

Alive



In this issue:

Getting Ready for Spring

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Cats Get Comfortable

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

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At the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, helping animals is part of our mission, but often that also means helping people. For example, our conservation program, the Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative (BCBI), funds primary schools and adult literacy classes in villages near the patrol posts we support in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A basic education gives the participants a better chance at a good-paying job and financial stability. In turn, they're more supportive of our conservation mission and less reliant on

the poaching that threatens bonobos and other animals in the Congo. Check out the report from BCBI field sites coordinator Patrick Guislain on page 12.

Closer to home, our Education Department helps thousands of students each year learn about animals, conservation and natural science. Last year, the department launched a first-of-its-kind program focused on how animals can teach children about empathy. We are proud of this cutting-edge initiative and excited to see the results. See page 4 for more details.

You'll find plenty of animals in this issue, too. Check out page 3 to learn more about the elephant exhibit under construction at the Zoo. Turn to page 15 to get an update on the Zoo's new snow leopard and learn about another new cat. Kids can snack like an otter and make an otter puppet in Kids Alive on page 10 in honor of the new otter exhibit opening this spring. Make sure to welcome the otters once the exhibit opens in May. Thank you for helping animals and people through your support of the Zoological Society and the Milwaukee County Zoo.

Jodi Gibson

Jodi Gibson, President & CEO
 Zoological Society of Milwaukee

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Elephant Update



If you've been at the Milwaukee County Zoo in the past year, you've undoubtedly noticed the huge construction project happening on the south end of the grounds. Crews are building a new, much larger elephant exhibit and barn in the former moose area. We got the inside scoop on the exhibit from Tim Wild, Zoo curator of large mammals.

Brittany
Photo by Richard Taylor

Why is the Zoo constructing a new elephant exhibit?

Elephant welfare has been studied a lot in recent years. The amount of space the elephants have, the ability to live in appropriate social groups, and the chance to enjoy a complex and enriching environment have all been scientifically shown to improve elephant well-being. We are trying to provide all of that for our animals, and our current space has limitations to accomplishing our goals. Modern standards from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums require us to have space to hold more than two elephants, but that's not the main reason we're doing this. We are doing this because it's the best thing for our animals.

Describe the new exhibit.

How will it be different for the elephants?

The biggest differences will be in the amount of outdoor space the elephants have, the opportunity to go outside into a semi-heated area in winter, softer flooring inside the barn to facilitate joint health as the elephants age and a number of built-in enrichment areas. The pool will be bigger and more welcoming. In winter, visitors will be able to watch training sessions with the elephants and exercise programs that keep them healthy and fit. We will also have better equipment for medical care.

When will the new exhibit open?

It officially opens in spring 2019, but the animals and staff will be able to get acclimated to the new building before it opens to Zoo guests.

Why does the construction take so long?

The design process took almost a year in itself. There were many other stakeholders besides animal care staff who had input into the exhibit area, including representatives of education, special events and operations. The construction takes so long mostly because of the scope of the project – the barn is a large building, and making it suitable for elephants is expensive. We also have to think about landscaping, visitor service areas, mechanical operations, plumbing and so on.

Will the new exhibit include other animals?

The elephants will have their own exhibit space, but the project encompasses two additional exhibits that will showcase other African animals. A new exhibit will feature impalas and zebras, and the old Australian yard will house our forest animals, the bongo and the yellow-backed duiker. Bird species, including African crowned cranes, will be added as space allows.

Crews work on the foundation for the barn as part of the new elephant exhibit set to open in spring 2019. Photo by Joel Miller



ANIMALS & EMPATHY:

Making an Emotional Connection

A field trip to the Zoo is always exciting, but the second graders from Summit View Elementary School are doing much more than visiting exotic animals today. The Waukesha students are working in groups in the Zoological Society's education building to learn about enrichment items for the animals. "Enrichment" might seem like a big word for a 7- or 8-year-old, but the children understand it indicates something given to an animal that encourages it to play, investigate, exercise or behave as it would in the wild. It's something Zoo animals need in order to stay happy and healthy.

The polar bear group has chosen a ball for its animal. The students watch a video of the Milwaukee County Zoo's former polar bear, Zero, playing with a hard plastic ball. "Who has done this in the pool before?" instructor Samantha Martinson asks. "Why might a polar bear do this for enrichment?" The penguin group has chosen a bubble machine. "And why would they be using bubbles?" Martinson asks. "So they can exercise and move around!" a student answers enthusiastically.

The children are taking part in a pilot program called the Animal Connections Continuum. This cutting-edge, grant-funded program teaches children how to develop and show empathy for animals and others. It launched in spring 2017 with second graders from five partner schools in the Waukesha and West Allis-West Milwaukee school districts. Students will stay

with the program through fourth grade, and the program will add a new group of second-graders each year.

Emotional and social intelligence are important topics in the education world right now, but the definition of empathy is still fuzzy, says Rachel Hahn, a Zoological Society educator who helped develop the program. The educators came up with a working definition of empathy as "the ability to identify with and care about the needs of another living thing" and researched how animals have been used to develop empathy in other settings. "We're on the forefront," Hahn says. "There are few programs in the nation that focus on developing empathy in youth and ways to assess its growth."

The Zoological Society works closely with the Milwaukee County Zoo for the program. The grant allowed the Zoo to purchase and care for three ambassador chinchillas used for the continuum. Zookeepers are trained to incorporate the curriculum into talks with participating classes. "We discuss the individual animals, their personalities and how we develop a relationship with an animal," says zookeeper Laurie Talakowski, who gives seal talks. For example, she tells the students how Sydney, the matriarch of the seal group, has been trained to lie on her back and present her belly for an ultrasound. "It's very trusting of her to cooperate with some stranger (the veterinary technician) and this weird machine," she says. "She's putting her faith in us, the zookeepers, because of the relationship we've developed over the years."

Each year of the program includes three visits from educators to the classroom and



Top: Instructor Samantha Martinson helps Kaia J. of Summit View Elementary School learn about animal enrichment.

Bottom: Instructor Rachel Hahn shows students from Summit View Elementary School food and training items the zookeepers use with the harbor seals. Photos by Bob Wickland

two field trips to the Zoo or a partner organization. In second grade, the curriculum focuses on familiar animals such as pets. It introduces students to the program's ambassador chinchillas, Chloe, Cleo and Calypso, and a Madagascar hissing cockroach. Students are asked to reflect on how they feel about meeting the animals and how they think the animal might feel about meeting them. They learn about animals' basic needs and how people have many of the same needs, including food, physical exercise and mental stimulation. They attend zookeeper talks about elephants and harbor seals and create a poster with "empathy promises" to people and animals.

In third grade, students learn about their community by studying plants and animals native to Wisconsin. They visit the Mequon Nature Preserve in addition to the Zoo and build butterfly gardens at their schools. In fourth grade, the program widens to a global focus on conservation. Students will study the rainforest, the challenges it faces and how it affects nearby communities. They also will learn about the Zoological Society's Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative, which studies and protects bonobos and other wildlife in the rainforest of the Congo. "You have to build a strong foundation in second and third grade and lay the groundwork of empathetic actions before you can have that conversation about global conservation in fourth grade," says Martinson, who is helping develop the program with Hahn.

Using animals as a way to teach empathy to young children is perfect, says Lori Marshman, a second-grade teacher at Waukesha's Bethesda Elementary School. "When

you're talking about animals, the students can relate to it, and then you can transfer that knowledge to people," she says. Paul Orgas, a second-grade teacher at Jefferson Elementary School in West Allis, says the program reaches kids in a way that a regular school

setting can't. "My students are sharing more about how they care for their pets at home. I have also noticed that when a student is feeling down or upset, other students are going to them and checking to see if there is anything they can do to make them feel better." Both teachers say one of their favorite parts so far has been watching the students build their own chinchilla habitats. "It is such a joy to watch as they work together to build the best habitat," Orgas says. The teachers have been able to expand on what the students learn in the program as they talk about feelings in the classroom.

The schoolteachers, students and zookeepers are all helping the Zoological Society refine the program through their feedback. The Society is constantly assessing program components and sharing what it learns with the larger community, says Averia Flasch, Zoological Society grants administrator. For example, the Society is an active member of Milwaukee Succeeds, a network of community partners focused on social and emotional learning. Hahn and Martinson have provided resources for other Milwaukee-based organizations regarding the assessment process and implementation of empathy-based curriculum. The Zoological Society is looking for new funding partners to continue the empathy-focused program, Flasch says. "We're looking to not only sustain this program but expand it and continue learning as we grow."

By Stacy Vogel Davis



Top: Zoey N. of Summit View Elementary School touches a hissing cockroach held by instructor Samantha Martinson. Photo by Bob Wickland

Middle: Students from Jefferson Elementary School show their design for a chinchilla enrichment activity.

Bottom: Zookeeper Kim Pankonien demonstrates the harbor seal enrichment program to students participating in the Animal Connections Continuum.

Photo by Bob Wickland

Greenhouses

Gear up for Spring

It's a bitter 5 degrees outside on a recent February day, but it's 65 degrees and sunny inside the Milwaukee County Zoo's three greenhouses. You can't help but smile as you step from the freezing, snow-covered pavement into a bright, warm environment filled with lush green leaves and colorful buds and flowers.

This is a busy season for Zoo horticulturist Noah Huber and his staff. They're preparing plants that wintered in the greenhouses to go back outside and starting to grow seedlings for summer flower beds. They have to make room for spring blooms such as pansies that will arrive soon. Huber also is mapping out the greenery for the special summer exhibit on dinosaurs while planning purchases for summer and fall plantings. "Every month you're caring for something new, ordering something for three months out and cleaning something from last month," he says.

In addition to outdoor summer displays, the horticulture staff plans holiday displays for Easter, Halloween and Christmas, takes care of plants in indoor exhibits and grows some plants for animal enrichment. For example, the staff starts new batches of wheatgrass each week for the primates and small mammals to eat. It can quickly get crowded in the greenhouses, which together offer 5,000 square feet of space in a non-public area on the south end of the grounds. "It gets kind of nerve-racking because we have to make room for a lot of flower beds right now," Huber says. "It starts to get busy really quickly."

Check out these photos of a February day inside the greenhouses by photographer Bob Wickland.

By Stacy Vogel Davis



From left: Nicole Nowak, Alex Hoefs, Noah Huber, Samie Seegers and Ginger Grabner take care of the plants in the Zoo's greenhouses.





Left: Intern Samie Seegers tends to plants in the Zoo's greenhouses. Noah Huber, Zoo horticulturist, holds an abutilon plant.



Ginger Grabner, left, and Nicole Nowak separate dahlias in preparation for spring planting.



CREATURES IN CRISIS

The Milwaukee County Zoo houses many exquisite and rare birds. But the Guam kingfisher is the rarest animal in the entire Zoo. The bird, also known as the Micronesian kingfisher, was driven to extinction in the wild after the introduction of brown tree snakes to the island of Guam. These snakes wiped out nearly all of Guam's native birds. In the 1980s, some of the few remaining kingfishers were brought to zoos in the U.S. The last wild kingfisher was seen in 1988.

But there is still hope for the Guam kingfisher. Thanks to breeding programs through the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the captive population of the bird has increased fivefold to 146 as of 2016, according to the National Aviary. The AZA hopes to reintroduce some of these birds into the wild at some point, but first conservationists will have to find a way to protect the birds from predation by the brown tree snakes.

While the Guam kingfisher is the only animal at the Zoo that is classified as extinct, several are almost there. The International

Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) considers an animal critically endangered when it faces "an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild." An animal could end up on the list for

several reasons, including a population reduction of more than 80% in the past 10 years or three generations, a severely limited geographic range, or a population of fewer than 50-250, depending on circumstances.

As more and more animals become in danger of extinction, their counterparts in zoos and aquariums become even more important. These animals preserve the precious genetic details of a species and could eventually help conservationists establish new wild populations. They also remind visitors about the importance of conservation and inspire them to save animals in the wild.

Here are some of the critically endangered animals that are on exhibit at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Conservation information comes from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species unless otherwise noted.

By Stacy Vogel Davis



Photo by Bob Wickland



Photo by Bob Wickland

BLACK RHINOCEROS

Remaining in the Wild: About 4,880 as of 2010. That's double the total from 1995, when the population bottomed out at 2,410.

Range: Three subspecies of black rhino roam eastern and southern Africa.

Threats: Illegal killing for their horns. Rhino horn is used in traditional Chinese medicine, even though it is made of keratin, the same material as people's hair and fingernails. The horns also are highly prized for ornamental use in Asia and the Middle East.

Zoo Presence: The Zoo has two female black rhinos, Mimi and Jozi. Zoo staff raises money for the International Rhino Foundation through an annual "Cinco de Rhino" luncheon, a "Bowling for Rhinos" fundraiser and matching Zoo funds.



Photo by Richard Brodzeller

CHINESE ALLIGATOR

(ALSO KNOWN AS YANGTZE RIVER ALLIGATOR)

Remaining in the Wild: Fewer than 150, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society

Range: The lower reaches of the Yangtze River in eastern China

Threats: Loss of habitat to a growing human population. Much of the alligators' habitat was converted to rice paddies, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Zoo Presence: Two Chinese alligators, male and female siblings, live in the Aquatic & Reptile Center.

EASTERN BONGO

(ALSO KNOWN AS MOUNTAIN BONGO)

Remaining in the Wild: About 100. The bongo is not endangered at the species level, but this subspecies is nearly extinct.

Range: Montane forests in the Kenya highlands

Threats: Habitat loss, hunting and disease transmission from grazing cattle

Zoo Presence: Two female eastern bongos are on exhibit in warm weather next to the African savanna exhibit. The Zoo contributed a bongo to a repatriation program in Kenya in 2004.

BALI MYNAH

Remaining in the Wild: 50-115.

The population fell to just six birds in 2001 but has since risen with reintroduction efforts.

Range: Island of Bali, Indonesia

Threats: Illegal poaching for the pet trade

Zoo Presence: The Zoo has a male and female Bali mynah in the aviary. The female just arrived in fall 2017, and the Zoo is hoping the birds will breed.



Stock photo

COTTON-TOP TAMARIN

Remaining in the Wild: About 6,000

Range: Colombia

Threats: Habitat loss as their forest home is cleared for agriculture and pasture. The monkeys were previously threatened because of export for the pet trade, zoos and biomedical research, but export was banned in 1974.

Zoo Presence: The Zoo currently has five cotton-top tamarins, four females and one male, in the Primates of the World and Small Mammals buildings.



Photo by Robert Noble



Photo by Joel Miller

GRAND CAYMAN BLUE IGUANA

It might seem like endangered animals are a lost cause, but that's not true! Some animals have been brought back from the brink of extinction, such as the Grand Cayman blue iguana. The iguana, once down to fewer than 20 individuals in the wild, was recently upgraded from critically endangered to endangered. The Milwaukee County Zoo and Zoological Society of Milwaukee have played a part in that success.

Each year, zookeeper Stacy Whitaker and veterinary technician Joan Maurer travel to Grand Cayman Island with support from the Zoological Society to help with the Blue Iguana Recovery Program. Maurer assists Wildlife Conservation Society veterinary staff in examining young iguanas that have been hand-raised before they're released into the wild. She also helps with routine exams of wild and captive adult iguanas. Whitaker helps monitor how the population is doing through surveys and tracking. The program has released about 1,000 young iguanas into the wild. Although the animals still face threats from free-roaming dogs, cats and rats along with habitat destruction, conservationists are hopeful that they can now make a complete recovery.



Stock photo

Otter Obsessed!

A new exhibit featuring North American river otters is set to open this spring. Have you ever wondered how otters become such good swimmers? At the young age of 2 months old, baby otters are pushed into the water by their mothers and forced to figure it out. That might sound harsh, but with Mom's supervision, the baby otters are instant professionals!



Stock photo

Eat Like an Otter

North American river otters primarily eat fish. Give this fun snack a try so you can eat like an otter.

What You'll Need:

- 2 three-ounce boxes of blue Jell-O
- Gummy fish
- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 cups cold water
- Clear plastic cups or Mason jars
- Toothpicks
- Whipped cream (optional)



Directions:

1. Mix the Jell-O according to the directions on the package.
2. Pour desired amount of Jell-O mix evenly into cups. Refrigerate for about two hours until it is soft set. It needs to be gelled enough that the fish won't sink to the bottom, but not so hard that you can't push them in.
3. Put desired amount of gummy fish in each cup of Jell-O. This part is a bit tricky. We found it was easiest to spear the fish with a toothpick and then use another toothpick to release it. You may want to put the fish a little higher because they could sink afterward.
4. Put cups back in fridge for another two hours to finish setting.
5. Add whipped cream to the top and serve. We added whipped cream to cover the imperfections from pushing the fish into the Jell-O. This snack should be served immediately after it is set. That way, the gummy fish will retain their texture. If they sit in the Jell-O too long, they will become soft.

Enjoy!



Stock photo

Make Your Own Otter Puppet

Playtime is always better with a good puppet. It's even more fun when you get to craft it yourself!

What you'll need:

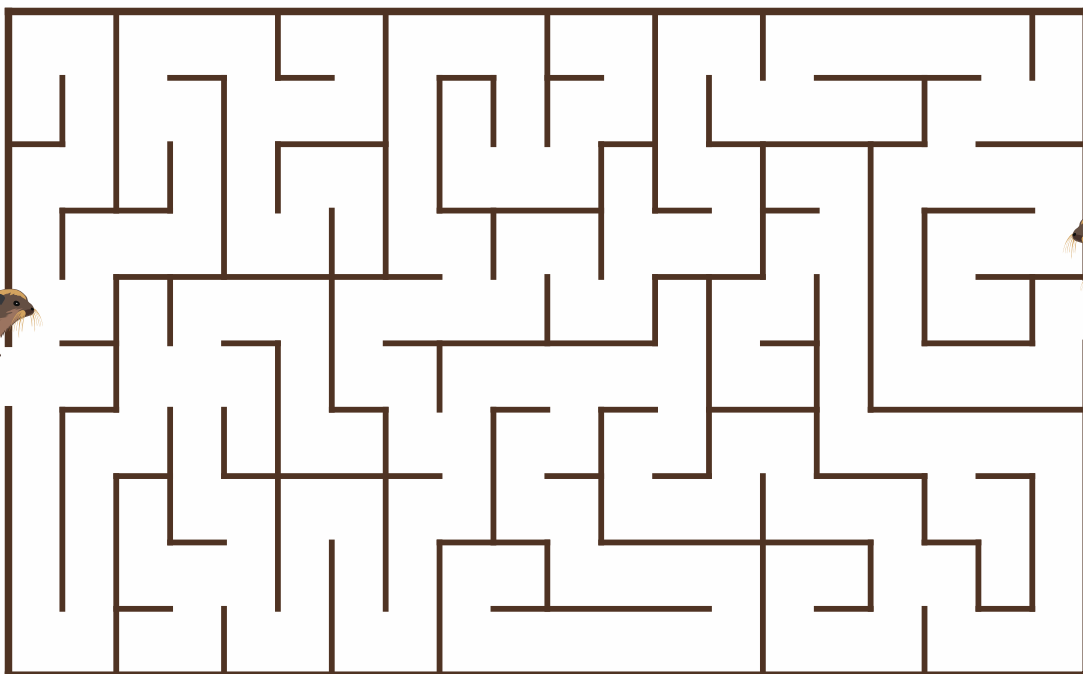
- A brown paper lunch bag
- Black marker
- Construction paper - brown, black and white
- Glue
- Scissors



Directions:

1. Using the marker, outline ears, arms, feet and tail on brown paper. Draw eyes on white paper. Outline the nose on black paper. You can find stencils for the body parts at zoosociety.org/otterpuppet, or try drawing them yourself.
2. Cut everything out.
3. Glue everything in place. Be careful not to use too much glue so the puppet doesn't stick together.
4. Wait for it to dry completely and then you have an otter puppet!

“Oh no! The *river otter pup* got lost from his family! Can you help him find his way back?”



SCHOOLS IN THE SALONGA

The Zoological Society's Bonobo & Congo Biodiversity Initiative (BCBI) is its signature conservation effort, helping protect bonobos and other wildlife in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). But the initiative also helps people living near patrol posts it supports in the enormous Salonga National Park. One example of this is BCBI's support of local schools. Patrick Guislain, BCBI field sites coordinator, explains why that support benefits local families and BCBI. Photos provided by BCBI



BCBI's support for local primary schools grew organically over the years. We established the Etate Research Station and Patrol Post in 2002, mainly because our survey had identified the area to be rich in bonobos. We started dealing with the nearby villagers of Tompoko, buying their produce for the Etate guards and for ourselves, chit-chatting with the local fishermen and getting acquainted with the guards' families. We found out Tompoko once had a tiny school, but the little thatch building was falling apart and classes were no longer being taught.

In the DRC's interior, far away from the main urban centers, officially recognized schools exist mostly in villages along the main roads that allow for travel by bicycle or motorcycle. Such village schools depend on a "mother school" that receives its support, through church groups, from the government. Parents have to pay monthly school fees to cover administrative costs. But in a little village like Tompoko, things are quite different. There is no "main road"; the village is surrounded by swamps where a bicycle can't even pass. Either the children are sent to the closest village with a recognized school – which means they have to live there for a while with relatives – or they simply do not attend school. As a result, there has been a build-up of illiteracy in the country's interior for the past few generations.

A village like Tompoko may take the initiative to set up its own school, but it is not recognized by the government. In that case, the school fees are used to pay a modest teacher's salary. Given the extreme poverty in rural DRC, and noting that most families have many children, it is no surprise that parents frequently keep their children at home. These schools do not receive basic teaching materials such as blackboards, books or chalk. Schoolbooks are mainly for sale in the capital of Kinshasa at about \$10 apiece, which is a very steep price in a faraway town. Even when these obstacles are overcome, it can be difficult to find quality instruction in a remote village with a high illiteracy rate.

In 2004, BCBI worked with the Tompoko village to rebuild the school building and resume classes there. Over the years, BCBI's geographical scope gradually expanded. We started to set up regular markets with the villages of Tompoko and nearby Watsi to provide us with the necessary fresh food at Etate. In 2006, we started an agricultural program covering eight villages and supported by the U.S. Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program. We came into closer contact with villages farther away from Etate. In 2016, BCBI's increased support of anti-poaching patrols



Top: BCBI donates schoolbooks to local schools around Etate.

Middle: Primary school students gather for class in a newly constructed classroom in the village of Biondo Biondo.

Bottom: A teacher prepares the day's lesson on a makeshift blackboard.

extended the project's reach all the way to Biondo Biondo, about 140 miles upriver from Etate. In all those places, we found the same situation that we had found in Tompoko in 2002: a high degree of illiteracy, unpaid or nonexistent teachers and faltering schools. Today, BCBI supports five elementary schools on the periphery of the Salonga National Park.

BCBI's involvement in the schools is limited but essential. Our first step is to have the village establish a parent committee where a responsible parent is elected as the focal point for the school. We provide financial aid to the committee so the village can employ most of the school's teachers. Salaries for the remaining teachers are paid by the school fees. While BCBI ensures that each school has the necessary teacher manuals, blackboards, chalk, notebooks and pens, the villages are responsible for the maintenance of the school buildings.

One of the biggest factors that has allowed these schools to exist is an indirect financial one. BCBI's support for anti-poaching patrol posts in the Salonga leads to increased employment of patrol guards. These guards purchase their food locally and thus provide the villages with direct revenue. This link ties BCBI's conservation efforts to the villages' increased living standards, providing villagers with the income for school fees and other goods such as clothing, soap and tools.

In establishing the schools, we had the good fortune to find Jean-Paul Likolo. Jean-Paul initially was one of the teachers in our adult literacy program before he joined the ranks of ICCN (the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature) as a park guard at Etate. He sets out regularly to oversee the functioning of BCBI-supported schools. Twice a year, BCBI sets up meetings with the schools' parent committees. We go over Jean-Paul's reports and address specific issues that may cause future problems, such as a teacher with inadequate attendance.

After the sixth year, children who wish to continue to secondary school must pass an exam so they can receive their certificate. At the age of 12-14, the children are mature enough to be away from their parents to attend a more distant secondary school. At the end of every school year, the majority of children at the BCBI-supported schools who have finished sixth grade pass the exams to receive their elementary school diplomas and continue to secondary school.

A basic education, including the ability to read and write, increases the children's chances in life. This becomes apparent in BCBI's adult literacy program, where about 100 villagers from Watsi and Tompoko enthusiastically participate in classes. Job opportunities in the DRC are few and far between, especially in remote inland areas. To become a teacher or park guard, you must be able to read and write. An education is also a plus if you're trying to set up a small business closer to a town.

The program is beneficial to BCBI as well. In the short term, we establish a good relationship with the villages based on mutual respect. The area of about 1,000 square kilometers around Etate has one of the lowest poaching rates in the entire Salonga National Park. While it is clear that Etate's frequent patrols have a hand in obtaining such a result, it is also apparent that the relationship between BCBI and those villages is a factor. The local fishermen



Above: BCBI donated these blackboards for the school in the village of Biondo Biondo.

Middle: The majority of children at BCBI-supported schools who finish sixth grade receive their elementary school diplomas and go on to secondary school.

Bottom: In each village, teachers are evaluated and selected by a parent committee.

even paddle considerable distances to Etate to inform the guards if they have observed someone entering the park.

In the long term, BCBI's school support helps lead to better educated adults who may be less prone to make ends meet through small-scale poaching in the park. Likewise, BCBI and ICCN can only benefit from educated park guards who are fully able to use a GPS and fill out high-quality patrol reports. Truly, education is a positive force for BCBI and the local community.

By Patrick Guislain

THE DOCTOR SAYS GOOD-BYE



Dr. Roberta Wallace examines a sedated snow leopard.
Photo by Mike Nepper

Dr. Roberta Wallace decided in eighth grade that she wanted to be a veterinarian because she loved animals and was interested in medicine. Forty-seven years later, as she retires as the senior staff veterinarian at the Milwaukee County Zoo, those are the same things that made the job so worthwhile over the years. “I just like working with animals,” she says.

It’s a humble sentiment from someone who made a huge difference at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Over 28 years here, she helped establish a renowned veterinary residency program, researched Humboldt penguins in the wild and created many partnerships between the Zoo and other organizations, all while making sure animals received the best care possible.

Wallace arrived in Milwaukee in 1989 after working at the Indianapolis Zoo. It was an exciting time because zoos were becoming more aware of the importance of quality veterinary care, she says. One of the things that kept Wallace in Milwaukee all these years is the good working relationship between the veterinary staff, curators and zookeepers. At some zoos, keepers don’t trust the veterinarians, she says. “At this Zoo, the relationship has been fantastic.”

That’s in large part thanks to Wallace, says Zoo Director Chuck Wikenhauser. “She was great at working with the staff to make sure everyone was on the same page

in terms of medical care and animal care,” he says. “If the keepers had an animal they were concerned about, they didn’t hesitate to go to Roberta.” She also made connections with medical professionals who work with humans, such as a dentist and hand surgeon. She worked with the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee to establish a zoo veterinary residency program that is now considered one of the best in the nation, Wikenhauser says.

Wallace’s knack for partnerships helped create an important research project on Humboldt penguins in Chile. She had been studying the captive population to learn more about breeding and nutrition when she applied for – and received – a \$25,000 grant to study the wild population. “We didn’t really know anyone in Chile, so I cold-called a penguin expert,” she says. That expert connected her to a scientist in Chile who helped her establish a long-term study of the penguins and the threats they face. Wallace hopes to continue studying wild penguins after her retirement.

Celi Jeske, Zoo area supervisor at the Animal Health Center, says she was impressed with how many roles Wallace played. “On any given day, she could be overseeing that day’s clinical animal cases, mentoring a veterinary resident, preparing next year’s hospital budget, purchasing new equipment, editing an article on Humboldt penguins and preparing a lecture. Most importantly, she did this with professionalism, style and a sense of humor. She always had the best interests of the Zoo in mind.”

That’s obvious to anyone who talks to Wallace. She easily rattles off the names of her past residents and what they’re doing now. When asked about the highlights of her career, she mentions individual animals. For example, she performed surgery in 1994 on a Guam kingfisher – an animal that is extinct in the wild – that couldn’t lay eggs, allowing that bird to lay and hatch a chick the following year. In 2015, she was able to save a tiger, Amba, with a potentially deadly fungal infection. Amba went on to have a litter of cubs in 2016. “It’s nice to go around the Zoo sometimes and say ‘I had a hand in helping that animal survive,’” she says.

By Stacy Vogel Davis



Wallace listens to a polar bear’s heartbeat.
Photo by Mike Nepper



In addition to caring for Humboldt penguins at the Zoo, Wallace studied them in the wild. Here, she measures a Zoo penguin’s beak. Photo by Richard Brodzeller



Wallace examines Amur tiger Amba, who gave birth to a litter of cubs in 2016. Wallace helped save Amba’s life when she had a fungal infection the previous year. Photo by Joel Miller

CATS GET COMFORTABLE

At 33 pounds, Amos the serval is much larger than your average housecat, but he's tiny compared to the other cats at the Milwaukee County Zoo. So it's not surprising that he was a little timid in his new exhibit in Florence Mila Borchert Big Cat Country near the lions, hyenas and jaguars. At his previous home at the Little Rock Zoo in Arkansas, he was alone in an outdoor exhibit. "He's getting used to the glass and being around larger carnivores," says Sheri Guay, a zookeeper in the big cat area.

To help Amos adjust, keepers put brown paper over the glass. They took the paper away piece by piece so, if he chose, he could see more of the building – and people could see more of him. "It gave him a safe, quiet area he could return to," Guay says. After a few months at the Zoo, he is adapting well. He is spending more time near the window and learning how to shift on and off exhibit. Now that he feels comfortable, the keepers are getting to know his personality. "He's a talker," Guay says. "He definitely lets you know when he's not pleased."

The keepers also are learning what the 9-year-old serval likes for enrichment. Enrichment refers to anything that offers an animal choices and draws out its natural behaviors. Amos enjoys playing with paper bags and boxes and investigating scent sprays, Guay says. Servals like water, so the keepers have filled tubs with water for Amos. They haven't seen him play in them yet, but he was spotted playing with his water bowl when he first arrived at the Zoo. He likes eating "whole prey" items such as mice, chicks and small rats.

In the wild, servals live in the savanna of central and southern Africa and feed on birds, reptiles, frogs and insects. Their large ears give them an acute sense of hearing. They can jump up to 10 feet in the air to catch prey. The Milwaukee keepers haven't seen Amos jump yet, but they're planning to hang a bungee cord or other enrichment items in his exhibit to see if he leaps at them. They also hope to add some climbing enrichment.

Snow Leopard Settles In

Orya the snow leopard is another animal who was shy when she arrived at the Milwaukee County Zoo. She came here from Zoo Zurich in Switzerland in August 2016 thanks to a gift from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. "It took her a while to feel comfortable here," Guay says. But after more than a year of diligent care from the keepers, Orya is coming out for feedings and getting better at shifting on and off exhibit, she says.

The Zoo hopes Orya will breed with Asa, who was also brought to Milwaukee through the Greater Milwaukee Foundation gift. The two leopards can see each other with a mesh barrier in between. Snow leopards' breeding season is January through March, and it's possible the leopards might breed this year, Guay says. Keepers have set up cameras in the off-exhibit area to monitor their behavior. "We look for certain behaviors before we feel comfortable putting her in with him," she says. "You want to see rubbing on the mesh, some chuffing sounds. It will just depend on them."

Orya the snow leopard was shy when she arrived here from Switzerland, but she has settled into her new home.

Inset: Amos the serval arrived at the Milwaukee County Zoo in October.
Photos by Joel Miller



Alive



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GET READY TO GO ON A PREHISTORIC ADVENTURE THIS SUMMER!

Life-size robotic dinosaurs will return to the Zoo with "Dinosaurs! A Jurassic Journey," sponsored by Sendik's Food Markets. Guests can watch and interact with more than 20 creatures from May 26 to Sept. 3 in a tropical outdoor exhibit. New dinosaurs such as elaphrosaurus and suchomimus will make their Milwaukee debut along with fan favorites such as Tyrannosaurus rex. Tickets are \$3 per person after regular Zoo admission. Zoo Pass members can preview the exhibit for free during Nights in June on June 5, 6 and 7.



Photo courtesy of Billings Productions