

ZooTracks

it's all about your oregon zoo



David Steinberg and
David Kleinke working in the kelp habitat.

Diving in.

"I really wanted a means of public interaction and to educate visitors about our animals, animal behavior and ocean conservation. Having education delivered this way serves as bait, because a diver underwater creates a fascination for young people."

David Steinberg, volunteer diver, zoo member and foundation donor

Expert volunteers help care for zoo animals and habitats.

On a cool July morning, in a building tucked behind the zoo's marine life habitats, dive safety officer Micah Reese sits in a room filled floor to ceiling with parts and equipment. He's preparing to lead a team of volunteers through the safety drills and go over the day's assignments. Today, divers will clean the zoo's sea otter area and holding pools – collecting enrichment toys, removing shells, and scrubbing algae from the walls with a hydraulic brush.

The quiet hum of the filtration system plays counterpoint to the ever-present sound of running water. One by one, the volunteers arrive, lugging enormous gear bags. Reese is affable, greeting everyone with a joke and a warm welcome. The close relationships are evident – people who dive together are responsible for one another in ways that build trust.

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Diving in. (Continued from page 1)

To serve on the team, divers must provide and maintain their own equipment. The zoo supplies scuba tanks, weights and Reese's expert leadership.

"Micah has done a phenomenal job cultivating this dive program and keeping everyone safe," said Amy Hash, who oversees the zoo's marine life team.

The marine life care staff are trained as well, maintaining their certification with monthly dives.

"Regular diving allows them to participate in setting up enrichment activities," Reese explains. "It gives them a chance to practice their skills and experience the animals' habitats up close."

"There is no better time to do health checks on our fish and anemones than when we're diving in the kelp habitat," Hash said. "And we're currently working on underwater training with our harbor seals, which is enriching for both the animals and staff."

Kayla Boys, a volunteer for four years, was recently hired as the zoo's assistant dive safety officer. She'll help Reese strengthen and expand the program, which he hopes will include education and mentoring in the future.

A recent gift to the Oregon Zoo Foundation represents a big step toward that goal, offering opportunities for some unique interactions at the zoo. Volunteer diver and zoo member David Steinberg made a gift that is helping the zoo acquire a communication system that lets divers speak to each other underwater and to guests on the other side of the glass. Steinberg's gift included a match from his former employer, IBM, doubling his impact.

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Volunteers David Steinberg and David Kleinke have served on the dive team since 2009.



"When I look out and see kids waving," Reese adds, "it reminds me of why I was inspired to pursue this work."

He's excited because he believes when people see divers at work with the animals, they could be inspired to say, "I want to do that."

With his help, they might also be saying, "I can do that."

Matching gifts are an easy way to double (sometimes triple!) your donation to the Oregon Zoo Foundation. If you're planning to make a gift or purchase a membership, or already have, your employer may financially match your donation. Check with your human resources department or email foundation@oregonzoo.org to learn more.



Jolene

Investing in your zoo.

Make a gift with long-term impact.

You know your favorite animals by name. You haven't missed ZooLights in years. And you even know the best time of day to swing by the Pacific Shores area and watch otters dine on delectable, sustainably sourced seafood.

You know the zoo, but you may not know how you can help preserve this local treasure for generations to come. What sorts of gifts make the biggest impact?

Talk to Susan! She knows the zoo too, and she's an expert at helping zoo friends, like you, identify the best financial assets and tools to achieve your goals.

Susan will listen to you, and learn more about you and what you love most.

Then, she will assist you in making a meaningful investment to help sustain your zoo for years to come.

Email susan.daigle@oregonzoo.org or call 503-914-6029 and set up a time to talk about how you can help create a better future for wildlife.



Visit www.oregonzoo.org/condor
and make a gift to help save an iconic
northwest species from extinction!

Greetings!

Looking forward to another year with you.

Summer at the zoo was great, packed with fun music nights and members-only evenings — but now we're excited to welcome the crisp fall air, and watch the rains return our landscape to familiar shades of green. We're looking forward to wintry beverages at ZooLights, sipped with extra holiday cheer. And we're already hard at work, planning our spring gala, Zoo Rendezvous — we can't wait to gather and honor all that you make possible for your zoo.

This year, because of you, we're celebrating a big win for wildlife. For the first time in more than a century, California condors are flying free over Redwood National Park. This majestic endangered species is now a flap of the wing closer to returning to the skies of Oregon.

And, we're celebrating many important small actions — little things each of us do for wildlife every day.

You've told us about your efforts to create bird- and pollinator-friendly gardens, and you've shown your support for measures like the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. It's making a difference and helping advance the zoo's critical work.

This is all possible because of you. Every day, your support helps the Oregon Zoo be the best it can be for animals, our community and our world. YOU are the heart of our work for wildlife, and we're incredibly lucky to have you in our herd.

See you around the zoo!

With gratitude,

Julie Fitzgerald,
Executive Director,
Oregon Zoo Foundation

Kim Overhage,
Chair, Oregon Zoo Foundation
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Kya at Predators of the Serengeti

Paws and Tales.

High school students explore veterinary careers.

“Go ahead, touch her paw,” he encouraged. The students were timid at first, inching their way closer to the anesthetized cat, careful to avoid the team working around the examination table. Dr. Carlos Sanchez, who heads the veterinary medical center, explained what was going on to the three high school students visiting that morning.

The cat’s medical team communicated with each other at every turn, moving quickly as Dr. Rich Sim guided them through a routine preventive exam, cleaning teeth, collecting samples and monitoring the animal’s vitals.

This animal was no ordinary house cat. Kya is a 15-year-old, 304-pound lion who lives at the zoo, and for three students hoping to pursue careers in veterinary sciences, this was the chance of a lifetime.

Thomas Cha, who started college this fall, is a member of Banfield Pet Hospital’s inaugural NextVet internship class. Tryanna Thompson and Kierra Derthick are high school students who spent their summer working alongside Cha and the rest of a veterinary team, as pet care assistants at a local Banfield clinic.

Banfield’s new NextVet program offers students a paid, immersive internship experience aimed at inspiring young people to pursue careers in companion animal medicine.

Fifteen interns - including Thomas - spent the summer working in Banfield hospitals across the U.S. to gain firsthand knowledge about veterinary medicine from hospital teams and industry experts. The program, Banfield says, was established in response to a nationwide shortage of veterinary professionals. One recent study from Mars Veterinary Health estimated nearly 41,000 additional veterinarians will be needed to meet the needs of companion animal healthcare by 2030.

“I realized there is so much to learn in veterinary medicine, especially to be a zoo vet,” said Derthick. “What made me fall even more in love with veterinary medicine was being able to be up close to the lion.”

For Cha, it was exciting to see how many people it took to perform the exam, but the best part was touching the lion. “Her fur was so soft,” he said.

As the team completed Kya’s exam and whisked her back to her habitat before rousing her from slumber, Dr. Sanchez led the students on a behind-the-scenes tour of the zoo’s vet center. He shared stories of caring for elephants and chimpanzees while the students hung on his every word. Then he dashed into his office to grab what looked like a large piece of bone, and handed it to them. They passed the object around reverently and he asked, “What do you think that is?”

After a series of guesses, he told them it was a piece of dental plaque from a rhino. For Derthick, “That was a deciding factor for me pursuing veterinary medicine.”

“As soon as I got home, I started researching more about lions and all the animals we saw at the zoo,” she added. “I know this is what I want to do.”

You can help provide unique opportunities for youth to engage with wildlife and conservation science with a donation to the foundation - visit www.oregonzoo.org/give, email foundation@oregonzoo.org or call 503-220-2493 to learn more.



Veterinary technicians Bianca Martin and Sloane Black examine lion while Dr. Sanchez explains the procedure to Banfield students.

Science, supported by bears.

New technology could allow safer monitoring of wild polar bears.

This spring, biologists working with the zoo had the chance to see polar bears Nora and Amelia Gray in a new light: a laser beam. Researchers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey and National Park Service tested their state-of-the-art laser technology by scanning the zoo's polar bears in their Polar Passage habitat. If effective, the laser scanning could provide a safe, non-invasive way to monitor bears in the wild.

“Currently the way we weigh bears is with a big metal tripod, and they have to be immobilized,” said Lindsey Mangipane, a polar bear biologist with the USFWS. “We’re hoping this method will give us a way to evaluate body size of bears that doesn’t require capture and handling.”

Mangipane and her colleagues first learned that the National Park Service was imaging brown bears using 3D laser scanning technology in Katmai National Park, as part of the popular annual event Fat Bear Week. They wondered whether the same technology could be used on polar bears in the wild, and they came to the Oregon Zoo to find out.

Because the zoo bears are weighed regularly, Mangipane and her colleagues can calibrate her laser technology against their known weights to determine its accuracy. While Nora and Amelia Gray enjoyed some frozen treats, researchers trained invisible scanning lasers on the bears from the roof of Polar Passage.

“Nora and Amelia Gray were so fun to work with,” Mangipane said. “And their care staff did a great job getting them in a good position that we could conduct the scans.”

Accurate information about wild polar bears’ body mass and condition could help researchers answer a lot of questions, according to Mangipane. Bears that are in good body condition have increased fitness levels and are more likely to have cubs. As sea ice in the Arctic retreats, this information becomes even more important in the effort to conserve wild polar bears.

This isn’t the first time Oregon Zoo polar bears have lent a helping paw to science. Nora enjoys her time in a swim flume, fully funded by foundation donors and designed to help scientists understand the caloric requirements of wild polar bears.

“We still have gaps in understanding how climate change is affecting polar bears,” said conservationist Amy Cutting, who recently joined Polar Bears International after 20 years on the zoo’s animal-care team. “Zoo bears are perfect candidates to help because they already participate in many health-care behaviors voluntarily and seem to find those experiences enriching.”

Indeed, much of today’s zoo-based polar bear science has its roots in animal-care advances at the Oregon Zoo, according to Cutting. In 2012, polar bears Conrad and Tasul became the first of their species to voluntarily give blood. The breakthrough was huge in terms of improved animal well-being and veterinary care, Cutting says, and it also opened the door to other possibilities.

Tasul helped scientists learn how climate change was affecting the diets of wild polar bears, then assisted researchers by wearing a high-tech collar to help calibrate tracking collars deployed on wild bears.

These collaborative efforts couldn’t come at a more urgent time. As climate change reduces Arctic sea ice, polar bears struggle to find and catch seals, making it harder for them and their cubs to survive. The species is classified as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Species Survival Commission has designated the species as facing a high risk of global extinction.

To learn how you can support important conservation science initiatives like these or to make a gift, call 503-220-2493 or email foundation@oregonzoo.org. We can’t do this work without you!

Nora and Amelia Gray
at Polar Passage

“Zoo bears are perfect candidates to help because they already participate in many health-care behaviors voluntarily and seem to find those experiences enriching.”

Amy Cutting, Polar Bears International





You can help Humboldt penguins in the wild by choosing sustainably harvested fish at the market. Visit www.seafoodwatch.org to learn more.

Make a big difference!

Small actions for wildlife, and for us all.

In a town full of drawbridges, every once in a while you just get ... stuck. Or maybe you find yourself sandwiched between cars at the corner of SE Division and 11th, the freight train's caboose no more than a distant mirage.

Next time you're stopped for more than 10 seconds, try turning off your engine. Turning off your car might be the easiest way to reduce your vehicle's impact on the environment. Idling wastes fuel and produces greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants that affect wildlife worldwide.

Do you have a small action you'd like to share? Email jenny.woodman@oregonzoo.org and tell us what you're doing!

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