It's been a full year since COVID-19 changed the world and the ways that we work, play, and interact with each other. It's been a tough year, and everyone has struggled in one way or another. Even at a social distance, though, we know how vital it is to support one another, with a kind word or just a wave hello.

Your support and encouragement have made a world of difference to us at the Zoo, and we are so glad to be able to lift your spirits as well. Since July, I've had the pleasure of welcoming so many of you to the Zoo and hearing how excited you were to get outdoors, stretch your legs, and enjoy our beautiful park. Hearing the laughter and exclamations of wonder from Zoo visitors makes me smile, as I know it does everyone who works here.

I've also been gratified by the positive feedback on Zoo Lights. It can be nerve-wracking to try something brand new or—in this case—to do something that hasn’t been done in over 20 years, while simultaneously putting COVID-19 protocols in place. Our team put a lot of work into the preparations, and staff manned extra shifts without complaint each evening to pull off something truly spectacular. The response was fantastic! We appreciate all the comments and constructive ideas about how we can make Zoo Lights even better going forward.

And that’s not all! We’ve been rolling out some other new experiences for visitors to try, and so far they’re getting great reviews, too. If you haven’t participated yet in a Goat Trek, Penguin Fish Toss, or Penguin Training, you’ve got plenty to look forward to. Join us for these creative versions of animal enrichment, and trust me, you’ll be enriched too!

As we continue to create opportunities for visitors to enjoy the Zoo in person, we’re also cognizant of the fact that many are still looking for ways to connect virtually. In this Zoogram, you can read about how our Education team has been connecting with school groups, extended families, and even some local businesses through virtual field trips and ZOOmobiles. Be sure to check out these options on our website.

Meanwhile, we haven’t missed a beat in caring for the animals or in pursuing our wildlife conservation work. We may not be traveling to South Africa or Bolivia this year for field work, but we’ve been doing plenty right here at the Zoo to advance our conservation programs. This Zoogram spotlights our behind-the-scenes contributions to Project SNOWstorm, for example.

Enjoy learning about all that we’ve been up to for the past few months, and please come see us this spring at the Zoo!

Sincerely,

J. Kirby Fowler, Jr.
President & CEO
We’d like to invite you to stretch your legs and make some memories at the Zoo this spring. The world’s tallest animal, a bird that flies beneath the sea, and a cat whose roar can be heard for miles will put the wild in your step. Come for breakfast, make a day of it, or take in a twilight event—your choice! Our calendar is filling up fast with Penguin Fish Tosses, Goat Treks, Sip n’ Strolls, Wine in the Wilderness, Guinness Nights, and so much more. We hope you’ll join in the fun.

It’s all happening at the Zoo!
It’s a new year, a new season, and a new chance to visit the Zoo! Join us this spring for daily activities, visits with the animals, and a calendar full of special events for you and your family.

As you plan your next visit, please reserve your timed entry in advance and review modifications designed to keep you, our staff, and the animals safe and healthy.

We look forward to seeing you soon! And remember – your visits help support our mission to care for the animals and to promote wildlife conservation at home and around the world, so thank you!

**BUNNY BONANZOO**

Presented by Mary Sue Candies | April 2-4

Free with Zoo Admission

It’s time once again for Bunny Bonanzoo! We’ll be celebrating spring with chocolate eggs, candy chutes, games, crafts, food, and live entertainment. Fun for the whole family!

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES**

Click Here for info and reservations

Bring your birthday crowd to the Zoo and enjoy a festive gathering on Celebration Hill, followed by a day with the animals. Let us help with the planning while you focus on the fun!

**PICNICS**

Click Here for more info and reservations

Want to take your family reunion or work party outdoors this spring? Then plan a picnic at the Zoo! You can host your group at Waterfowl Lake or Celebration Hill. Zoo staff will be on hand to assist, and any one of our approved caterers can help provide a spread.

**YOGA AT THE ZOO**

Click Here for Tickets

From downward dog to cow, to lizard, cat and more, wildlife has a deep tie to this ancient practice. Now’s your chance to connect even closer to nature during Yoga at the Zoo. Whether you’re just beginning or you’re looking to perfect your practice, a yoga class at the Zoo offers something wildly different.

**BREAKFAST WITH THE ANIMALS**

Constellation presents Breakfast with the Animals

Click Here for Tickets

One of the greatest experiences you can have at the Zoo is back this spring—breakfast with the animals! The coffee is hot, the food is delicious, and the company is unforgettable. Sign up now to reserve your spot. Same-day admission to the Zoo is included.

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No doubt many of you have been following the story of Maisie, the newest and youngest member of the Zoo's chimpanzee troop. She was born at the Oklahoma City Zoo last August but soon moved to the Maryland Zoo after it became apparent that her birth mother could not properly care for her. The AZA's Chimpanzee Species Survival Plan (SSP) recommended the transfer, based largely on the Zoo's considerable experience and success with this species. For nearly six months, the Chimpanzee Forest team worked round-the-clock shifts, hand-rearing Maisie until she was old enough to meet some fellow chimpanzees.

In late January, Maisie's life took a dramatic turn. She began to meet the troop! Introductions between chimpanzees can be a tricky affair, as the Chimp Forest team knows very well, and patience and vigilance are essential to success. From the moment that introductions begin, the team takes its cues from the chimpanzees themselves. “From this point forward,” said Erin Grimm, mammal collection and conservation manager for the Zoo, “every decision we make will be based on what we see happening between Maisie and the other chimps.” Maisie first met Abby, an adult female in the Zoo’s troop that had been viewed as a potential surrogate mother. Abby has never given birth before, but she has helped raise several other orphan chimps and the hope was that she would do the same with Maisie. For whatever reason, though, Abby did not feel comfortable doing so this time around. Other adult females in the troop began to step in and show interest in Maisie, starting with Bunny and Rozi. Now, nearly two months along, it appears that Maisie will not be raised by any one female but by the entire group, with the help of Louie.

“Louie’s role in all this has been helpful although unusual for a male chimp,” says Grimm. “But that could change tomorrow, who knows!” The troop is sorting things out, and no matter what tomorrow brings, the Chimp Forest team will be ready to respond. Stay tuned!

RED-TAILED GUENONS
The colobus have new neighbors! A pair of young red-tailed guenons has moved in with them. Red-tailed guenons, like black-and-white colobus, are tree-loving monkeys native to central Africa. They have colorful faces, long red tails, and cheek pouches that can store almost as much food as their stomachs. Depending on the day, you’ll find the Zoo’s pair inside Chimpanzee Forest, cruising the overhead primate trail, or outside at Lemur Lane. The six-year-old female, “Naim,” came to the Zoo from ZooTampa at Lowry Park. The five-year-old male, “Gus,” came from Zoo Atlanta. When they are old enough, they will have a chance to start their own family, as they have been recommended to breed by the AZA’s Guenon Species Survival Plan (SSP).

AFRICAN PENGUIN CHICKS
The Zoo is celebrating another banner year for our African Penguin colony. Breeding season this past winter brought 10 new chicks into the fold. The last egg hatched in early February. After spending a few weeks in their parents’ care, the chicks began getting to know their keepers and even learned to swim from them. The Zoo’s colony is now more than 100 birds strong! African penguins are native to the rocky shorelines of South Africa and Namibia, and the species is endangered in the wild. You can see the youngest members of our colony at Penguin Coast this spring and summer.

NEWS FROM THE ZOO

CLICK HERE to see baby chimp videos!
The Zoo's male snowy owl awaits the upgrade, flapping its wings in a sense of its own determination to continue its life on the wing. And it will. He has already been outfitted with Project SNOWstorm's version 2.0 transmitter, a sleek piece of equipment on his back. He will continue to wear the transmitter through the summer at least, and keep researchers on their toes, patiently awaiting the next data point.

Meanwhile, ever since getting his transmitter, the Zoo's snowy owl has ignored it. He seems oblivious to the new addition to his back, as if it is just another sleek piece of equipment. "There are no problems at all to report," says Kottyan. "It went easily and quickly." The Zoo's male snowy owl, a contributor to science, is learning to live with his new backpack.

Conservation Manager, to fit the Zoo's snowy owl with his new backpack. "It was pretty cool to see the old prototype. That is how and why the Zoo's male snowy owl became a contributor to science. "We are the only zoo in the world with a male snowy owl that's been tracked," says Dr. Bronson, "so we were the only ones in a position to make this offer, but happy to do it." Describing the process of 3D-printing technology, Dr. Bronson notes that it was used to reduce weight and size of the transmitter, making it a bit longer, narrower, and higher so that it would rise above a snowy owl's thick back feathers but still rest stably. Using 3D-printing technology, they were also able to take weight out of the design, producing an even harness that weighed less than two ounces, a negligible amount for a bird her size and weight.

Delaware was fitted with a matchbox-sized, solar-powered GPS transmitter. She wore the transmitter backpack-style, expected movements, and it was good to see that she did that relatively quickly." The Zoo's male snowy owl is now back in the wild, spreading its wings, and ready to continue its epic journey, tracking his movements and adding to the data that will help researchers better understand the winter ecology of snowy owls. The heart of the project is to better understand the summer and territorial behaviors of snowy owls, and it is a job that continues to grow with new data points.
Suddenly, they realized that WiFi reception on Zoo grounds is uneven. You can still take virtual learners around the Zoo, but not all iPad cameras work well in this type of virtual program. The one on the back of the device is much better than the one on the front.

Virtual Field Trips

During a virtual field trip, the host takes kids around the Zoo in pursuit of a particular theme, using video footage from their camera and interviews with Zoo staff. The program then switches to a set of three educators while another acts as producer. Each live program runs 30 minutes. One educator acts as host while another acts as narrator, and the third as interviewer.

Kovaleski–was immersed in Zoom while the three managers, Kristin VanBuskirk, Sharon Bowen, and Hannah Rupert–got creative. They consulted with Kerrie Sarkus, the Zoo's IT manager, about using their Zoom account. When it became clear that they would need to come up with their own setup that was better than the one on the front.

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Virtual Field Trips and ZooMobiles

In the fall of 2020, three of the Zoo’s most experienced educators were able to rejoin the Education team and they talked about the pandemic becoming an entirely different reality. As weeks stretched into months and the true measure of the coronavirus hit the United States, they sat down at their kitchen tables and began calling around to school districts, museums, and zoos. They wanted to talk about the value of virtual field trips and ZooMobiles. Within weeks, they had ready, and in the second month, the teams had been busy preparing for the fall.

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Song is a great way to identify birds in your backyard or around your neighborhood. In spring especially, even before you can see a bird, you can often hear it singing.

**Why do birds sing so much in spring?**
Because of babies! Spring is the start of breeding season for most Maryland birds. Males sing to attract females and to warn other males away from their territory.

**When a bird sings, it is telling you what it is and where it is.**
To females, a male bird sings “come visit me.” To males, he chirps “buzz off, I was here first.”

If a female likes what she hears, she will enter a male’s territory to check him out. She will look at all sorts of things, from the quality of his feathers to the skill of his nest-building. If she likes what she sees—and hears—she will accept him as her mate.

**Let’s listen!**
Click below to hear the songs of four birds common to Maryland. Once you’ve trained your ears to their tunes, set your alarm for early morning and step outside. Who do you hear? Anyone familiar?

---

**songs of SPRING**

Keep practicing, and one day you will be as good as Zoo Naturalist Peter Martin at identifying birds by their songs and calls. Peter first became interested in birds as a kid growing up in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Now, he spends a lot of his spare time bird-watching—and listening! He has become a good mimic, too, and uses his skills to participate in citizen-science projects focused on birds.

[CLICK HERE to listen](#) as Peter answers the call of an Eastern Screech Owl on a recent spring evening near his home in Hereford, Maryland.
This breeding season, 10 African penguin chicks hatched out at Penguin Coast. Each received a gem of a name, in keeping with this year’s naming theme. And the Zoo had a gem of a partner, Maryland’s very own Smyth Jewelers, to spread the word about the precious newcomers!

“We are feeling the love! It has been great fun partnering with the Zoo to help them name this year’s rare penguin chicks after equally precious gemstones,” said Ruthann Carroll, director of advertising at Smyth Jewelers. “African penguins are endangered in their native range, and we are happy to help bring more attention to the great work the Zoo does on behalf of the penguins in their care as well as in the wild.”

To celebrate the first chick hatched in 2021, the Zoo and Smyth Jewelers held a public naming contest. More than 4,400 votes were cast, and Ruby was the big winner!

Thank you to everyone at Smyth Jewelers for your support of the Zoo and for feeling the love for penguins.

Thank you for your support! We could not have made it through this past year without you. We are here for the animals no matter what, and we appreciate that you have been here for us. As the Zoo continues to recover from the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic, we ask for your continued support. If you can, please donate, and help us continue to provide the best possible care for all of the amazing animals at the Zoo.

Click to Donate Today

Call it a vineyard variation. Instead of Brew at the Zoo this year, we’ll be celebrating Wine in the Wilderness! This event is scheduled for Saturday, June 19 and Sunday, June 20. Join us after hours in the Maryland Wilderness to take in the serene sights and sounds of the evening while also enjoying wine, charcuterie, decadent pastries, and live music. You’ll be able to visit with some of our Maryland native species as well, including bobcats and North American river otters.

There will be a flower-wall backdrop for photos and vendors on hand for those who want to do a little shopping. Guests will also receive wine tumbler and fun temporary tattoos as favors.

Wine in the Wilderness will be a good time, to be sure, but also a vital fundraiser for the Zoo. Your attendance will directly benefit the Zoo’s animal, education, and conservation programs. We appreciate your support—and could not do it without you!—so please mark your calendar and reserve your tickets.

Reservations are required for this event. Tickets go on sale Friday, April 23rd.

Your safety is important to us, and you can be sure that we will be adhering to all State and City public health guidelines in hosting this event. Luckily, we have plenty of room in the Wilderness to spread out and gather safely. Guests are encouraged to stay with their groups, practice proper social distancing, and wear a face mask when not eating or drinking.

WINES IN THE WILDERNESS
Administrative offices are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the months of March through December and Friday–Monday during the months of January and February. The Zoo is closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

To all our friends and members, thank you for your continued support of the Zoo and its amazing animals. Here's to a happy and healthy 2021! We look forward to seeing you on grounds this spring.

While planning your next visit, please check the Zoo’s website—www.MarylandZoo.org—for timely updates on events, programs, exhibits, and improvements. Follow the tabs on the website to reach any Zoo department, including Group Sales, Membership, and Education.