learning about and discussing a conservation issue, and working in groups to create campaigns to promote their message.

Ages: 13 to 18-year-olds

Price: \$55 for Zoo members, \$60 for non-members

When: Wednesdays 6 – 8 p.m. (6 weeks)

Winter Session: Monarchs & Habitat Loss – January 8, 15, 22, 29 and February 5, 12

Spring Session: Benefits of Biodiversity – March 5, 12, 19, 26, 29, and April 2, 9

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/wildlife



▶ DAY-OFF ZOOCAMP

JAN 20 AROUND THE WORLD

School is out, so come to the Zoo instead! We will spend the day traveling around the world exploring different regions and discovering the animals and habitats that make each area unique! It's like Summer ZooCamp in a single day!

Ages: 5-9

Dates: Jan 20

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/zoocamp



Amanda Lindley

▶ BREAK WEEK ZOOCAMP

FEBRUARY 17-21/APRIL 14-18

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 explore nature and animals, create projects, share ideas, and make new friends.

Ages: 5-9

Dates: Feb 17-21 Creatures of the Night
Apr 14-18 Lifecycles

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/zoocamp



Amanda Lindley

▶ SUMMER ZOOCAMP

CHECK WEBSITE FOR DATES

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 & camp themes)

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/summercamp



▶ GIRL SCOUT & CUB SCOUT WORKSHOPS

JAN 25, FEB 2, APRIL 6, APRIL 27, MAY 4
OR PLAN YOUR OWN DATE (SEPT. - MAY)

We offer an array of workshops for girl scouts and cub scouts. During a workshop scouts will earn badge requirements while exploring the Zoo and meeting ambassador animals in our classroom.

Dates: Jan 25, Feb 2, April 6, April 27, May 4 or plan your own date (September – May)

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/scouts



Wayne Smith

▶ SCOUTS BSA MERIT BADGE WORKSHOP: BIRD STUDY

APRIL 5

During this workshop scouts will discover how birds can be indicators of the health of an ecosystem. We will practice our naturalist skills as we identify birds and sketch them in field notebooks. This workshop is taught by a certified merit badge counselor.

Date: April 5

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/scouts



Laura Barrows

▶ ZOOTEEN PROGRAM

APPLICATION DEADLINE MAY 1

The ZooTeen program gives young adults the opportunity to work together with like-minded peers from around the region, along 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 2025 are open until May 1!

Deadline May 1

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/teens



Wayne Smith

▶ GROUP TREK IN THE TWILIGHT

JAN 11, FEB 28, APR. 5, 25, MAY 2

Calling all scout leaders and youth groups! Trek in the Twilight starts by fueling up with some dinner, and then the evening is filled with activities, an up-close animal experience, and a guided Zoo tour.

Dates: Jan 11, Feb 28, Apr. 5, 25, May 2 or request your own date

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

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/trek



Jason Abel

▶ FAMILY TREK IN THE TWILIGHT

APRIL 11

Bring your family to our after-hours Trek in the Twilight! We start by fueling up with some dinner, and then the evening is filled with activities, an close animal experience, and a guided Zoo tour.

Dates: April 11

Pick Your Own Date (September - May)

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

Price: \$65 per adult-child pair, \$30 per additional guest

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

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/trek



Jason Abel

EVENTS

► CONSERVATION AWARENESS DAYS

SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

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!

February 22-23: Polar Bear Weekend

April 19: Earth Day

May 17-18: Endangered Species Weekend

June 21: Giraffe Day

July 12-13: Oceans Weekend

July 26-27: Genesee Weekend

August 16: Golden Frog Day/Rana Dorado Festival

August 17: Reptile Day

September 20-21: Elephant & Rhino Weekend

October 4-5: Cold Asia Weekend

► COMMUNITY CLEANUPS

MARCH 22/APRIL 19/MORE DATES COMING SOON!

Join like-minded neighbors to help clean-up our local green spaces. You'll be amazed at the impact you 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. All ages are welcome to attend. The Seneca Park Zoo will be hosting at least one cleanup a month starting in March 2025. Keep an eye on our website as more dates are posted!

Dates: March 22/April 19/More dates coming soon

Register: senecaparkzoo.org/cleanup



► BIRDS, BEES & BREWS TASTING EVENT

MAY 9

Raise a glass and celebrate spring at our Birds, Bees, and Brews tasting event! Stroll the Zoo after-hours as you sample some of our region's best brews – from cider and beer to local coffee and kombucha. Enjoy live music, festive food, meet animal ambassadors, and chat with naturalists, all in support of Seneca Park Zoo! 21+, early-bird tickets on sale March 1!

Date: May 9, 2025

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/bbb



Jason Abel

► ZOOBREW

JUNE 20/JULY 11/AUGUST 15/SEPTEMBER 5

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.

Dates: June 20, July 11, August 15, September 5

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/zoobrew



David Jorgensen

► RISE & SHINE CART TOURS

**APRIL 5 & APRIL 27
(MORE DATES TO COME FOR MAY)**

Come wake up with the zoo for a guided golf cart tour and experience the zoo as the animals are starting their day. This tour is 90-minutes long and you'll learn about the animals that call the Seneca Park Zoo home.

Dates: April 5 & 27

Learn More: senecaparkzoo.org/riseandshine



A publication of the Seneca Park Zoo Society

ZOONOOZ

JANUARY 2025



Suzie Webster
Canada Lynx

Seneca Park Zoo Society

2222 St. Paul Street
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senecaparkzoo.org



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Designer: Amanda Lindley

Contributing writers:

Pamela Reed Sanchez, President and CEO, Seneca Park Zoo Society
Beth LaPierre, Director of Marketing and Communications

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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