

# Alive



## Inside

Waking from Winter Slumber

Plight of the Polar Bears

Zoo Blooms

Gorilla Baby Mesmerizes

"Zoo School" for Toddlers

The mission of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee is to participate in conserving endangered species, to educate people about the importance of wildlife and the environment, and to support the Milwaukee County Zoo.

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**CEO's Letter**



At the Milwaukee County Zoo, care for the animals is paramount. We at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) love when we can contribute to efforts to improve animal health and management. The story on page 9 offers a perfect example. The Zoo's Animal Health Center wanted to convert its analog X-ray equipment to digital. The ZSM found an anonymous donor, made a proposal and secured a \$110,000 donation. The new equipment is state-of-the-art, allowing the Zoo to preserve X-rays in digital format and easily share results with other zoos. It also includes a portable system,

which will allow more animals to receive X-rays right in their exhibits. This reduces the amount of anesthesia needed and the stress of transporting animals to the Animal Health Center.

Concern for the animals is also the reason the Zoo allows its bears to hibernate each winter. Some zoos keep their bears awake so they will be on exhibit year-round, but the Milwaukee County Zoo allows the animals to exhibit their natural winter sleeping patterns. You can read more about the hibernation process on page 8.

But spring is fast approaching, which means it's time for the bears to wake up. It's also time to start thinking about flowers! Check out the beautiful photo spread on pages 6 and 7 showing the work of the Zoo's horticulture team, led by Noah Huber. This summer you'll be able to see more of Noah's handiwork at the special summer exhibit on dinosaurs, where you'll also see life-size, prehistoric creatures (page 3).

Whether it's the fauna or the flora that you enjoy most, I hope you get your fill of it at the Zoo this spring and summer.

*Robert Davis*

Dr. Robert Davis, President & Chief Executive Officer



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**On the Cover:** Alaskan brown bear Borealis, known as Boris for short.

Photo by Richard Brodzeller

# BUILDING LIFE-SIZE GIANTS

The dinosaurs tower over the people who come to stare at them. They snort, raise their heads and even spit at unsuspecting observers. No, it's not the latest "Jurassic Park" movie – it's the Milwaukee County Zoo's special summer exhibit, full of the most realistic dinosaurs you'll see outside of Hollywood.

In fact, the dinosaurs at Expedition Dinosaur, sponsored by Sendik's Food Markets, are carefully researched by Billings Productions Inc., an animatronics exhibit company just outside of Dallas, Texas. Dinosaurs last visited Milwaukee in 2012. This year's exhibit will feature about 20 prehistoric creations, including seven that are brand-new to Milwaukee audiences.

A lot of thought goes into deciding which dinosaurs to make, says Robby Gilbert, Billings director of exhibit displays. "We'll talk to zoos about what they want. As research comes out or a new creature gets found, there's always something new and exciting." The company's newest dinosaur is a diablo-ceratops, a creature with two long, curved horns on top of its neck frill that was an early cousin of the triceratops. The company picked diablo-ceratops because the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the main accrediting agency for American zoos, will hold its 2015 annual meeting in Utah, where the dinosaur was discovered in 2002.

"Once we have an animal in mind, we start our research process," Gilbert says. "A lot of it is online and reading scientific papers. If we're lucky enough, we reach out to paleontologists and ask them for guidance." For example, the company contacted Dr. Heinrich Mallison, a German paleontologist, in 2012 when it created a plateosaurus. It sent Mallison pictures of its clay models and incorporated his feedback about the dinosaur's posture, tail, hands and feet. "We look at every little thing we can," Gilbert says.

The company builds its first model, or "maquette," out of clay at 1 or 2 feet tall. The maquette can go through several versions before the life-size one is built. At that point, employees scan the maquette into computer software that directs machinery to cut out giant foam blocks to make the basic shape. The blocks are put over a steel frame, and then sculptors put a quarter-inch to half-inch of clay on top. "That's where we get all of our details, such as scales or any features we're looking at," Gilbert says.

The company added a new material a few years ago when it introduced its first feathered dinosaur, a citipati that will be part of the Milwaukee exhibit. "It's now widely accepted that birds are modern dinosaurs, which is incredible," Gilbert says. "You're seeing a shift, especially in these predatory, raptor-like dinosaurs, away from the leathery skin to a feathered, furred creature. It's pretty neat."

This small clay model, or maquette, of a plateosaurus was later turned into a life-size exhibit.

Photo provided by Billings Productions



The production company contacted a German paleontologist for advice on making its plateosaurus as realistic as possible.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBIT:

Expedition Dinosaur, sponsored by Sendik's Food Markets, runs May 23-Sept. 7 behind the Zoo's Small Mammals Building. Admission is \$2.50 per person. See the April-May issue of Wild Things to learn more about this year's batch of dinosaurs.

Photo provided by Billings Productions



Stock image

Diablo-ceratops, discovered in 2002, is the company's newest dinosaur.

By Stacy Vogel Davis

# PLIGHT OF THE POLAR BEARS



The author saw a mother polar bear with her two cubs nearly every day while she was in Churchill in fall 2014.

*Kara DeLanty, a zookeeper at the Milwaukee County Zoo, is a field ambassador for the conservation group Polar Bears International. For each of the past two years, she has spent two weeks in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, during polar bear migration season to educate tourists about the plight of polar bears. Here is her account of her fall 2014 visit.*

As I walked through the doors of the Churchill airport Oct. 15, two of my friends immediately rushed toward me and swallowed me up in a big bear hug (no pun intended). This was my third trip to the “polar bear capital of the world,” so it was beginning to feel cozy and familiar in spite of the frigid temperatures.

I first traveled to Churchill in Manitoba, Canada, in 2009 to attend a weeklong workshop held by Polar Bears International (PBI). For the past two years, I have spent two weeks each October back in Churchill volunteering for PBI as an “in-field ambassador” with support from the Milwaukee County Zoo. My job was to travel onto the tundra each day on a Tundra Buggy, a bus-size all-terrain vehicle operated by Canadian tourism company Frontiers North Adventures. I educated tourists about the issues facing polar bears in the wild while we observed them in their natural habitat.

This past year was a particularly good time to be in Churchill. Aside from seeing several polar bears each day, I saw abundant wildlife I hadn’t seen during my previous two visits. There were Arctic hare, ptarmigan (a partridge-like bird), Arctic foxes and snowy owls galore. We even had the rare opportunity to witness a gyrfalcon attack and kill a snow bunting (an Arctic songbird). It is difficult to put into words just how pristine and untamed the Arctic looks and feels.

That is why it was shocking to see a large pile of garbage in the middle of the untouched landscape one day. One of the Tundra Buggy drivers did a quick check for polar bears in the area, then climbed down to the ground to pick up the eyesore. It was a bunch of helium balloons that said “BIG SALE!” that had gotten entangled on a willow tree. Churchill is in the middle of nowhere, by no means a shopping mecca. Where did the balloons come from? Winnipeg? Minneapolis? Somewhere even farther away?

Those balloons turned into the perfect analogy to teach tourists about how our actions in areas far away from the tundra can reach that fragile ecosystem. The Earth’s atmosphere acts like a giant blanket that surrounds our entire planet. Left alone, it is the perfect thickness to keep us at a balanced temperature. However, if we continue to add excessive amounts of greenhouse gases to it, such as carbon dioxide, the “blanket” will thicken even more than it already has and heat our planet to dangerous levels. This warming is melting the sea ice that polar bears depend on for survival, mainly because they use it as a hunting platform. This is why the burning of fossil fuels anywhere on the planet, including right here in Milwaukee, is affecting sea ice in the Arctic.

Although I have delivered this message many times in my home community, I feel like it had an even bigger impact in Churchill. People are there from all over the world, and they gain inspiration from the wild polar bears right outside their windows. Polar bears congregate in large numbers in the Churchill region during October and November while they wait for the ice to freeze on Hudson Bay. They’re extremely hungry, as they have been fasting for more than 100 days. Most of the time, they conserve energy

by napping, but they also occasionally play fight. The real showstopper is when a bear decides to give a little “buggy love” by standing on its hind legs with the front paws against the vehicle’s side!

Luckily, most of the bears I saw during my last trip looked healthy and strong. This included a mom and two first-year cubs I saw almost every day for the two weeks I was there. Every time I saw them, I felt a combination of happiness and concern. On one hand, they were amazingly beautiful, and I felt honored to be able to see them in the wild. On another, I worried that there



might be a late freeze on Hudson Bay that could lead to their demise. Fortunately, this was a good season for the sea ice, but scientists are concerned that this might not be so every year. For now, I will cherish all of the memories I have of Churchill and its bears and do my part to help save their sea-ice habitat.

*By Kara DeLanty*



Animals such as ptarmigan (above), Arctic hare, Arctic foxes and snowy owls also inhabit the region.



Left: Tourists observe a polar bear up close in a Tundra Buggy in Churchill, Canada.



Kara DeLanty has some fun with a polar bear skull with driver Neil Mumby.

A polar bear gives some “buggy love” to the Tundra Buggy.



## YOU CAN HELP

Like Kara, you can do your part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and preserve the Arctic habitat, home to polar bears and many other animals.

Here are some suggestions from Polar Bears International:

- Switch to energy-saving LED or compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Replace old appliances with Energy Star-qualified ones.
- Unplug electronics when not in use or use “smart” power strips.
- Commute to work or school by bike or public transportation.
- Use a programmable thermostat to reduce heating and cooling at night or when you’re not home. Consider setting the temperature two degrees higher in summer and two degrees lower in winter.
- Properly insulate, caulk and weather-strip your home to prevent air leaks.

For more suggestions and to learn more about polar bears, visit [polarbearsinternational.org](http://polarbearsinternational.org).

# Keeping the Zoo Colorful

If you're a gardener, you're probably thinking about seeds, dirt and flower beds right about now. But Zoo horticulturist Noah Huber spends all year plotting the flowers, shrubs and other greenery dotting the 200 acres of the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Huber's job is a gardener's dream. Since 1997 he has worked closely with the rest of the Zoo's grounds team to keep the Zoo looking fresh and green. He and his crew of eight to 15 people (depending on the season) handle about 50 flower beds with 35,000 plants, 150 potted plants and hanging baskets, and 10 acres of grass. They also grow plants for indoor exhibits, most notably in the primate and bird buildings, and plan floral decorations for Easter, Halloween, Christmas and other special occasions. They work year-round in three greenhouses with about 5,000 total square feet of space. They even grow plants above the indoor hippo and Malayan tapir exhibits, Huber says. "If there's a space to grow, we use it."

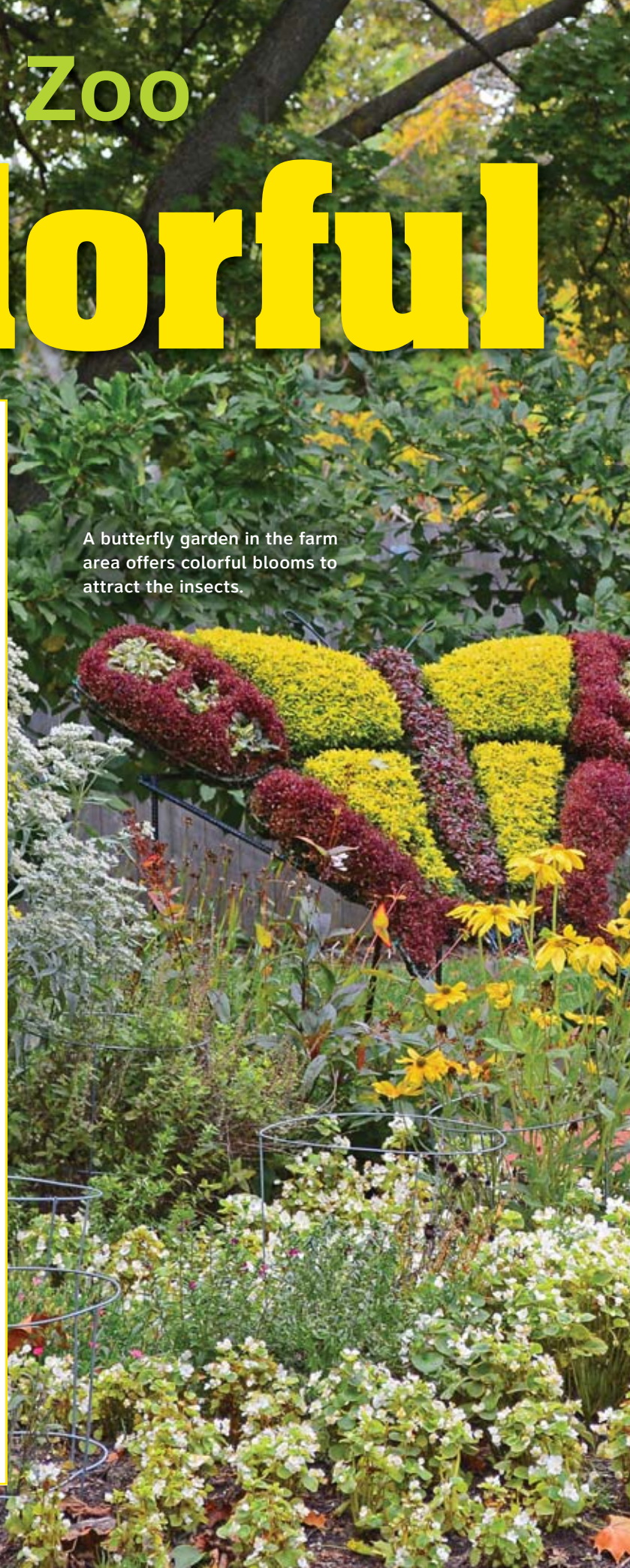
Huber and Ann Hackbarth, another Zoo horticulturist who retired in 2014, have made major changes to the Zoo's greenery over the last 15 years, adding color and flair. They incorporated their work into large projects at the Zoo, including the U.S. Bank Gathering Place, Lakeview Place Restaurant and the Northwestern Mutual Family Farm. Topiaries – plants trained into specific shapes and displays – showing everything from a train to a butterfly to the word "Zoo" now dot the grounds. This summer, Huber and his team will create a green setting for the special summer exhibit on dinosaurs. (A dinosaur topiary from a previous dinosaur exhibit already resides near the aviary pond.)

Some displays stay the same from year to year, while others change annually or seasonally. "Most beds have spring, summer and fall versions," Huber says. You'll know spring has arrived when the pansies go out around mid-to late April. This year, Huber is planning to add pink pansies in some areas to the standard yellows and blues.

In the meantime, enjoy this photo spread showing the glorious displays Huber and his team create around the Zoo. Make sure to visit this spring and summer to see your favorite flora and check out what's new!

*By Stacy Vogel Davis*

A butterfly garden in the farm area offers colorful blooms to attract the insects.



The horticulture team creates displays for major holidays such as Easter, Halloween and Christmas.



Photo by Stacy Vogel Davis



Horticulturist Noah Huber and his staff create green settings for indoor animals, too, including the birds in the Herb & Nada Mahler Family Aviary.

Photo by Richard Brodzeller



# Time to Welcome Back the Bears

By the third week of November, many of us are preparing for Thanksgiving dinner. It's estimated the average person consumes 3,000 calories during the meal – far more nourishment than anybody needs in a single day! But that's nothing compared to how much American black bears consume during hyperphagia, the phase from late summer to November when they gorge on the equivalent of 15,000-20,000 calories per day. Bears do this to prepare for hibernation, when they sleep from late November to late March or early April. The reason bears hibernate is simple: There's not enough food available during winter.

Like their brethren in the wild, the Milwaukee County Zoo's two black bears, two Alaskan brown bears and four grizzlies have been hibernating since fall. (Polar bear Snow Lilly and Asiatic black bear Hot Lips do not hibernate.) The bears arrange

their straw bedding as they see fit, says Dawn Fleuchaus, Zoo area supervisor of North America and Australia. "It's placed in their dens behind their exhibits; visitors can't see them hibernating." The bears need no encouragement to build their dens because they're genetically programmed to do so.

Not all zoos allow their bears to hibernate because they want visitors to see bears year-round. "We allow them to hibernate because it's the most natural thing for them to do," says Fleuchaus. "It's healthy and we don't want them to fight nature." But just because bears hibernate doesn't mean they don't wake up. "They get up occasionally and come outside when the temperatures are mild," says Fleuchaus. "If they need to rehydrate, they often eat snow."

There's more to hibernation than splurging on food and going to sleep. Hibernation has five stages:

1. During spring and summer – which varies depending on latitude and temperature – bears eat 5,000-8,000 calories per day.
2. When bears enter hyperphagia in late summer, they also drink up to several gallons of water per day. They urinate profusely to rid themselves of waste.
3. Following hyperphagia, metabolic rates change in preparation for hibernation. Bears eat less but continue to drink to purge wastes. Bears start resting up to 22 hours per day. Their heart rates, while awake, fall from 80-100 beats per minute to



Alaskan brown bears Aurora and Borealis snooze in the fall sun as they prepare for hibernation.

A grizzly bear lies atop a mound of straw that zookeepers put in the bear's den for hibernation.

Zookeeper Laurie Talakowski spreads straw in the grizzly bear den in preparation for winter hibernation.



## Learn More About Hibernation

Bear hibernation is the theme at Zootastic! on April 24, sponsored by Grow Hope@SaintA. This after-hours fundraiser takes place at the Milwaukee County Zoo and offers tons of family-friendly entertainment. For details, check out your Wild Things newsletter packaged with this publication.

- 50-60 beats per minute. When sleeping, heart rates dip to 22 beats per minute.
4. Then hibernation sets in, although it's not a true hibernation. The bears go into what is known as torpor, a deep sleep that can be interrupted by a loud noise or if they're moved or touched. During true hibernation, an animal's body temperature matches the outside temperature. But bears' temperature remains at 88 degrees (down from a normal temperature of about 100 degrees). During this phase bears burn some 4,000 calories per day.
  5. When they emerge from hibernation in spring they enter the final phase, known as walking hibernation. It lasts from two to three weeks. As their metabolism adjusts to normal summer levels, bears start eating and drinking again.

"We expect the bears to emerge from their dens soon," says Fleuchaus. "Just like in the wild, they're going to show interest in eating." If you've missed seeing your favorite bears, now is a great time to come to the Zoo and wish them "good morning!"

By Zak Mazur



# X-RAYS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The machine looks like the kind of thing you would set to “stun” in a sci-fi movie. But this equipment is meant to help heal, not hurt. It’s a handheld X-ray generator, part of a package of digital radiography and ultrasound equipment that is dramatically improving diagnostic care at the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Dr. Roberta Wallace, the Zoo’s senior staff veterinarian, had been hoping to upgrade the Animal Health Center (AHC) to digital equipment for a while. “Digital radiography is becoming the standard,” she says. “It’s getting harder and harder to even get the replacement parts for analog equipment.” The Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) found an anonymous donor willing to donate \$110,000 for the technology, which arrived this winter. “Thanks to the generous donation, we took a giant step forward in upgrading our equipment,” Wallace says.

Zoo veterinarians and technicians take X-rays and perform ultrasounds almost every day, Wallace says. The handheld machine and other portable equipment will allow them to X-ray more animals in their exhibits, eliminating the need to transport the animals to the AHC. They can even develop the X-rays on site, so they don’t have to wait for someone to go back to the AHC and develop the film to see if it’s clear enough for interpretation. All this significantly reduces the amount of time an animal has to be under anesthesia. That’s important, Wallace says, because the longer an animal is under anesthesia, the more risk there is to the animal and staff, especially with larger animals such as polar bears.

The equipment is more powerful, creating better images. For example, one of the portable machines is powerful enough to X-ray an elephant’s foot. Once the image is obtained, the staff can zoom

in and lighten or darken certain spots to better identify problems, similar to the way a photographer can manipulate digital photos. Plus, staff no longer have to store and use hazardous chemicals to develop the film. “This is by far easier, more efficient and better quality,” Wallace says. The Zoo can easily send the digital images to other zoos or consultants to help diagnose problems and share case studies.

The donor was especially interested in how the equipment will help great apes, says Penny Gutekunst, ZSM vice president of development. “The donor told us they love any kind of apes, bonobos in particular. It seemed like a natural connection.” The new equipment will help with general care of the apes and research for the Milwaukee Ape Heart Project, part of a nationwide effort to study the problem of heart disease in apes. Unlike the old portable ultrasound machine, the new one is powerful enough to penetrate a gorilla’s chest for an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart). Many of the Zoo’s bonobos and gorillas are trained to undergo annual echocardiograms without anesthesia to monitor their heart health.

The new equipment will also be helpful for the Zoo’s veterinary residents. The ZSM, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine and the Zoo, funds several residency programs at the Animal Health Center. “We are a teaching hospital, and we need to have the equipment that is standard for a modern veterinary school,” Wallace says. “We’re training the next generation of zoo veterinarians.”

*By Stacy Vogel Davis*

Above: A new handheld generator is lighter for Zoo staff to carry and allows them to X-ray smaller animals quickly and easily in their exhibits.

Dr. Roberta Wallace examines an X-ray of a bird using new digital software. The unit behind the computer allows the staff to develop digital X-rays in seconds.

# Kids Alive

## GO ON A DINOSAUR EXPEDITION!

Dinosaurs might not be around today, but scientists are still learning more about them every day. Paleontologists study fossils - remnants and impressions left in rock by living things from prehistoric times. You can make your own fossils and have a "dinosaur dig" in your backyard. This summer, visit realistic dinosaur creations at the Zoo's special summer exhibit, Expedition Dinosaur, sponsored by Sendik's Food Markets.



### T. REX MAZE

Tyrannosaurus rex was one of the largest carnivores that ever lived at 40 feet long and 15 to 20 feet tall. Can you find your way through the king of the dinosaurs in this maze?

## EXPEDITION DINOSAUR

Expedition Dinosaur, the Zoo's special summer exhibit sponsored by Sendik's Food Markets, runs May 23-Sept. 7. Admission is \$2.50 per person.

## MAKE A DINOSAUR FOSSIL

Trace fossils are formed when organic matter such as leaves, shells or bones leave impressions in rock. You can make imitation trace fossils with salt dough.

### YOU WILL NEED:

3 cups of flour

1 cup of salt

1½ cups of warm water

Mixing bowl and spoon

Wax paper

Items to create fossils

Acrylic paint (optional)

1. Mix the salt and flour in a bowl. Slowly stir in the warm water. If the dough is too sticky, add flour. If it's too dry, add water. Dough should be firm - about the consistency of Play-Doh.
2. Grab a small handful of dough, roll it in a ball and flatten it with your palm on the wax paper.
3. Press items into the dough to form the fossils. Try using shells, leaves, toy dinosaurs or cookie cutters. You can make a dinosaur footprint with your hand. Helpful hint: Put flour on your hands to keep them from sticking to the fossils.
4. Let the fossils dry for at least 24 hours or bake them in the oven at 250 degrees for about an hour to an hour and a half. (Drying time varies depending on thickness.) Paint the fossils with acrylic paint if desired. Remember, real fossils aren't perfect, and yours don't have to be, either!

Parents, you can create a dinosaur dig for your kids by hiding the completed fossils in a sandbox or the backyard. Hide toy dinosaurs and plastic Easter eggs ("dinosaur eggs") to add to the fun.

## DINOSAURS OF A FEATHER

Scientists now believe many dinosaurs had feathers and are related to modern-day birds. They're unsure if the feathers were used for warmth or mating displays. You can make a textured picture of a citipati, a feathered dinosaur that will be at the Zoo's special summer exhibit. Go to [zoosociety.org/dinofeather](http://zoosociety.org/dinofeather) to print out the citipati drawing. (For best results, print on thicker paper such as cardstock or glue the printout to a piece of construction paper.) Glue craft feathers in the area outlined in green, then color in the rest of the dinosaur and the background.



CITIPATI

Photo provided by Billings Productions



Photo by Stacy Kaat

## Meet Beth Rich

**Title:** Deputy director, animal management and health, at the Milwaukee County Zoo

**Hometown:** San Diego, Calif.

**Age:** 43

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of California-Santa Barbara and master's degree in conservation education from San Diego State University

**Previous zoos:** San Diego Zoo and Safari Park; Racine Zoo; Tautphaus Park Zoo in Idaho Falls, Idaho

**Family:** Her husband, Matt Rich, has also worked in zoos. They have a cat, cockatiel and parakeet at home.

**Hobbies:** Horseback riding and travel. She has been to South Africa several times and went to Vietnam in 2013. She'd like to rent an RV and travel around the U.S. someday.

# A Passion for Animals and People

Asking Beth Rich to choose a favorite animal is like asking a mother to choose a favorite child. As a zookeeper, she loved to work with primates, she says. She's "enraptured" by the king cobra in the Aquatic & Reptile Center. When it comes to birds, she's a self-described "penguin-aholic." "It's tough to pick one animal, and because of my position, I really shouldn't have a favorite," she says.

That position is the new deputy Zoo director of animal management and health at the Milwaukee County Zoo. In her role, Rich manages a collection of more than 2,000 animals, animal facilities and programming, and a staff of 70, including curators, veterinarians and zookeepers. The job requires someone good with people and animals, says Chuck Wikenhauser, Zoo director. "We've got curators and veterinarians with animal expertise, but we needed someone who could manage people, too," he says. Rich stood out because she worked her way from the bottom up, from zookeeper to director of a small zoo in Idaho.

Rich has been close to animals all her life. She grew up near one of the most renowned zoos in the world, the San Diego Zoo in California. She rode horses as a child and volunteered at a veterinary hospital in high school. "I was one of those kids – much to the chagrin of my mother – who was always bringing home lizards," she says.

She started her career close to home as an educator at the San Diego Zoo and nearby San Diego Zoo Safari Park, but eventually she realized she wanted to work more directly with animals. She served as a keeper in San Diego in several areas, including the Center for the Reproduction of Endangered Species, where she got to help rear endangered animals. In 2007, she came to the Racine Zoo as animal care supervisor. From there she became general curator and later superintendent of Tautphaus Park Zoo, a 7-acre zoo in Idaho Falls, Idaho. (The Milwaukee County Zoo is about 200 acres.)

The Milwaukee position opened up when long-time Deputy Director Dr. Bruce Beehler retired in 2014. Rich liked the idea of working at a bigger zoo. "Milwaukee County Zoo has a good reputation," she says. "That was a big attraction." Zoo officials were impressed by Rich's strong organizational skills and passion for the job, Wikenhauser says. She's active in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Zoo's accrediting agency, particularly in the areas of animal enrichment and training.

Animal enrichment – finding ways to keep animals engaged and active – has been an area of heavy focus in recent years as zoos learn more about animals' psychological needs. The Milwaukee County Zoo already offers enrichment to animals through games, treats and toys, but Wikenhauser hopes Rich will help formalize the enrichment program. "We need to be sure the enrichment we're doing is effective," he says. "You always want a learning experience for the animals."

Rich also hopes to be part of educational efforts at the Zoo. She expects to work closely with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM), which runs Zoo classes, camps and school outreach through its Conservation Education Department. She'd like to help the zookeepers become more comfortable interacting with visitors and boost the Zoo's educational animal collection, housed in the Northwestern Mutual Family Farm.

"I'm excited about the addition of Beth to our Zoo and very glad to see her passion for education," says Dr. Bert Davis, ZSM president and CEO. "As we continue to evolve and enhance our role as leaders in conservation and education, she will be critical to our success."



Clockwise from top: The Zoo's white-faced whistling ducks respond to Beth Rich's whistle. Rich, a self-described "penguin-aholic," checks on a baby gentoo penguin. Rich learns about food preparation for the Zoo's birds. Photos by Bob Wickland

Alex Waier, curator of birds and the Family Farm, says he's excited to hear Rich's ideas and get her perspective from her work at other zoos. She has jumped enthusiastically into a demanding role and handled it well so far, he says. "She's a very can-do person. Coming from a smaller institution where she wore many different hats, she's well-versed in many areas of zoo operations."

Rich sees her role as helping everybody else – people and animals alike – do their jobs to the best of their abilities. Together, they will help tell the critical story of nature and conservation in the wild. "I have to tell the story of the animals," she says. "My animals here, and then the bigger picture of animals all over the world."

*By Stacy Vogel Davis*



# Meeting Kids at Their Level

When I signed up my 2-year-old for Zoo class, I wasn't sure how he would do in a classroom setting. Calvin is what we affectionately call a "runner" – full of energy and always on the go. And that's OK, says MaryLynn Conter Strack, education coordinator for the Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM). Zoo classes are professionally designed by the ZSM Conservation Education Department to meet the developmental needs of children in each age group, from Stroller Safaris for infants to full-day classes for teenagers.

Calvin was excited for days before we went to "horse class" last fall. Classes for 2-year-olds, which include a parent or grandparent, are stuffed with hands-on activities that last a few minutes each, perfect for toddlers with short attention spans. "For 2- and 3-year-olds, learning happens through play," Conter Strack says. So for horse class, the kids create stick horses and then practice riding them. The teacher tells them what horses eat, but they also "feed" toy horses out of a trough filled with real hay. "We address multiple learning styles in all of our classes," Conter Strack says. "We have things for children who are kinesthetic, who need to move in order to learn, and activities for kids who are visual or auditory learners."



(Top) Quinn F., of Milwaukee, creates a horse booklet at a Zoo class for 2-year-olds.

(Middle) The author and her son, Calvin, identify body parts on a plush horse.

(Left) Grace P., of West Bend, rides a stick horse she made in Zoo class.

The learning starts at the door with teacher Molly Del Vecchio. She asks Calvin his name, what animal they'll be learning about and what kind of sound it makes, prompting an excited "Neigh!" from Calvin. First up is choice time, when the children pick from stations such as finger-painting a horse, creating a horse book or playing with barnyard puzzles. Calvin loves feeding the toy horses.

Next is circle time. Calvin eagerly sits at the circle, but not every child does, Conter Strack says. The teachers tell parents it's OK if children remain at an activity station.

"We can tell they're paying attention from wherever they are," she says. "They're just learning in a different way." The children identify body parts on a plush horse. Then it's time to make the stick horses. The materials are prepared ahead of time, leaving simple, age-appropriate tasks such as coloring the horse's face and attaching sticky-tape hair. After more choice time, everyone gathers again for a rhyming

story about horses and a snack of potato-chip strings serving as "hay."

Finally, it's the moment every child has been waiting for: a trip to see a real horse up close! Children and parents traipse to the Northwestern Mutual Family Farm to visit Gypsy, an Arabian horse. Each child gets a quick chance to pat Gypsy on the neck. Calvin gets a high-five from "Miss Molly" to say good-bye, and then we're ready to enjoy the rest of the Zoo.

We've been to several other classes this year, learning about cows, turtles and the Zoo train. As a working mom, I appreciate the chance to spend this quality time with my son. He's always eager to tell his dad and grandparents about what he learned and made at the classes. He talks about them for weeks afterward, and it's fun to reminisce about these special memories. I know he's learning not just about animals, but also how fun "school" can be.

*By Stacy Vogel Davis*

**Spots are still available for Spring Classes and Summer Camps. Sign-up for Fall Classes starts Aug. 6. See [zoosociety.org/education](http://zoosociety.org/education) for more information.**



## Silver Arawana



Photo by Bob Wickland

### Arrived: Dec. 2, 2014 Aquatic & Reptile Center

It can bound like a monkey, leaping 6 feet into the air to snatch food. But it doesn't live in trees, nor does it live on the ground. In fact it doesn't even have legs to propel itself into the air. That's because this creature is a fish called an arawana, also known as a "monkey fish" or "water monkey." These carnivorous fish are found in tropical rivers in South America, Southeast Asia, Africa and Australia. Arawanas in each region differ slightly in appearance.

The Aquatic & Reptile Center (ARC) at the Milwaukee County Zoo acquired a South American silver arawana at the end of 2014. It lives in the Flooded Forest Exhibit. Estimated to be 2 years old, this sleek, 2-foot-long fish looks prehistoric.

That's because it is. "Arawanas are from a very ancient family of fish known as bonytongues," says Craig Berg, curator of reptiles and aquarium. Arawanas have existed since the Cretaceous Period and have not changed in 100 million years. That means they swam in rivers when dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Berg says arawanas are called bonytongues "because they have teeth on their tongues to help them hold prey. They're specialized surface feeders in the wild that eat insects and can snag small birds off of overhanging branches." At the Zoo they eat specially formulated pellets, frozen fish and krill. Berg says the arawana is unlikely to prey on other fish in the exhibit, but "it could eat some of the cichlids that are born in the tank."

The next time you visit the ARC, look up toward the surface of the water in the Flooded Forest Exhibit. That's where the arawana likes to swim.

By Zak Mazur

### Born: Nov. 24, 2014 Stearns Family Apes of Africa

A few months ago, newborn gorilla Sulaiman almost never left the embrace of mom Shalia's powerful arms. But boy, times have changed! The once tiny baby with a coconut-sized head, so young he couldn't sit up on his own, has grown into a rambunctious and curious little fellow. Sulaiman – whose name means "Peace" in Swahili – hasn't disturbed the peace of the otherwise laidback troop, but he's certainly added a lot of playful energy. Born on Nov. 24, 2014, Sulaiman is 13-year-old Shalia's first baby. His name was chosen by employees of Northwestern Mutual, which donated funds to renovate the outdoor Gorilla Yard.

By all accounts Sulaiman's birth went smoothly and quickly. "Shalia has done all the work; we've been completely hands off," says Claire Richard, a zookeeper. Sulaiman's birth has influenced the dynamics of the troop, which also consists of dad Cassius and females Naku and Femelle. "Shalia has become more important in the hierarchy now that she's a mother," says Richard. All of the gorillas in the troop are curious about Sulaiman, and he is curious about them.

Although Sulaiman has somewhat struck out on his own, Richard says he'll remain close to Shalia for many years to come. "It will be three to four years before Sulaiman is completely weaned from breast milk, although he'll have been eating solid foods for years before that," she says. A significant change will occur when Cassius starts spending more time with Sulaiman. "Cassius will teach Sulaiman how to be an adult male gorilla and how to play nicely."

By Zak Mazur

## Gorilla Baby



Photo by Richard Brodzeller

**Dash,**  
the Zoo's young, male  
red panda, enjoys  
a cool fall day.

Photo by Richard Brodzeller



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## Renovating the Red Panda Exhibit

Red pandas look like living, breathing plush toys. That's one reason why the Milwaukee County Zoo's red panda, Dash, deserves an even cozier habitat befitting his adorable appearance. For the 2014-15 Annual Appeal, we hope to add additional things to the Red Panda Exhibit like:

- A taller, more secure structure to protect the red panda from wild animals such as raccoons that can pass on diseases
- A roof to provide shade on hot summer days, because red pandas prefer cooler conditions
- More trees and branches for climbing, resting and watching Zoo guests
- Special areas for enrichment activities and food treats to keep Dash's mind active

When construction is completed, the Zoo would like to introduce young, female red pandas to our male. Hopefully they'll produce little red pandas and create some panda-monium in the renovated exhibit!

### Donate here

To give to the Zoological Society's 2014-15 Annual Appeal, please see the flyer packaged with this magazine, go online to [helpmczredpandas.com](http://helpmczredpandas.com) or call 414-258-2333.

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