

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT TO SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION

June 1, 2016

## I. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

WPZ concluded 2015 with record-breaking attendance – 1.33 million visitors – surpassing 2014 by 60,000 visitors and marking 15 years of attendance exceeding 1 million. Because of strong public and private support, the zoo is able to continually improve up-close animal encounters, customer services and amenities. The results are evidenced by the public's positive response: in 2015, 96 percent of guests surveyed said "my visit met or exceeded my expectations," and 93 percent said "my visit was worth the time and money."

Management challenges in 2015 included changes in administration, an excessively hot summer and a record rainy winter which constrained attendance and earned income. However, good budget discipline, a temporary hiring freeze and a successful winter WildLights event enabled the zoo to end the year only slightly under projections.

A special highlight was the opening of the new Banyan Wilds exhibit. Many zoo events and experiences were dedicated to celebrating the opening and the return of tigers to WPZ. In addition, the new exhibit focuses on increasing awareness of tigers' plight in the wild, and engaging members of the public directly in tiger conservation efforts.

Launched at the Space Needle, WPZ's Show Your Stripes community-awareness campaign celebrated Malayan tigers with 10 tiger statues created by NW artists. The tiger statues were displayed at popular Seattle and Bellevue establishments, in parades and festivals, and at the zoo. Three tiger statues sold for \$20,000 each at the 39<sup>th</sup> annual Jungle Party auction where more than 1,000 civic and community leaders helped raise a record \$2 million for zoo operations.

For the summer, WPZ teamed up with Seattle Public Library to get kids wild about science, reading, and tigers. The "Wild Science! Summer of Learning" combined the best of zoo and library content on the environment and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. WPZ's outreach programs traveled to 13 library locations, while a culminating celebration September 11-13 invited library patrons from underserved neighborhoods to the zoo with free bus transportation. The collaboration engaged 6,000 children and adults, helping Seattle Public Library increase the overall reach of its Summer of Learning by 15 percent over the prior year, demonstrating the power of partnerships.

On August 8, Asian Wildlife Conservation Day, visitors celebrated dozens of Asian species in the zoo's collection. Keeper talks and the Malayan tigers at Banyan Wilds highlighted the zoo's 10-year partnership with Panthera, an international organization dedicated to the preservation of big cats around the world.

### *Awards and honors*

In the fall, WPZ earned several top awards from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) at the national association's annual conference. David L. Towne, WPZ director from 1984-2002, and former superintendent of Seattle's Department of Parks and Recreation, was honored with the highest award for professional excellence, the R. Marlin Perkins award. Then-acting president and CEO, Bruce W. Bohmke, received the top award for his long-term involvement with the AZA Professional Development Program, having taught program courses on avian management, biology, and conservation for 20 years. The zoo's volunteer program earned a Significant Achievement Award.



In addition, WPZ's raptor flight program crew earned a certificate of Merit in Conservation from the American Association of Zoo Keepers and our zoo animal registrar was elected president of the Zoo Registrars' Association. Kelly Helmick, DVM, the zoo's associate veterinarian and a diplomat of the American College of Zoological Medicine, was elected president of the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians. Senior Conservation Scientist, Lisa Dabek, PhD, was nominated for the prestigious Indianapolis Prize for extraordinary contributions to wildlife conservation. Robert Long, PhD, WPZ's first Senior Conservation Fellow, was recognized among the first group of 20 scientists awarded the Wilburforce Foundation Fellowship in Conservation Science.

## **II. CAPITAL PROJECTS, MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### *Capital Projects*

The highly anticipated opening of Banyan Wilds, WPZ's most ambitious exhibit in 20 years, was completed and opened in May. Private contributions from more than 1,250 individuals, families, foundations, and corporations made it possible to transform the zoo's last "old" exhibit from 1950's concrete into the latest example of naturalistic exhibits for which Woodland Park is known. The public welcomed three Malayan male tigers to Seattle – Liem, Eko and Olan – ambassadors who are sharing the story of their species' tenuous existence in Peninsular Malaysia, and of the people working tirelessly in the field to protect their forest habitats and stop poachers in their tracks.

Every feature of the two-acre immersive exhibit is designed to elicit empathy for tigers, sloth bears, and many other species who share their forests. Interpretive features and programs show how, together, people can end the extinction economy that is causing these iconic felines to vanish. Of guests surveyed in exit interviews, 92 percent said they visited primarily to experience the new exhibit. Many reported feeling inspired to take action for tigers such as by voting for the citizen-led I-1401 wildlife protection initiative, donating funds or joining the zoo's Tiger Team.

The 10-year, \$1 million WPZ & Panthera Malayan Tiger Conservation Project is working to protect the fewer than 350 Malayan tigers that remain in the wild. In its third year, the project made great progress in tiger research and protection in the historic Taman Negara National Park and the Kenyir Wildlife Corridor (details p. 5).

Work began on a new butterfly exhibit, Molbak's Butterfly Garden, bringing back to the community a zoo experience that had closed in 2009. The Butterfly Garden is near Zoomazium and the new Alvord Broadleaf Theater, an outdoor stage for up-close encounters with small animals. Together these venues near the former West Entrance provide a new area for animal and nature experiences in the west part of the zoo. Also, pre-planning concepts and initial renderings were created to renovate and re-open the Night Exhibit, which also closed in 2009. Using a combination of private fundraising and proceeds from the Seattle Park District's major maintenance funds, it is expected to reopen in 2018.

Construction was completed to expand parking and provide guests an additional 165 surface parking spaces at the Northwest area of the zoo. The project also improved pedestrian access and ADA-compliant features of the West Entrance, while reducing local traffic around the zoo's perimeter. Staff trailers were relocated to the new Center for Wildlife Conservation to make room for the expanded lot.

### *Maintenance*

Thanks to the voter-approved Seattle Park District funding, the zoo is addressing long-needed infrastructure improvements. Renovations began on deteriorated decking of the orangutan exhibit boardwalk, to replace boards with sustainable FSC lumber and reopen to the public in early 2016. The large South Entry Plaza deck was also replaced with sustainable, slip-resistant bamboo lumber.

Other major maintenance projects completed included replacing the roof on the Animal Health Building; an assessment of 30 critical roofs to prioritize for replacement or repair; an architectural design to renovate the Conservation Aviary building; and a comprehensive inventory of significant trees on zoo grounds. In the Family Farm, the old cow kiosk was removed and the paving was improved. Permits were obtained and construction began on utility and paving projects on the zoo's west side, as well as to replace old, energy-inefficient pumps that supply necessary water pressure to the zoo.

#### *Sustainability*

WPZ continued to make progress on its campus-wide sustainability goals. Following the City of Seattle's request in late summer to organizations and residents to reduce water use by 10 percent, WPZ achieved a 12.7 percent drop in water usage over the same period a year earlier. Regarding solid waste, WPZ registered a 15% decrease over 2014, and 40% decrease over 2013, in the amount sent to the landfill. This was accomplished despite attendance increases in both years, as a new "clean-green" dumpster diverts more leaves and landscape debris from the waste stream. WPZ also became a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), an international, nonprofit organization of more than 2,000 member businesses promoting the growth and use of sustainable oil palm products through credible global standards and stakeholder engagement.

### **III. ANIMAL CARE AND HEALTH**

#### *Medical partnership advances great animal care*

Vip, a 37-year-old male gorilla, is breathing easier because of breakthroughs in WPZ animal care made possible by the collaborative ingenuity of zoo partners, donors and supporters, such as the Center for Diagnostic Imaging. The zoo veterinary team partnered with University of Washington professor and sinus surgeon Greg Davis, MD, assisted by several specialists in allergy and immunology, to diagnose and treat Vip's recurring sinus polyps and infection. In 2015, Vip's second surgery finally led to a full recovery and to his fathering a gorilla baby with 19-year-old female Nadiri in November.

#### *New baby gorilla steals hearts*

In November, a female western lowland gorilla, Yola, was born to first-time mother, Nadiri, and father, Vip. When Nadiri did not initially show strong maternal behaviors, attentive zoo staff instituted 24/7 baby care behind the scenes in the gorilla exhibit. There, mother and daughter learned new things about each other daily. The baby smelled and saw her mother and other gorillas, and Nadiri began to show maternal behaviors. Keepers and curators were cautiously optimistic that mother and baby would bond. Yola's birth carries on the valuable genetic heritage of her grandfather, Congo. He was born in the wild and is a "founder" animal for the Gorilla Species Survival Plan population which aims to sustain this species in zoos for the next 100 years. Yola means "firefly" in Hausa, a name gorilla keepers selected from a public naming contest to highlight the baby's role in keeping the flame of her lineage alive.

#### *2015 living collection highlights*

January – Male red panda Yukiko, from Red River Zoo, North Dakota, was introduced as a mate for female Stellar. No offspring just yet, but the two showed signs of compatibility.

February – Twin orangutans Chinta and Towan celebrated their 47th birthday with special treats and a lot of zoo guests. Born at WPZ, the twins gained national celebrity status as the first-known twin orangutans born in a zoo and had even appeared in "Life" magazine. Towan died in March, 2016, the oldest male orangutan in a North American zoo.

April – WPZ’s last two Asian elephants, Bamboo and Chai, moved to Oklahoma City Zoo and successfully integrated into a larger, multigenerational family. Bamboo is thriving with the new herd. Sadly, Chai died unexpectedly in 2016.

July – the milestone 50<sup>th</sup> Humboldt penguin chick hatched since the colony’s first breeding season in 2010. WPZ has one of the most successful Humboldt penguin breeding programs in North America. Also, WPZ received a hooded crane foster egg from the International Crane Foundation. The zoo’s pair of adult cranes had not produced viable offspring together but bonded with and raised the foster chick.

September – Kuwan, a jaguar triplet born at WPZ in 2013 and the first jaguar birth here in nearly 20 years, fathered two healthy cubs at his new home, Zoo de Granby in Quebec.

October – Misawa, a rare Rothschild’s giraffe, moved to Gladys Porter Zoo, Texas, to mate and start his own family. He had earned global media attention and visitor adoration for his loveable “grumpy-faced” look, although keepers and visitors confirmed his very gentle nature. Also in October, WPZ reared and conducted a final release of 750 Oregon spotted frogs into a protected wild site. Since 2007, this species recovery project among NW zoos and agencies released a total of 7,000 frogs (4,200 from WPZ alone). Ultimately attaining a 90% survival rate of reared frogs helped achieve federal listing as threatened.

November – The birth of Yola, a highly celebrated, fourth generation western lowland gorilla at WPZ, marked a significant addition to her lineage. Her healthy birth and development is testament to the expertise and care of zoo curators, managers, keepers and veterinarians.

#### *Other highlights*

Many other new animals joined our living collection, either being born here or coming from another zoo, including maned wolves, ring-tailed lemurs, North American porcupine, African pancake tortoises, Rocky Mountain goat, critically endangered Indochinese box turtles, Hill Wallaroo, and others. Sadly, after a very long life of 47 years, Nina, a great grandmother and bedrock of our gorilla groups, passed away in May after receiving tender, specialized care in her geriatric years. She is missed by staff and visitors alike.

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

In 2015, the zoo’s Education Department underwent a restructuring into three areas: 1) Guest Experience, 2) Science and Conservation Education, and 3) Volunteer and Community Engagement to better support WPZ’s 2015-2018 Strategic Plan: Growing Our Reach and Impact.

Supported by a significant new grant, the team incorporated new learning techniques to inspire empathy for animals in children and adults and foster a life-long ethic of caring. This perspective also influenced the design and construction of the new Alvord Broadleaf Theater behind Zoomazium and the expanding ambassador animal programs. WPZ is leading a collaborative effort with other zoos to research empathy and define national best practices for zoo experiences and education.

For the first time, the zoo’s child and family programs held a 12-week summer season for camps, significantly increasing the number of children attending: 2,508 campers attended Zooper Day Camp, Kinder Camp, Zoo U and Discoveries Day Camp programs. Altogether, 65,000 students, teachers, and chaperones participated in zoo-based programs or self-guided visits, 35% from underserved schools receiving free zoo entry and bus transportation, with support from King County parks levy.

The team worked to better link the zoo’s outreach programs with existing and new community partnerships, such as Family Nature Club, a partnership with the Refugee Women’s Alliance and early childhood educators to serve an additional 100 preschoolers.

In October, the Volunteer Celebration recognized a milestone: 13,000 cumulative hours of service by a top volunteer, and the contribution of more than 84,000 hours by community and group volunteers, a value of nearly \$2 million.

In the fall, WPZ also held Seattle's first Youth Climate Action Network "Summit." The new partnership between WPZ, Seattle Aquarium and Pacific Science Center engaged more than 150 teen and community participants, including local climate scientists, activists, artists, and public and nonprofit professionals from the University of Washington, NOAA, King County DNR, King County Metro, the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy and Seattle City Light.

The Senior Zoo Walkers program with the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation's Sound Steps and Group Health concluded 2015 with a record number of participants.

## **V. WILDLIFE AND HABITAT (FIELD) CONSERVATION**

### *Innovating technology to improve Northwest conservation*

WPZ's Living Northwest program, Microsoft Research, and Idaho Fish and Game took non-invasive wildlife conservation research to new heights, designing a tech device to facilitate monitoring North Cascades' species of concern in winter's harsh conditions, when trekking in is too dangerous. Some 70 programmable, long-lasting scent dispensers were deployed and paired with nearby camera traps. As the scents "lure" wild animals into view, the cameras record their range use and activity. High school Science, Technology, Engineering and Math students replicated the clever devices, while WPZ grizzly bears Keema and Denali helped by bear-proof testing the protective casings. Thanks to supporters and funding from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the devices will potentially revolutionize NW winter data collection and help better protect elusive wolverines, lynx, fishers and martens.

### *Helping Washingtonians make history for wildlife*

Thousands of zoo members, donors, volunteers, and staff helped Washington voters decide that wildlife need their ivory, skins, and bones more than humans need exotic trinkets, furniture and meats. In November, Initiative 1401 passed with 70 percent of the vote, ushering in a state law that strengthens penalties and bans commerce of products made from 10 of the most trafficked endangered species, all geared toward ending the global extinction economy. WPZ's advocacy and outreach role was significant in the broader coalition success, which involved the Humane Society of the United States, Seattle Aquarium, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Sierra Club, WildAid, Paul Allen, Wildlife Conservation Society and the 96 Elephants campaign.

### *Detering the poaching of endangered Malayan tigers*

The WPZ-Panthera Tiger Conservation Project nearly doubled the core tiger research area and protected new tiger breeding hotspots by deploying expanded "camera trapping" networks. With enhanced surveillance training and more monthly joint patrols by project staff and government personnel, deterrence is working: for the first time in two years, no tiger snares or poachers were observed in the core area. Community and religious leaders proactively encourage fellow citizens to save the Malayan tiger as a national and world treasure.

### *New grant to double the size of conservation reserve in Papua New Guinea*

The Equator-Prize winning Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program attracted major investments from the World Bank's Global Environment Facility and the Rainforest Trust. The work will help 50 villages in Papua New Guinea strengthen local conservation efforts, expand sustainable livelihoods commerce, and bring more clan-owned forest landscape under protection, effectively doubling the Conservation Area WPZ helped establish there in 2009. The work is in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program, the PNG government and Tenkile Conservation Alliance.

### *New alliance to save Asian elephants*

With the Oregon Zoo, Houston Zoo and wildlife organization Hutan, WPZ developed the Borneo Elephant Zoo Alliance to protect the endangered elephants on the Malaysian island. The Alliance's research-based land-use planning enables local communities to protect migration byways for elephants while also meeting local livelihood needs. Although WPZ made the difficult decision to close the elephant program after 94 years, the zoo's commitment to a world in which elephants thrive remains unchanged.

## **VI. PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

In partnership with WPZ's department of field conservation, the zoo strengthened its ability to engage the public in wildlife protection policy with of successful Initiative 1401, a citizen's effort to stem the illegal trade of wildlife body parts in our state and the decimation of many critically endangered keystone species, including elephants and tigers. Staff efforts included hosting information events, publishing stories to our huge audiences, and collecting signatures on and off zoo grounds.

The Community Access Program (CAP) enabled 54,000 underserved adults and youth, who otherwise might not be able to visit, to enjoy the zoo's natural wonders. CAP's community partners serve homeless shelters, food banks, senior centers and homes, minority programs, disabled and mental health facilities, and low-income youth centers and provide tickets so families can enjoy hands-on nature and science learning all year round.

WPZ's social media reach has grown dramatically in recent years, successfully engaging our audiences in stories about wildlife conservation, protection policies, environmental science, and the role members and partners play in creating a thriving planet. In concert with the Tigers on Tour/Show Your Stripes campaign, a popular #ihearttigers contest inspired thousands of tiger lovers passionate for big cat conservation to join the WPZ Tiger Team action network. In 2015, zoo Facebook page fans approached 125,000. With 27 million video views, WPZ remains the most watched U.S. zoo on YouTube.

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