

AN INSIDER MAGAZINE FOR ZOO PASS MEMBERS

SPRING 2022

ALIVE





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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Photo provided by Milwaukee Business Journal

CEO's Letter

Spring is the season of change at the Zoo – the emergence of green leaves and flowers signal brighter days ahead; the mittens, boots and coats of Zoo guests are replaced with sneakers and T-shirts; and animals that stayed inside for much of the winter get to enjoy their outdoor habitats once again. In many ways, change is also the theme of this issue of Alive magazine. The Milwaukee County Zoo and Zoological Society have seen exciting changes in the past year, and we're eager to share some of these updates with you.

Last August, the social dynamics of the Zoo's bonobo population changed when two females were transferred from the Columbus Zoo. Turn to page 4 to read about Elema and Sukari's introduction. Changes are happening in the world of migratory bird ecology, as well. Read about the Zoo's new bird tracking technology, which was funded by the Zoological Society, on page 14. We are also looking forward to changes yet to come. One of the biggest events on the horizon is the construction of the new rhino habitat and central pathway. But before construction can begin, the blueprints need to be designed. Read about our 2022 annual appeal on page 3.

Watching the Zoo spring into the warmer months of the year is rejuvenating. There's nothing quite like walking through the Zoo while birds are singing, insects are buzzing and butterflies are filling the gardens. To learn how we're helping pollinators like these, and how you can too, turn to page 6. I hope you've had a wonderful start to 2022, and we'll see you soon in the weeks and months ahead!

Jodi Gibson

Zoological Society President & CEO

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RHI- NOT HELP?

A female Eastern black rhinoceros trots across the soft substrate of her indoor habitat, intrigued by a fresh bundle of willow branches. As she begins to nibble, a baby rhino emerges from behind her massive frame. Just yards away, on the opposite side of an open divider, a young girl gasps. This is the first time she has shared the same air with a rhino, the first time she has ever seen one in person. She covers her mouth with glee, points to the calf and looks up at her dad with a newfound swell of empathy and fascination...

We hope you can help us make this dream become a reality. The capital campaign is charging into Phase III, and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee is seeking support to fund the design of a new indoor and outdoor home for Eastern black rhinos, which are one of the most endangered mammals on Earth. Organizations accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums like the Milwaukee County Zoo are part of endangered species breeding programs, and the new rhino habitat will be designed with breeding in mind.

"A baby rhino born at the Zoo would be the first since the mid-90s," says Joan Stasica, pachyderm area supervisor. "The new exhibit will have multiple yards we can adapt to different sizes and needs. It will also have natural substrate which will give the animals a comfortable surface to walk on. Overall, it will be equipped with modern features that will bring it to what the standards of care are now." The current pachyderm building, which was built in the late '60s, lacks amenities ideal for breeding, enrichment and viewing.

"This project will not only improve the lives of rhinos, but it will also benefit other animals, too," says Ray Hren, primary Eastern black rhino keeper. "More indoor space and a new pool will be added for the hippos, the red river hog habitat and viewing area will be expanded, and there will potentially be room for an African animal species new to the Zoo. It's going to be a pretty incredible renovation." The design phase for this exhibit, which will also include a new central pathway through the Zoo, will hopefully be completed by the end of 2022, with construction beginning in 2023.

Rhi-not help?



Stock photo



▶▶ DONATE TODAY! ◀◀

To donate to the Zoological Society's annual appeal, visit zoosociety.org/appeal.

Donations of \$100 or more will be recognized on electronic signs in the Conservation Outpost within Adventure Africa.

Miller Brewing Company will match a portion of your contribution, making your gift even bigger. Help us turn the dream for a new rhino exhibit into a reality!



FRIENDSHIP AT FIRST TOUCH

A new friendship began the moment their fingers met. Last fall, when a young bonobo named Elema was introduced to the Zoo's bonobo population, she was initially separated by a mesh door. Bonobos are social, curious animals and commonly communicate through touch. When Elema stretched her fingers through the door and a young male bonobo named Noki reached back, lead bonobo keeper Stacy Whitaker knew she would fit right in.

Nine-year-old Elema, who was transferred from the Columbus Zoo, has been recommended to breed here in Milwaukee. Elema was joined by 16-year-old Sukari, who was transferred to accompany her. Whitaker oversees introductions. "Females are naturally predisposed to joining new groups, which makes things easier," she says. "We first put them in separate stalls, a small group on one side and the new bonobo on the other. If they are showing appropriate behavior, anything that's friendly, we let them join the group."

The Zoo's bonobo population has 19 members, with an age range of 5 to 54 years old. Bonobos live in matriarchal communities, and the Zoo's oldest bonobo, Laura, is the troop's leader. Bonobos often look to the matriarch for direction when a new member is introduced, says Whitaker, and Laura was excited by the new arrivals. Elema and Sukari are still hashing out their respective positions in the group's social hierarchy, but each have started to integrate in their own way.

"Once Elema joined the population, she began playing with Noki immediately. They would occasionally stop to tease each other like siblings, then start playing again. It was adorable," Whitaker says. Sukari's introduction has also been a success. "Early on, she very cutely decided Tamia was the greatest thing in the world. She follows her around everywhere and constantly tries to get her attention. I'm not exactly sure why she became so attached to her, but Tamia sure is happy for the attention. Elema and Sukari are wonderful; we love them both."



TEN FACTS ABOUT THE BONOBO MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- 1.** The U.S. bonobo management program was created at the Milwaukee County Zoo in 1988.
- 2.** In the past decade, nine bonobos have been born at the Zoo.
- 3.** Bonobo management works toward genetic diversity and demographic health of bonobos.
- 4.** Cardiac and neurological research to support bonobo health and welfare is currently being conducted through the breeding program.
- 5.** Members of the bonobo breeding program vote on research proposals that support bonobo health and welfare including behavioral observations, neurological studies and genetic sampling.
- 6.** The Milwaukee County Zoo was one of the first two institutions to house bonobos in the U.S.
- 7.** There are currently 86 bonobos in the entire bonobo management program in North America.
- 8.** The bonobo management program is comprised of the following eight institutions: Ape Cognition and Conservation Initiative (Iowa), Cincinnati Zoo, Columbus Zoo, Fort Worth Zoo, Jacksonville Zoo, Memphis Zoo, Milwaukee County Zoo and San Diego Zoo.
- 9.** Breeding recommendations are primarily based on genetics. Factors such as personality, health of family lineage and role in their troop are also taken into account.
- 10.** Auriana Donaldson, conservation programs coordinator at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, is the secretary of the bonobo management program.







NO MOW? NO PROBLEM

Seven years ago, when Milwaukee County Zoo horticulturists Noah Huber and Alex Hoefs were determining how to maintain an unruly plot of land, they settled on a unique solution: stop trying. “The hill along the south side of Lake Evinrude is steep, irregular, filled with boulders and, at that time, was overrun with invasive brush,” says Huber. “It suffered from soil erosion every time it rained, and it was becoming unsightly.” Huber and Hoefs decided to set down their equipment and let nature take the reins.

Before the experiment began, they had to prep the land. “We replaced the invasive plants with a species of grass that would prevent erosion and be self-sustainable,” says Hoefs. “Then we basically ignored the area.” The hill quickly grew into a charmingly wild ecosystem, and with it sprouted an abundance of benefits. “Within a month, washout erosion completely stopped. Hours of labor were eliminated, landscaping costs were cut and lawnmower emissions were reduced. It was incredibly effective.”

When Huber and Hoefs told the Zoo and Zoological Society’s Green Committee about their project, an unexpected advantage was brought to their attention. This patch of unkept land, later labeled a No Mow Zone, provided valuable refuge and food for overwintering pollinators. “That was really cool to hear,” says Huber. “I believe the protection of native critters is the center of conservation. Pollinators work in concert with plants and other animals to sustain the ecosystem that we live in. They help produce so much of our food.”

Inspired by this synchronicity of conservation and pragmatism, Huber and Hoefs decided to replicate their new strategy in other parts of the Zoo. In the seven years since the inception of the No Mow Zone initiative, a dozen additional zones have been created and there are plans for more. Some of the zones are filled with grass, some are filled with flowers; all of them are bustling with bees, butterflies, moths and birds that are thriving in their newfound safe-havens.



The Milwaukee County Zoo is, first and foremost, a place where families come to visit animals they would likely never have a chance to see in person. But it’s also a place of learning, inspiration and leadership in conservation.

The Zoological Society takes pride in not only helping upcoming generations develop empathy for nature but also empowering people to make choices that will help the environment.

“Most conservation is really abstract,” says Auriana Donaldson, conservation programs coordinator for the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. “A lot of messaging is about donating money, following along with a certain project, or recycling. These things matter, but the results are often gradual and hard to see. I’m always on the lookout for tangible conservation activities we can share with the public.” Last spring Donaldson walked past one of the No Mow Zones at the Zoo, and three words popped into her mind: No Mow May.

“I first learned about the idea of No Mow May through a campaign that began at Appleton’s Lawrence University. I thought it was brilliant; it was always in the back of my mind. I pitched the concept of a No Mow May outreach campaign to Zoo leadership, and the rest is history.” The power of No Mow May stems from its convenience; it’s something most people with a yard can do (or, technically speaking, *not* do), and results appear within days.

Donaldson hosted weekly videos that tracked the progress of her yard throughout May, wrote numerous informational posts and even led a milkweed seed giveaway on Facebook. The public response was palpable. The seed giveaway received hundreds of entries, and her videos were viewed by thousands. “Growing these beautifully biodiverse spaces is becoming a cultural movement. It doesn’t mean you’re lazy; it means you care about the environment. We don’t need one person to have a perfect yard for pollinators; we need a couple thousand people to have an imperfect yard.”

The Zoo’s No Mow Zones will be growing wild again this year, and the Zoological Society is expanding its No Mow May outreach efforts. The Zoo’s most prominent zones are located on the hill near the playground, inside the Stackner Animal Encounter courtyard and on the south side of Lake Evinrude.

Be sure to follow Auriana on the Zoological Society of Milwaukee’s Facebook throughout May as she provides updates on the state of her yard! Individuals who would like to participate in No Mow May must do so within the guidelines of their local lawn care ordinances.



AN OFF-EXHIBIT *EXPEDITION*



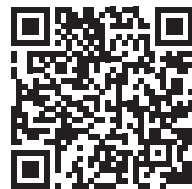
Few animals blend speed and grace with power and size like a moose. Moose can carry their 1,000-pound bodies through dense forests with ease, run more than 20 miles per hour and grow nearly 8 feet tall. When people learn the Zoo is home to a female moose named Robin, they often ask how they could have missed such an impressively massive animal. The answer is simple: Robin is one of the few Zoo animals that live off exhibit.

Robin once lived in an area viewable to the public, but when the Zoo's footprint was redesigned for Adventure Africa she was relocated to an off-exhibit, woody acre of land behind the Small Mammals Building. Her habitat contains many environmental features moose love: tall trees, thick vegetation, shallow bodies of water and room to explore. Though Robin

doesn't see many Zoo guests, she is visited by her keepers multiple times per day. And, like all other Zoo animals, she is provided enrichment like scented toys, fresh vegetation in the winter and even the occasional disco ball light show.

While Robin enjoys a life of comfort, solitude and hand-delivered fruit, she came from humble beginnings. In 2009, when Robin was just days old, she was found wandering in Alaska without her mother. The Alaska Zoo brought her in for rehabilitation but quickly determined she would require human care her entire life. Robin was soon transferred to the Milwaukee County Zoo where she was bottle-fed back to full strength and has resided ever since. Dawn Fleuchaus, the Zoo's North American area supervisor, describes Robin as confident, tough and well-adjusted.

If you are interested in sponsoring Robin the moose, you can purchase an animal sponsorship at zoosociety.org/sponsoranimal. Sponsorships help the Zoological Society fulfill its mission to conserve, educate and support the Milwaukee County Zoo.



Robin the moose isn't the only Zoo animal that lives off exhibit. Scan this QR code with your phone's camera to see some of the other animals that are primarily used for educational purposes and not regularly viewable to the public.

A PASSION FOR COMPASSION

In April 2021, the Zoological Society welcomed a new Vice President of Programs, Beth Heller. Beth has a BA in Biology from Lawrence University and an MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and she brings nearly three decades' worth of experience in environmental education. We recently sat down with Beth to discuss her role at the Zoological Society, to learn why she has dedicated her career to conservation and to find out some of her hopes for the future of Society programs.

Zoological Society of Milwaukee: Hi Beth, thanks for chatting! You have a really interesting combination of college degrees. Is this the academic path you always envisioned?

Beth Heller: Yes and no. I believe that taking care of the environment makes good business sense. Waste is waste, whether you're running a business or figuring out how to compost something in your yard. If you can turn waste into something valuable, it is a win-win. In my early days at the Urban Ecology Center (UEC) I saw a need to have credibility with business leaders. So, in addition to offering tools and skills to plan UEC's growth, the MBA provided that credibility.

ZSM: What are your responsibilities as vice president of programs?

BH: I oversee all of the programs the Society has to offer, including education programs, Kohl's Wild Theater, grant-funded programs, our internship program, conservation programs and our Zoo Pride volunteer auxiliary. As an organization leader, I aim to tap and guide the talent within our staff and volunteers so that we can motivate each other and our community to take conservation action.

ZSM: Could you take us on a brief tour of your professional background?

BH: My first job out of college was teaching high school biology. I've also worked for an environmental education program in the Catskills Mountains in New York; at a wildlife rehabilitation center in Albuquerque; at Riveredge Nature Center in Newburg, Wis.; and finally, at the Urban Ecology Center in Milwaukee where I was the senior director of education and strategic planning for over two decades.

ZSM: You've dedicated your career to protecting the environment. What do you love about nature?

BH: Nature is restorative for me. It feeds my energy and helps me clear my mind. Every single time I'm outside I learn something new. Nature is magical!

ZSM: We couldn't agree more. Why do you think environmental education opportunities are important for urban settings?

BH: It's really easy to feel disconnected from our ecosystem, and we are completely dependent on it. I also think that experiencing nature in different ways, such as looking at birds, catching insects or admiring wildflowers, is important to our mental health. It improves the quality of life in an urban setting, and it helps us connect to the responsibility we have to take care of the environment.

ZSM: The Zoological Society offers a wide range of nature-based educational classes and camps. What is the primary goal of the Conservation Education Department?

BH: To inspire empathy for wildlife. Research shows that if you can empathize with a wild animal you are more likely to want to protect it and take care of it, and this leads to conservation action. Our students not only connect with animals by seeing them in person, but they also learn empathy by seeing how well zookeepers care for the animals. Empathy is something everybody benefits from as a life skill, and we're here to teach it.

ZSM: What are some everyday things people can do to get involved in conservation?

BH: The first step is making a commitment to understand the impact your daily decisions have on the environment. The list of potential actions one can take is really long, and it can be overwhelming. My advice is to start by picking one thing and sticking with it until it becomes a habit. Then add onto your conservation action from there.

ZSM: Great advice. Finally, this wouldn't be a true Alive interview without asking you about your favorite animal.

BH: I love insects. I'm particularly drawn to dragonflies and damselflies. They're essentially prehistoric animals, and they're fascinating to watch. They're big, colorful and easy to spot. If you're hiking along a pond, a dragonfly monitoring its territory may fly near to check you out. Studying insects is a life-long practice, as they are enormously diverse and can live in every habitat. Also, insects can tell you a lot about the health of an ecosystem. They're amazing!







Pollinators, such as birds, bees, bats and butterflies, are some of the most important creatures in the world. They help plants grow by spreading pollen from one flower to another, and are responsible for about one-third of the world's crop production. Like many animals, pollinator populations are declining and they need our help to survive. You can support your neighborhood pollinators by growing pollinator-friendly plants (like flowers or milkweed), leaving them alone if you see them in nature or celebrating their beauty by making pollinator crafts!

Styrofoam Honey Bee

Craft created by: Estrella Longoria

Bees are colorful, fast and fun to watch, but trying to catch one is never a good idea. With this fun arts and crafts project, you can make a bee toy that you can hold any time!

SUPPLIES

- Craft glue, or hot glue and glue gun (use with adult supervision)
- Black and yellow acrylic paints
- Styrofoam ball (one big, one small)
- Black pipe cleaners
- Toothpicks
- Paintbrush
- Wire cutters or scissors
- White construction paper
- Googly eyes

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Glue the large and small Styrofoam balls together.
2. Paint the small ball black (head).
3. Paint yellow stripes onto the large ball (body).
4. Paint opposite black stripes onto the large ball.
5. Cut the pipe cleaner into six equal-length pieces and one shorter piece (legs and stinger).
6. Create six equidistant holes – three on each side – with a toothpick on the bottom of the large ball. Then, create one more hole on the back.
7. Glue a pipe cleaner piece into each hole, with the shorter piece in the back.
8. Fold one full-sized pipe cleaner in half and bend each end into spirals (antennae).
9. Glue the folded pipe cleaner to the top of the smaller ball.
10. Cut two 2x2-inch and two 1x1-inch squares out of construction paper (wings).
11. Cut all four pieces of paper into teardrop shapes and fold the tips outward.
12. Glue the pieces of paper to the front of the large ball (see photo for example).
13. Glue on googly eyes and paint the face with yellow paint.



TIP:
Let the craft dry after each step that requires paint or glue. Temporarily stick toothpicks into the bottom of the craft so it can be set down while drying.



Butterfly Snack Holder

Crafts created by: Abby, Ashlynn and Lydia Wegner

Butterflies come in many sizes, shapes and colors, but they all have one thing in common: they love to drink sweet nectar from flowers. Celebrate your fondness for butterflies (and sweet treats) by creating a colorful butterfly snack holder!

SUPPLIES:

- Baggies (sandwich or quart)
- Wooden clothespins
- Markers, paint or any other small craft items
- Craft glue, or hot glue and glue gun (use with adult supervision)
- Pipe cleaners
- Wire cutters or scissors
- Googly eyes
- Cereal or candy (wrapped works best)

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Decorate the clothespins with markers, paint or craft items.
2. Glue two googly eyes, side by side, to the closed side of the clothespin.
3. Cut a pipe cleaner in half.
4. Fold one piece of pipe cleaner in half and bend each end into a spiral.
5. Fill a baggie about 1/3 full with your treat of choice.
6. Push half of the treat to either side of the bag, and pinch the middle from top to bottom.
7. Clamp the clothespin over the center of the baggie.
8. Insert the folded pipe cleaner.



Spelling Bee:

Can you correctly spell these pollinator terms?

1. KOLUNEE _____ A group of bats.
2. MAHNARK _____ A near-endangered species of butterfly.
3. DAZEY _____ A white and yellow flower pollinators love to visit.
4. WAKS _____ A substance bees secrete to make honeycomb.
5. NEKTER _____ A sweet liquid pollinators drink from flowers.
6. INSEKT _____ A small invertebrate animal that has six legs, and usually has wings.
7. KWEEN _____ The mother of most of the bees in a hive.
8. POLIN _____ A powdery substance found in flowers.
9. MIGRAESHUN _____ The travel of animals to a warmer climate.
10. KAKOON _____ The silky case caterpillars rest in while turning into butterflies or moths wings.

Answers: 1.Colony 2.Monarch 3.Daisy 4.Wax 5.Nectar 6.Insect 7.Queen 8.Pollen 9.Migration 10.Cocoon

TOWER POWER

Every year millions of migratory birds fly through the skies of Wisconsin. They fill the air with their songs, fill our minds with wonder and fill research journals with valuable information about the environment. Migration patterns provide insight into climate change trends; help researchers track rates of creatures like insects, fish and amphibians; and help conservationists decide which habitats receive the most attention and financial support. For generations, researchers have studied migration ecology through the catch-and-release method of bird banding.

Bird banding has served an important purpose, but it's a time-intensive task that is limited by extremely low bird recapture rates. In recent years, a new technology has surfaced that produces significantly more data and, most importantly, doesn't require recapture: the Motus Wildlife Tracking System. Motus towers use radio telemetry to locate birds that have been outfitted with a non-intrusive transmitter called a nanotag. When nanotagged birds fly within the 9-mile range of a tower, they automatically get logged by the station.

In 2020 Alex Waier, the Milwaukee County Zoo's bird curator, acquired a Motus tower for the Zoo through the Society's Conservation, Research & Education Fund. "Motus towers tell you which direction the bird is coming from, whether or not the bird stays in an area and how long they stay there," says Waier. "The Zoo is a stopover

site for many migratory birds because of our acreage, tree cover and numerous bird feeders, and the tower allows us to be part of a bigger research project."

The Motus method is most successful when there is an overlapping line, or array, of tower signals. States like Michigan and Pennsylvania currently have complete east-to-west arrays containing dozens of towers, but the Zoo's tower is one of the first in Wisconsin. "One of the biggest challenges in conservation is collecting applicable information, and this technology does just that," says Kari Williams, the Zoo's conservation, research and sustainability coordinator. "Wisconsin is in the Mississippi Flyway, one of the most trafficked migration routes in the country. There is so much valuable data that we could be collecting."

The Zoo's acquisition of a tower is an exciting step in the right direction, but there is much work to be done before Wisconsin has an unbroken array. Recruitment efforts by the Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory are currently underway for private and public stakeholders who could potentially host a tower, which can be mounted on a rooftop or mast. Waier is excited by the future possibilities of the project. "These stations have so much potential to really expand our understanding of bird migration patterns, which in turn will improve numerous conservation efforts in the Midwest. It's going to be a real game changer."



A golden-winged warbler outfitted with a nanotag.

Photo by Liz Allocca



The Zoo's Motus tower is located on top of the Milwaukee County Zoo's Zoofari Conference Center building.

To learn how you can help expand Wisconsin's array, contact the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory at info@wlgbbbo.org or 262-235-2570.

We would like to offer a special thank-you to the following individuals who have been instrumental in the Zoo's participation in this project: Bill Mueller, former director of the Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory; Jennifer Phillips-Vandenberg, current director of the Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory; Bob Sass with Custom Communications Solutions, LLC; and Davor Grgic, the technician volunteer who assisted with setting up the tower.



TAKING PRIDE IN GIVING BACK

Ask five different people about their favorite part of the Milwaukee County Zoo and you'll likely get five different answers. The Zoo is, of course, a place for people to visit animals they would otherwise never see in person, but there is so much more behind the gates. Nature-based education classes, family-friendly events, conservation opportunities, live theater performances – at the Zoo one will find an abundance of cherished community offerings. While each function is orchestrated by separate departments of Zoo and Society staff, one group is involved in all of them: Zoo Pride.



There is no set mold for a Zoo Pride volunteer. The age range of volunteers is currently 19 to 98, and hours worked per year range from 5 to 500. People of all ages, commitment abilities and skillsets are welcome. "The only common trait we look for when hiring a volunteer is a sense of service," says Lynn Wilding, program manager of volunteer services. "We have about 30 different committees such as office help, event staff, education support, animal watch, animal enrichment and public outreach. We even have a bee-keeping committee. There's truly something for everyone."



Last fall the Zoological Society launched Zoo Pride Spotlight, a social media campaign dedicated to shining a light on Zoo Pride volunteers. Each month one is interviewed about the type of work they do, their experiences at the Zoo and their passion for the job. They are also asked to give advice to somebody who is considering joining Zoo Pride. Without coincidence, nearly every person gave the same response to this prompt: "Do it!"

The Zoo offers so much to the Greater Milwaukee Area, and Zoo Pride is the perfect outlet for those who wish to give something back. Like many organizations, staff numbers dipped during the COVID-19 pandemic. "At our peak, we were operating with 625 volunteers," says Wilding. "We currently have 325. Recruitment was temporarily put on hold, but we're hoping to increase those numbers soon." If you or somebody you know is interested in volunteering at the Zoo, applications are currently being accepted at zoosociety.org/volunteer.



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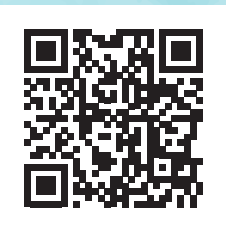


MAY
6



A night of animals, music and fun

Make a SPLASH when you DIVE into this family-friendly event on May 6, 2022. Zootastic, sponsored by Wellpoint Care Network, includes an evening at the Zoo, dinner, dessert, a dance party, crafts and special zookeeper talks. This year's theme is all about water and the animals that can't get enough of it. From the hippos who spend 16 hours a day in their pool to otters who constantly get out of the water just to dive back in. Zootastic is a fundraiser for the Zoological Society and helps us conserve, educate and support the Zoo.



Scan this QR code with your phone, or visit zoosociety.org/zootastic, to learn more and register!

zoosociety.org

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