

# 2014 Annual Report to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation

May 31, 2015

## SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS



Woodland Park Zoo finished the year with strong attendance for 2014, a total of 1,276,314 guests, which surpassed that of 2013 by 16,000, a new record and the 14<sup>th</sup> year in a row attendance has exceeded 1 million. Due, in part, to a summer with above average hot temperatures and to slightly slower concert sales, financial results show operating revenues at 2% under budget. However, we offset this revenue shortfall by holding expenses 2% under budget and we ended the year with positive net income, aided by generous private giving and strong earned-revenue results. Final audited figures were made available in May.

New litters of young animals, the temporary cheetah exhibit, great summer experience programming, and enjoyable seasonal weather translated into above-average performance and exciting new visitor experiences. Also contributing is the continued vitality of our growing membership program, with online sales continuing to boost membership sustainability.

We earned our seventh consecutive accreditation, a rigorous process that occurs every five years, by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' (AZA) Accreditation Commission. Only zoos and aquariums that meet the highest standards, show proven leadership in the care and conservation of wildlife, and inspire people to take action to protect the natural world are accredited by AZA.

November's national Zoobiquity Conference, a collaboration between the University of Washington and Woodland Park Zoo, attracted hundreds of leading scientists and practitioners in veterinary medicine, human medicine, and environmental health to explore a "One Health" approach to how rapidly changing local and global environments affect the health of humans and animals. After morning panel sessions at UW, participants gathered at WPZ for Walking Rounds – lively clinical discussions informed by the zoo's animals and animal management and veterinary experts.

We continued construction on the second phase of Banyan Wilds creating new, naturalistic exhibits for endangered Malayan tigers and sloth bears, and a conservation hub to engage guests in projects to save wild tigers. The first phase, which opened in 2013, was the popular Asian small-clawed otter exhibit, a kids' nature-play zone and an aviary.

In its third year, the WildLights winter festival (Nov. 28 - Jan. 4) enjoyed its highest attendance ever—84,500 guests—helping to spread zoo attendance throughout the year and more fully utilizing the facility. The zoo worked with the neighboring community to alleviate issues identified the previous holiday season. Nightly free parking reduced impacts on residential streets, and member and corporate employee discounts Sunday-Wednesday further spread attendance evenly. The zoo received great feedback on operational improvements, and virtually no complaints from neighbors during or after the event at the Neighborhood Liaison Committee meeting in February.

Winter Jamboree, a new winter break promotion, attracted many families to Zoomazium and the Rain Forest Food Pavilion with fun activities, musicians and performers. In spring, the zoo hosted its first week-long Party for the Planet during Earth Month, with sustainability and conservation themed activities, tours and contests. In summer, the ever-popular ZooTunes began its fourth decade of offering family friendly outdoor concerts with a successful line up of musicians and performance bolstered by online ticket sales.

Other special events during the year included: Hoot for the Hood, our annual neighbor appreciation day, attended by a record-setting 350+ neighbors; half price for moms the day before Mother's Day, and free admission for veterans on Veterans Day. In March, the zoo continued the popular "Rainy Day Discount" program, introduced a year earlier. June's "Bear Affair: Living Northwest Conservation Day" drew big crowds learning how to live peacefully with Pacific Northwest species, including bears, wolves and cougars. The zoo hosted a "Tasting Flight" wine event and "Brew at the Zoo," an October after-hours event, allowed guests to enjoy local brewery products.

## **ANIMAL CARE AND HEALTH**

Two WPZ keepers earned top accolades from the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) for outstanding commitment and distinguished careers in animal care, education and conservation, including a Lifetime Achievement Award and a Certificate of Merit in Conservation. The Puget Sound Chapter of AAZK earned a Certificate of Merit for Zoo Keeper Education and the Barbara Manspeaker Chapter of the Year.

Because of WPZ's exemplary care partnerships with scientists and medical professionals at University of Washington and numerous medical providers, our 35-year-old silverback gorilla, Vip, successfully underwent groundbreaking endoscopic surgery on an infected sinus cavity. Endoscopic surgery is common in humans but rarely performed on zoo animals. He has recovered well and has re-engaged healthily with his group members.

Significant changes and additions to the animal collection, many per the nationally managed Species Survival Plan that guides successful zoo animal breeding programs, included: cheetahs, a new male red panda, a new male snow leopard, black crowned night herons, rufous-collared sparrows, vulturine guineafowl and Asian brown tortoise. An older pair of adult South African lions and the four cubs born in 2012 were transferred to other AZA-accredited zoos. We received a young male lion, Xerxes, who bred with our current female, Adia and successfully produced three healthy cubs in 2014. Staff and visitors alike have been impressed by the pair's bond and their growing family .

Significant births and hatchings included: a wallaroo joey, three South African lion cubs, litters of Asian small clawed otters, Solomon island leaf frogs, and numerous bird species, including a Malayan great argus pheasant, Humboldt penguin chicks, paradise tanagers, puna teals and ring-necked duck. The newest giraffe born in our collection turned 1 year old with festivities for people and animals alike.

With great compassion and sadness, and after a long, healthy life, 45-year-old female African elephant Watoto was humanely euthanized after she unexpectedly became unable to stand on her own, and after the on-site animal health team determined her condition was rapidly deteriorating. The necropsy (animal autopsy) revealed chronic, age-related arthritis in her leg joints and no evidence of an infectious disease process or herpesvirus infection.

## **CAPITAL PROJECTS, MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINABLE ZOO**

The zoo continued work on phase two of the new Banyan Wilds exhibit (formerly Bamboo Forest Reserve), the largest single exhibit project at the zoo in nearly 20 years, to house Malayan tigers and sloth bears, and a conservation action hub. Phase one included an exhibit of Asian small-clawed otters, an aviary and a children's nature-play area. Exhibit design evokes the lush, semi-evergreen rain forests of Southeast Asia, incorporating animals and influences from lowlands to highlands, from Assam in northeast India through peninsular Malaysia, with animal species appropriate to each subregion.

In other capital work, Exhibits and Facilities completed renovations to the former serow exhibit to prepare for the temporary cheetah exhibit, which included significant changes to the interpretive area in support of the 2014 summer experience program.

In other infrastructure improvement areas, we continue to make progress on our 2020 Sustainability goals to reduce energy use, water use and waste. The Community Solar on Phinney Ridge project, an innovative partnership among Seattle City Light, Woodland Park Zoo, and the Phinney Neighborhood Association and the largest community solar project in Washington state, was completed. Solar panel arrays on the Rain Forest Food Pavilion and on the zoo's behind-the-scenes animal food Commissary building enabled City Light customers to purchase electricity from a renewable source right on Phinney Ridge. The zoo had installed other solar arrays in recent years, per renewable energy and other energy efficiencies called for in our Sustainable Zoo plan.

With Seattle City Light, we completed replacement of all of primary electrical distribution wiring in the zoo's south end that had become unreliable, a significant maintenance project that repaired aging equipment affecting 50 percent of the zoo. Facilities staff conducted a full lighting inventory to identify further efficiency upgrades.

Additional projects included electrical and facility upgrades in preparation for re-accreditation. We also continued work to expand the existing inner north parking lot, adding 165 spaces to improve guest access as well as pedestrian walkways and ADA-compliant features to the West Entrance. We relocated administrative trailers to a non-public area south of this area, called the Center for Wildlife Conservation, to make room for the expanded lot. Consistent with the zoo's Long-Range Physical Development Plan, the project had been recommended by a citizen's working group.

## **EDUCATION, SCIENCE LEARNING AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

For our popular summer experience, the zoo's education staff focused on sustainability and "Our Changing Climate." Engagements integrated the Nature Exchange Outpost, climate change learning activities, and zoo apps to deepen visitors' learning experience on grounds – all geared to expanding learning about science, conservation, sustainable action for all ages. We added more interactive experiences with keepers and docents, digitally enhanced our tours to complement popular keeper talks and exhibits, and engaged more late-arrival visitors in the afternoon.

In conjunction with opening the temporary cheetah exhibit, we also implemented a new visitor interpretive scheme in the Wildlife Survival Zone. For our early learners, a suite of new cheetah-, cat-, and spot-themed programs included new puppet shows, creature features, outdoor and Zoomazium activities and a Big Cats activity backpack.

A new Family Nature Club was established in partnership with Thrive by Five, Seattle Housing Authority and Seattle Public Library for early learners and their families in underserved communities to enhance Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills while connecting learners to the natural world during community park visits and a final complimentary visit to the zoo. For Child and Family programs, 2014 was another record-setting year for our on-grounds camp program, serving 2000+ children ages 4-14. Our new Senior Classes continue to be popular.

ZooCorps, our teen development program, was honored as a “High Flyer” by the Raikes Foundation, for “reaching the highest bar of quality as measured by the Youth Programs Quality Assessment.” This year alone, the teens engaged over 85,000 zoo visitors on wildlife natural history and conservation topics via backpack, cart and animal encounter programs. Teens also provided learning and leadership support to our growing middle school ZooCrew program at schools in the community and on field trips to the zoo.

Our new Advanced Inquiry Program (AIP) Master’s degree for educators graduated its second cohort of students, and welcomed its fourth cohort into the program. Co-delivered by faculty at Miami University and WPZ education staff, the AIP combines graduate courses at the zoo with a web-based, global network of educators, community leaders and field work opportunities.

Collaborations continued with WISE, the Washington Informal Science Education Consortium (Woodland Park Zoo, the Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium, IslandWood, the Museum of Flight and the Burke Museum) as we piloted new 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade programs in Highline School District to advance STEM learning and teaching. Generous support from the Boeing Charitable Trust helped us advance a new WISE K-12 STEM Research Program, which combines project-based science learning with sustainability to bolster the learning goals of disadvantaged youth.

Citizen Science programs continued to attract an ample number of community volunteers who, along with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, helped monitor and manage threatened amphibian populations in 15 sites in King and Snohomish counties.

More than 750 volunteers and community and corporate service groups generously gave over 80,000 hours to the zoo’s mission this year, a value of more than \$1.8 million.

## **FIELD CONSERVATION**

The zoo’s flagship conservation program, the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP) earned the AZA’s International Conservation Award which recognizes outstanding contributions to habitat preservation, species restoration and biodiversity in the wild. Also, the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program—PNG, our nonprofit partner in Papua New Guinea, earned the prestigious Equator Prize given by the United Nations Development Program, which recognizes innovative solutions for people, nature and resilient communities. Of 1,300+ applicants, only 35 were chosen. Lisa Dabek, Ph.D., WPZ senior conservation scientist and TKCP director, visited Papua New Guinea in June to continue tree kangaroo research at a lower elevation range. Her team was successful in capturing and collaring three new tree kangaroos. As part of its community capacity building efforts, the program organized a health training workshop at Sapmanga Village for community health workers. U.S. volunteer doctors donated equipment, trained local healthcare workers, treated patients, and helped improve local communities’ access to basic healthcare.

Fred Koontz, Ph.D., vice president for field conservation, visited our tiger and snow leopard conservation partners in Malaysia and Kyrgyzstan, respectively. In Taman Negara National Park, Peninsular Malaysia, he helped local research and protection teams set up a camera-trap grid to survey the number of tigers using the forest for hunting and breeding. Thanks to enhanced law enforcement training provided by the 10-year conservation partnership between WPZ and Panthera, by summer's end local anti-poaching patrols had contributed to the capture and prosecution of several tiger poachers from neighboring Asian countries. In Kyrgyzstan, Dr. Koontz collaborated in the Sarychat-Ertash Nature Reserve with our conservation partner, the Snow Leopard Trust, working with communities to save snow leopards, and provide coaching and capacity building to in-country program leaders.

We celebrated the first anniversary of the "Living Northwest" program at Thrive, the zoo's annual fundraising event, by featuring bear ecologist, conservationist and PBS, BBC and National Geographic TV host Chris Morgan. The popular annual event highlighted the zoo's commitment to Pacific Northwest carnivores and conservation projects. Also in the Northwest, the zoo released another 135 endangered western pond turtles into a protected natural recovery site in Pierce County. In collaboration with biologists from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and community partners, the project has saved our state's last two wild populations of the species, established four new populations, and head-started some 2,000 turtles.

## **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

In its second year, our ZooAction program continued to engage zoo audiences and the public in dialogues and regional and state activities that affect wildlife conservation and science and environmental education. Among our successful efforts was engaging the community in awareness and support of Proposition 1 for dedicated parks funding for major maintenance, upkeep, and operations of our city's 6,000 acres of parklands, including WPZ.

During the summer launch of our 96 Elephants campaign (named for the number of elephants illegally killed each day across Africa), more than 5,200 visitors of all ages took action by pledging never to buy, sell or trade ivory and to support a moratorium on ivory sales in the state. On World Elephant Day (August 12) and again on Elephant Appreciation Day (Sept. 22), we sent batches of the collected signatures to more than 50 federal, state, county and city officials to encourage our leaders to take action to end the ivory trade in Washington state. In partnership with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, we reached out to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife and to public officials to help craft proposed legislation to close loopholes that allow the black market to go unchecked. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass; however, the zoo is committed to continue engaging voters, community, and local and state leaders in global efforts to save wild elephants and rhinos.

After several months of working to implement the recommendations of the Elephant Task Force, in November WPZ announced that it will phase out its on-site elephant program and continue to move forward with its mission of saving animals and their habitats through conservation leadership.

Our Community Access Program (CAP) partnered with more than 600 local organizations to bring 41,000 people to the zoo who otherwise would not have been able to visit. CAP relies on community partners serving homeless shelters, food banks, senior centers and homes, minority programs, disabled and mental health facilities, and low-income youth centers to provide vulnerable populations with engaging zoo experiences and science learning. Through the CAP group voucher system, many field-trip groups enjoyed the zoo

including head start, ECEAP, and after school programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs and Big Brothers, Big Sisters programs.

We reached a remarkable milestone in one of our media channels, surpassing 25 million video views on our [WPZ YouTube channel](#). We continue to be the most watched U.S. zoo on YouTube.

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