

# MINNESOTA ZOO TRACKS ONLINE

{WINTER 2011}



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GIVING TO THE MINNESOTA ZOO

SOUNDS OF THE TROPICS

MINNESOTA ZOO LAUNCHES  
"FISH SMART" PROGRAM

Local personality Lee Valsvik and her son  
Max at *Russia's Grizzly Coast*.



MINNESOTA ZOO  
Changing how you see the world



# DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

{ BY LEE EHMKE }

On an icy Minnesota winter day, there is nothing quite like taking a mini tropical vacation—just by stepping into the Zoo's warm and green Tropics Trail. When the Minnesota Zoo opened in 1978, one of its most unique features was this enormous tropical building, among the very first of its kind in any zoo. Over an acre and a half under glass, the Tropics Trail was designed to immerse visitors

in an environment that is the natural home of the animals exhibited there—the tropical rain forest.

For the first 25 years of its existence, the Tropics Trail focused exclusively on the wildlife and plants of tropical Asia. Starting in 2004, we began to make changes to present greater diversity. Today, the Trail features sections devoted to tropical biodiversity hotspots from around the globe: Madagascar, South and Central America, and African forest habitats—all of which bring a host of new animal species into our collection. Today, along with long-time residents like gibbons, tapirs, and Komodo dragons (all Asian species), the Tropics Trail now includes lemurs, tamarins, sloths, scarlet ibises, colobus monkeys, dwarf crocodiles, red river hogs, arrow poison frogs, and radiated tortoises, representing a broad sampling of the world's fast-disappearing rainforests.

The dynamic nature of the Tropics Trail has meant that, at times, sections of the exhibit complex need to be temporarily closed to allow us to make changes and improvements to the habitats and public spaces. In the past year, over \$1 million has been invested bringing the building's infrastructure up to date: we installed a new roof, new skylights, clerestory windows, as well as major upgrades to the air handling systems—greatly extending the longevity of the structure, improving the environments for animals and guests and making the building more energy efficient.

One of the Tropics Trail highlights—the Coral Reef exhibit that was added 20 years ago—is now undergoing much-needed major repairs and enhancements. When it re-opens in Spring 2012, it will be better than ever, with bright new artificial coral, an improved filtration system, and a spruced-up public viewing gallery. In this newsletter you can read about the remarkable natural sounds coming from the huge diversity of creatures in the Tropics Trail; added to that for a while will be the sounds of progress—please excuse the occasional sounds of hammers and drills as we work hard to maintain and improve Minnesota's largest rainforest!

Lee Ehmke  
Director/CEO

SEE LEE'S VIDEO HERE.

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{ ANIMAL SPOTLIGHT }

# KOMODO DRAGONS

*VARANUS KOMODENSIS*

{ BY KELLY LESSARD, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER }

The largest species of lizard in the world can be found on the Tropics Trail at the Minnesota Zoo.

Komodo dragons are found on the island of Komodo plus three small nearby islands where the climate is hot and dry. They live in dry open grasslands or in the lower levels of tropical forests. After hatching, young dragons live in trees for the first few years to avoid being eaten by adults.

Komodo dragons, also known as Komodo monitors, are big and are considered a top predator. Their hunting strategy is based on stealth and power: they ambush their prey (boar, water buffalo, and Sambar deer) and inflict a crippling, venomous bite. Using their long, forked tongue to smell, they then track their prey which usually dies within a few days, probably from the toxic effects of venom.

Solitary animals, Komodos come together only to breed and eat. Females may lay up to 30 eggs in underground nests during the dry season, which they leave unguarded to incubate for eight to nine months. To maintain their body temperature, Komodos bask in the morning sun and avoid temperature extremes by using shady areas in the afternoon and burrows at night.

Komodo dragons are vulnerable; they inhabit a small range and are affected by increasing human populations, poaching, and natural disasters.

Keeping these dragons at the Minnesota Zoo requires giving them special care—and Komodos like it hot! The average temperature inside the Zoo's Tropics building is 75° F, which, while warm, is not as hot as the blazing heat of Indonesia—so the Zoo installed a radiant floor heating system inside the Komodo exhibit that helps keep the dragons warm by circulating hot water through tubing in the cement floors and rocks.



{ FEATURE }

# SOUNDS OF THE

{ BY KELLY LESSARD, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER & CALE NORDMEYER, ZOOKEEPER }

The Minnesota Zoo's Tropics Trail is a great place to awaken our senses. Its lush, tropical climate makes it the perfect escape from the harsh winter with orchid blossoms infusing the air. Brightly-colored flamingos, playful warty pigs and diving ducks delight our eyes as we stroll along the winding trail. But the sounds of the Tropics are especially powerful; next time you visit, close your eyes and just listen...

Lesser Flamingo

# TROPICS



Red Ruffed Lemur

If you've ever visited the Tropics Trail when it opens in the morning, you've likely heard the loud calls of "Tia" and "Bailey," the Zoo's white-cheeked gibbons. These endangered primates, native to

{ SOUNDS OF THE TROPICS }

# PRIMATES

Southeast Asia, often "sing" in unison to claim their feeding area and announce their presence to neighboring gibbon families to strengthen family bonds. Instead of physical conflict, the adult pair defends its

territory with a loud, melodic duet that can be heard for miles in the wild and throughout the whole Trail and beyond at the Zoo!

The gibbons were one of the main primate groups on the Tropics Trail for many years, until 2004 when red-ruffed and ring tailed lemurs came to the Zoo. Soon after, competing territorial calls started to be heard between the groups, with a lower "gruff" call coming from the lemurs.

White-Cheeked Gibbons





Malay Great Argus Pheasant

## { SOUNDS OF THE TROPICS }

# BIRDS

There are so many birds on the Tropics Trail, it can be difficult to know whose call is whose! Toucans can be heard making a “cricket” sound, similar to frogs. Aptly-named white-crested laughing thrushes seem

to be making fun of other birds and guests alike with their repetitious “wacka-wacka-wacka.” Amidst the cacophony of louder birds, a flock of pied-imperial pigeons roams the Tropics building; the hushed

tones of their gentle cooing audible only to those who pause and listen intently.

Among the loudest residents of the Tropics Trail is our pair of rhinoceros hornbills. These large, beautiful birds are native to the forests of Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, and Thailand. The unique structure atop the rhinoceros hornbills’ bill, known as a casque, acts as a sound resonator, amplifying their thunderous call through the forest. Guests will typically hear our hornbills calling in unison as they cement their pair bond.

Some birds, such as our male Malay great argus pheasant, will call to announce their claim over a given territory. His loud ‘woot’ warns potential rivals of his dominance.



Rhinoceros Hornbill



Interesting sounds come from interesting animals, and the mammals are no exception. Tapirs tend to “squeak and hiccup” for attention, either from another tapir or even Zoo staff. Females specifically will

{ SOUNDS OF THE TROPICS }

# MAMMALS

hiccup during breeding season. Like many other species of pig, Visayan warty pigs squeal and snort at the end of the day when they are excited for their meal.

Gorals, known for blending in with their exhibit, emit a high-pitched snort when agitated or feeling threatened. Tamarins tend to have a high-pitched sound, and while sloths are usually quiet animals by nature, some at the Zoo tend to smack their food loudly.



Linne's Two-Toed Sloth



West African Dwarf Crocodile

Surprisingly, crocodiles are vocal reptiles: they croak or roar during breeding season, usually in the spring. Tiny arrow poison frogs make a typical but intermittent croaking sound that actually can be heard

{SOUNDS OF THE TROPICS}

# REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

by standing outside of their exhibit at the *Creatures Beneath the Canopy* exhibit on the Tropics Trail.

During your next visit to the Minnesota Zoo, pause and listen to the animals around you. *Which sounds do you hear?*

Arrow Poison Frog





{STAFF PROFILE}

# REBECCA MONTALBANO, HORTICULTURIST

{BY SARA KEENEY, SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR}

From making certain everything is watered and maintained outside during the summer, to ordering a variety of plants for the Tropics Building (and then planting them!), every season has Zoo horticulturist Rebecca Montalbano very busy.

Montalbano found herself at the Minnesota Zoo over 20 years ago. She attended Dakota County Technical College (DCTC) for two years, earning her associates degree in horticulture. During her time at DCTC, she became a student worker at the Minnesota Zoo and found her future career. After graduation, she joined the Zoo staff full-time and began working inside the Zoo's greenhouse.

Montalbano really enjoys working with the Zoo's orchid collection. "When the orchids are in bloom at the greenhouse, we bring them into the main Zoo to show our guests. We blend them into the exhibits as if they're meant to grow there year round. Once the flowers begin to fade, we take them back to the greenhouse to "re-grow" them and replace them with a new bunch of orchids."

She also enjoys researching plant materials. "When exhibits are designed, we find plants to match the exhibit geographically and make it beautiful."

{ FEATURE }

# GIVING

## TO THE MINNESOTA ZOO

{ BY MELISSA LINDSAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MINNESOTA ZOO FOUNDATION }

The Minnesota Zoo's exhibits, education classes and conservation programs are known to bring joy and wonderment to its guests, sentiments often felt when one receives a carefully-wrapped package.

But for 11-year-old Max and his mom, KOOL 108 and KARE 11 personality Lee Valsvik, the Minnesota Zoo has given them something to cherish each and every time they visit.

"The Zoo brought Kamchatka to us," says Valsvik, referring to the Zoo's award-winning exhibit, *Russia's Grizzly Coast*.



Valsvik and her partner Holly adopted Max from the town of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. This industrial seaport is the main city (population 240,000) and cultural center of Kamchatka, a peninsula in the Russian Far East that is one of the most isolated and wild places in the world.

The journey to Kamchatka in March 2001 was



not an easy one. While the peninsula is not far off the coast of Alaska, travelers must go through the embassy in Moscow before heading further east. So they flew from Minnesota to Amsterdam to Moscow, and then flew nine more hours on a Russian airline to Kamchatka.

"Petropavlovsk is situated on high hills, surrounded by volcanoes and mountains," continues Valsvik. "It is growing in popularity as a travel destination because of the remarkable scenery throughout Kamchatka, where geysers, mud-pots, and lava tubes provide a dramatic backdrop for

massive brown bears – just like what's found in *Russia's Grizzly Coast*."

Max loves coming to the Zoo and his favorite animals—not surprisingly—are the grizzly bears. He often tells other Zoo guests that he is from Kamchatka, and he particularly likes

watching the bears fish.

"The main industry of Petropavlovsk is fishing, and Max loves to fish," says Valsvik. "Fishing is clearly part of his DNA."



"The Minnesota Zoo and *Russia's Grizzly Coast* are so special to our family, which also includes our 10-year-old daughter Kiki," she continues. "Zoos around the world help each of us better understand the relationships between people and animals. They also teach us about different places, cultures and others who share our planet with us. For our family, *Russia's Grizzly Coast* is just an extraordinary gift."

While the Valsvik family feel blessed by this connection to Max's birthplace, the Zoo counts on people like Lee to strengthen their zoo as well ... as volunteers and donors who help the Zoo deliver extraordinary experiences throughout the year. For several years, Valsvik has donated her time and talents as the emcee for the Minnesota Zoo Beastly Ball, the annual fund-raising gala that raised more than \$500,000 last year.

"We could not boast of so many significant achievements without the support of volunteers such as Lee Valsvik and a thousand others," says Minnesota Zoo Director/CEO Lee Ehmke. "We are so grateful for their commitments, both their volunteer service as well as their financial support."



For the Phil and Donna Dobrzynski family, including daughter Alexis and twins Ryan and Rachel, giving a gift each year to the Zoo is a family tradition, just like their tradition of visiting the Zoo on Christmas Eve. "We spend the day wandering through the Zoo which is a perfect start to our Christmas celebration. We even have had other families join us for this special celebration," says Donna.

The Dobrzynskis are grateful for the Zoo's role in exposing their children and Zoo guests to a world bigger than their home or their neighborhood. "Everyone needs to see the bigger picture," remarks Phil. "When our daughter was four-years-old, she could name more animals and tell more animal facts than most adults."

When the family moved to the Twin Cities so Phil could attend graduate school 14 years ago, one of the first things they did was join the Minnesota Zoo. "We love the Zoo because it brings people and friends of all ages together. For us, the Zoo is more than just animals. It's an urban escape from everyday life. It takes you away from stress and brings you into another world," notes Donna.

The Dobrzynski's financial support of the Zoo's annual fund is a vital source of revenue for the Zoo. Gifts such as theirs, joined with thousands of other donations, help Zoo guests experience the naturalistic re-creations of

tropical, temperate and marine environments, complete with live plants and animals. Through "Friends of the Minnesota Zoo," which rewards donors contributing \$250 or more with benefits such as behind-the-scenes tours, or a lunch and tour with the director, the Dobrzynskis enjoy the opportunity to see their gifts in action and learn even more about the Zoo.

"We encourage people we know to support the Zoo to the best of their abilities because it is an amazing resource in our community," concludes Phil. "For volunteers, the Zoo provides an opportunity to share their knowledge with others and bring smiles to faces of all ages. For donors, making a gift to the Minnesota Zoo gives them the satisfaction that they are helping and protecting wild animals while supporting the greater community."

There are many ways you can support the Minnesota Zoo. For more information, please call 952.431.9237 or to make a gift online, please visit our donation page on [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org). Each of us can make a difference; all of us together can save wild animals and wild places.

# MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*The Minnesota Zoo is an extraordinary place, and we thank you for visiting and supporting us. In order to continue to provide you and our guests with experiences that deepen your connections to the natural world, we hope you will consider making a year-end gift to the Annual Fund. While there are many ways to make your gift, consider these three ways to support your Minnesota Zoo this year.*

## JOIN "FRIENDS OF THE MINNESOTA ZOO"

Friends is an exceptional group of individuals who are taking a leadership role by making annual gifts of \$250 or more to the Zoo. In return for their investment in the Zoo's conservation and education work, Friends are rewarded with opportunities to enjoy a variety of special benefits and privileges that deepen their commitment to wildlife and the Zoo.

One of the easiest ways to become a Friend is by making automatic monthly payments to the Minnesota Zoo. For example, a gift of just \$20.84 per month makes you a Friend of the Minnesota Zoo at the Voyager level. For more information, please contact Shannon Rhatigan at 952.431.9447 or [Shannon.Rhatigan@mnzoo.org](mailto:Shannon.Rhatigan@mnzoo.org). For more information, visit our donation page on [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org).

## GIVE A GIFT OF STOCK

While the market is taking us all on a roller coaster ride, it might be a good time to review your stock holdings and consider giving shares of stock that have appreciated in value to the Minnesota Zoo. As a donor of stock to the Zoo, you deduct the shares' fair market value and avoid income tax on the capital gain, while the Zoo receives the stock's full value. It's a win win for the Zoo and you! Call 952.431.9474 for more information.

## MAKE A TAX-FREE GIFT IF YOU ARE 70 ½ OR OLDER!

If you are age 70 ½ or older, you can donate up to \$100,000 to the Minnesota Zoo in 2011 using funds from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Your IRA rollover gift can fulfill your Required Minimum Distribution for 2011 while allowing you to make a meaningful gift to a charity you love—the Minnesota Zoo!

These transfers are neither taxable to you as income nor deductible as a gift but allow you to make a generous contribution to the Minnesota Zoo Foundation without having to write a check.

For more information, contact your IRA administrator or call Kim Bowman in the Foundation offices at 952.431.9474. Be sure to act now; this opportunity is only available through December 31, 2011.



{ FEATURE }

# MINNESOTA ZOO LAUNCHES “FISH SMART” PROGRAM

{ BY JOSH NELSON, SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD COORDINATOR }

*Currently, almost 90% of the fish we consume in the United States comes from just three species: tuna, salmon, and shrimp—and those species are in big trouble.*



Clockwise from left: Jake Uttich, executive chef, Oceanaire; Frankie Berberena, corporate area chef, Lancer Hospitality; Stephen Smith, executive chef, Ristorante Luci; James Kohler, executive chef, Luci Ancora; Russel Klein, executive chef, Meritage; Alex Chase, executive chef, Masu Sushi & Robata; Jamie Malone, chef de cuisine, Sea Change; Stewart Woodman, executive chef, Heidi's.



## The Problem

Globally, nearly 80 percent of our oceans are exploited or near collapse. In 2006, Dr. Boris Worm—a marine research ecologist and associate professor at Dalhousie University, Canada—wrote that if we continue with our current catch and consumption rates, all commercially-caught seafood will be depleted by 2048 (*Science*, November 2006).

Sustainable seafood is caught or harvested in a way that maintains (and increases) the current supply of fish while having little to no negative impact on the ecosystem. Although aquaculture is increasingly being used to meet the demand for seafood, it brings its own environmental issues to the table.

## The Partnership

The critical conservation need for sustainable seafood is what drove Minnesota Zoo staff to partner with the Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch Program in 2003. The partnership aims to help consumers make thoughtful decisions regarding seafood purchases that can make a positive impact on our oceans. One tactic—handing out wallet-sized "Seafood Watch" guides—has resulted in the distribution of over 80,000 cards from the Minnesota Zoo alone. The Zoo also has also incorporated sustainable seafood messaging throughout its aquatic exhibits and shows.

In 2010, the Minnesota Zoo's sustainable seafood program underwent a major transition. Another relationship, this one with the Shedd Aquarium's "Right Bite" staff along with a generous grant from the

Walton Family Foundation, led to a significant expansion of the Zoo's sustainable seafood education efforts including the hiring of the zoo's first sustainable seafood coordinator.

## The Program

In October 2011, the Minnesota Zoo launched "Fish Smart" a program designed to help protect the environment by increasing the availability of sustainable seafood in the Twin Cities and raising awareness of these issues throughout Minnesota. Currently, Fish Smart is partnering with several Twin Cities restaurants—including Heidi's Minneapolis, Meritage, Luci Ancora, Ristorante Luci, Sea Change, Masu Sushi and Robata, Lancer Catering, and the Oceanaire Seafood Room—that have pledged to only serving sustainably-sourced seafood. Fish Smart works with our restaurant partners to build public awareness of the different sustainable options including arctic char, barramundi and walleye.

Fish Smart also raises public awareness by showcasing the talents and creativity of our Fish Smart partners. New "Seafood Throwdown" events at local Farmer's Market locations include two chefs, local produce and sustainably sourced fish include "duels" to see who can make the tastiest, and most creative, dish in 45 minutes. Look for more of these events next summer.

The fate of our oceans and its wildlife may rest on our ability to create long-term sustainable methods for catching and harvesting seafood. There are many things you can do to make a positive impact on the health of our oceans. For more information about the Fish Smart program visit [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org) or visit us on Facebook or Twitter.

*"The Minnesota Zoo strives to connect people, animals and the natural world. Fish Smart does this by raising public awareness, and demand for, sustainable seafood. It demonstrates to people that informed decisions at the market can create positive change for our oceans."*

— Minnesota Zoo Director/CEO

Lee Ehmke

# YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

*RUSSIA'S GRIZZLY COAST CONSERVATION CABIN*

{BY DR. TARA HARRIS, DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION}

*Conservation is an important part of the message of the Zoo's award-winning Russia's Grizzly Coast exhibit. If you've been to the Conservation Cabin, you've probably seen the donation station, and maybe even supported a bear, sea otter, or leopard/tiger conservation effort. We appreciate your support, and we've put these funds to good use.*

## **BIG CATS (AMUR LEOPARDS & TIGERS): \$13,428 RAISED (AS OF OCTOBER 2011)**

Fewer than 35 Amur leopards and 500 Amur tigers are thought to remain in the wild. Habitat loss and poaching are the main threats to their survival. Funds raised at the Zoo have been sent to the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance to support habitat protection, anti-poaching efforts, and leopard/tiger-themed educational programs for local communities.



## **SEA OTTERS: \$10,986 RAISED (AS OF OCTOBER 2011)**

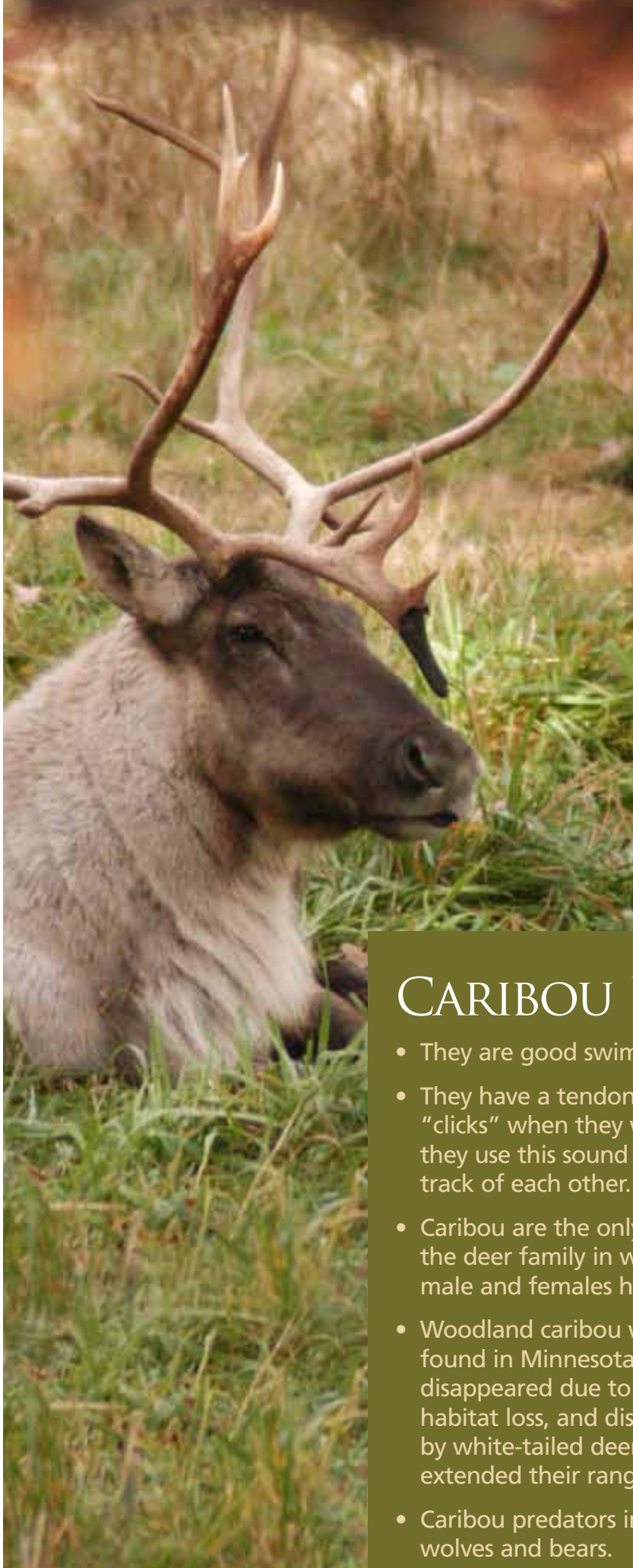
Sea otter populations are thought to have declined over 50% in the past

30 years. Funds raised at the Zoo have supported the Alaska SeaLife Center's efforts to rescue and release injured and sick sea otters, and conduct research on their populations. Recently, funds have also supported the work of Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Verena Gill to understand disease threats to wild sea otters.

## **BROWN BEARS: \$10,606 RAISED (AS OF OCTOBER 2011)**

Brown bears in the Russian Far East are threatened by poaching, overharvesting, and habitat loss. Funds raised at the Zoo have been used to support the Wildlife Conservation Society's efforts to track bears and monitor their populations in eastern Russia, train scientists to help with brown bear conservation, and provide brown bear education programs for local communities.





## {UNUSUAL CREATURES}

# CARIBOU

*RANGIFER TARANDUS*

{BY KELLY LESSARD, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER}

Minnesotans are getting ready for colder temperatures, and so are some of the Zoo's outdoor animals including caribou!

Caribou (also referred to as reindeer in Europe) thrive in the far north. Their thick winter coat has long guard hairs and dense, curly fur underneath. In the winter, their foot pads shrink and tighten, exposing the rim of the hoof, which cuts into the ice and crusted snow to keep them from slipping.

In the wild, caribou can be found in Canada, the northern United States, Europe and Asia roaming tundra and forested areas. They eat lichen, fungi, moss, herbs, sedges, grasses, shrubs, and young trees. Some herds migrate seasonally to find this food, while others live in small family groups and stay close to home in far northern woodlands.

Standing 30–60 inches at the shoulder and weighing 130–700 pounds, caribou use their massive antlers to protect themselves from predators. Males also use their antlers to compete for females. Endangered within the United States, caribou are threatened by habitat loss, logging, hunting, poaching, and other environmental factors.

## CARIBOU FACTS

- They are good swimmers.
- They have a tendon that “clicks” when they walk, and they use this sound to keep track of each other.
- Caribou are the only member of the deer family in which both male and females have antlers.
- Woodland caribou were once found in Minnesota, but they disappeared due to hunting, habitat loss, and disease carried by white-tailed deer as they extended their range.
- Caribou predators include wolves and bears.



## {ASK THE KEEPER}

### WORLD OF BIRDS SHOW SUPERVISOR—DAVE CRUZ

Q: How are the birds adjusting to their new home inside the Target Learning Center?

A: The birds are adjusting very well. As you watch the show, you may see some instances where a certain bird is not yet totally sold on what we ask him or her to do. Each behavior requires the birds to have confidence; that comes with experience and a strong relationship with the trainers. Luckily, these relationships are already strong so we are focusing on creating positive experiences for the birds in their new home.

Q: Are Coco and Alex siblings?

A: Although they are close in age (Koko is 35 and Alex is 32), they are not siblings.

Q: Do the birds ever have “bad mood” days?

A: Sure! If one of our birds doesn't feel like flying or doing a pre-trained routine, they just won't do it. If they do not want to be handled by the trainers, they can and do communicate that to us through body language and vocalizations.

Q: How do you avoid being...pooped on?

A: When you work with birds, you're going to get pooped on sooner or later. We spend so much time around these birds that we can tell before they poop and we also know that different species of bird poop a bit differently. We have to know where to stand, and pay attention to what we're doing. Lucky for our audience, most of our birds poop before they take off to fly. They don't “normally” poop in flight – but it could happen.

Q: What's your favorite bird or part of the show?

A: I love my job, I love training birds, and I love performing shows – but I have to say that my favorite part is just after we've finished the presentation and kids and adults come down to talk and tell stories. Oh, the stories I've heard! It means a lot to me that people enjoyed the show so much and they want more. They don't want to leave and that makes me feel great. We do this to have fun and inspire people.

Kim Bowman, Pat Koors and Ken Darling



# {DONOR PROFILE}

## {PAT KOORS}

{BY KIM BOWMAN, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MAJOR AND PLANNED GIFTS}

Some of the Zoo's best friends support the Minnesota Zoo financially, while others are generous with their time. Pat Koors does both.

"After 31 years of volunteering at the Minnesota Zoo, I feel at home," she says. "There is great camaraderie and I have good friends among the volunteers and staff. It almost becomes like a family."

A native of Hinckley, Pat was born to parents who married during the Great Depression. Farming and raising four kids meant lean times, and Pat learned the value of hard work and frugality from her parents. "My father was very frugal," she jokes, "and so am I."

Pat's natural interest in science led her to seek a degree in Medical Technology from the University of Minnesota. She built a rewarding career and retired in 1998. Today Pat is busier than ever through a variety of volunteer commitments such as ushering for theater productions, working on prairie restoration with the Minnesota DNR and Friends of the Mississippi, serving on mock jury trials at the law school—and sharing over three decades of loyal service with the Minnesota Zoo.

"I receive far more than I give—it's so rewarding," she says of volunteering. "Our Zoo provides great educational opportunities for our whole state and beyond. Falls Elementary School in International Falls has brought students to the Minnesota Zoo for 20 years. There's the Iowa farmer whose family has visited every year since the Zoo opened. And on any given day, I'll hear three or four different languages spoken

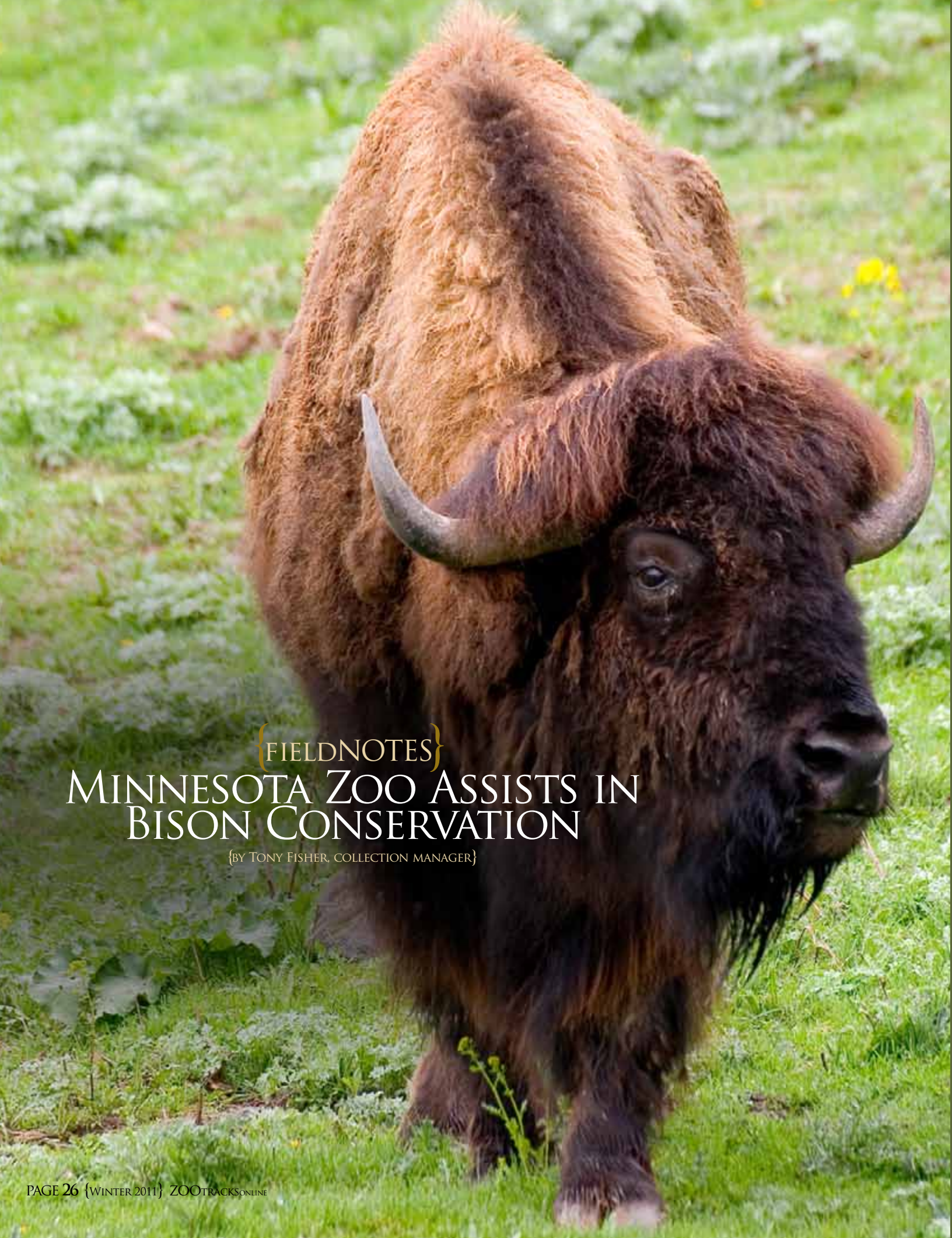
on our trails. It's the most diverse group of people you'll see anywhere."

She also praises the Zoo's continual evolution. "Replacing the old theater with the new penguin exhibit was brilliant, and I love the new south entryway," Pat says. "Lee Ehmke is doing a wonderful job—he is the heart and soul of the Minnesota Zoo."

Beyond volunteering, Pat has been generous when it comes to charitable support. Each year, Pat makes a generous gift to the Zoo's Annual Fund through the Friends program. These important gifts sustain the Zoo's vital operations. Pat also has supported the Endowment, an enduring fund that provides stable funding even in volatile times.

Pat joined the Circle of Life Society by including a bequest in her will for the Zoo Foundation. "I updated my estate plans after some changes in my life," she explains. "It seemed natural to leave gifts for my favorite charities along with gifts for loved ones and nieces and nephews."

Pat continues, "People should support the things they believe in. The Minnesota Zoo is a statewide treasure, and I hope those who believe in it will join me in supporting it financially."



{FIELDNOTES}  
MINNESOTA ZOO ASSISTS IN  
BISON CONSERVATION

{BY TONY FISHER, COLLECTION MANAGER}

Conservation efforts saved the plains bison from extinction in the early twentieth century, but help is still needed to keep this species healthy for the future.

Driven close to extinction in the late nineteenth century, small herds were salvaged and protected in reserves such as Yellowstone National Park and at the Bronx Zoo. Since that time, the population has multiplied once again to safe numbers on public lands and in private herds.

Yet, during the remarkable comeback of North America's largest land mammal, a silent genetic threat was introduced. Domestic cattle were allowed to interbreed with many of the protected herds, contaminating and changing the bison's genetic material (or genome) – and potentially altering the appearance and adaptability of a species that has existed for nearly 300,000 years. Less than one percent of the world's remaining plains bison population has been confirmed to be free of any sign of interbreeding with cattle.

The Minnesota Zoo has joined efforts with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in conserving and expanding the "pure" bison genome. In September, zoo staff members Diana Weinhardt and Dr. Jim Rasmussen assisted the DNR in testing bison at Blue Mounds State Park in Luverne, Minnesota for the presence of cattle DNA. Any bison that are verified to be pure may be used to start a new breeding program at the Zoo for eventual release back into Minnesota state parks.

{GREEN INITIATIVES}

# THE ZOO AS A LEADER IN GREEN PRACTICES

{BY DR. TARA HARRIS, CONSERVATION DIRECTOR}

**The Minnesota Zoo is excited to be the recipient of Minnesota Waste Wise's 2011 Leadership Award! It's great to be recognized for all the hard work the Zoo's staff and our on-site partners have put into making the Zoo a greener place.**

As Minnesota's largest environmental learning center, the Zoo's commitment to care for the environment is inherently part of our mission and daily practices. In the past few years, though, the Zoo has substantially increased its commitment to environmental sustainability by planning, implementing, and tracking green practices throughout our operations.

The award from Minnesota Waste Wise recognizes all that we have accomplished in our efforts to prevent waste, recycle and compost materials, reduce energy consumption, use eco-friendly products, educate one another about the importance of environmental sustainability, and generally set an example for others. Here are some highlights:

- In 2010, the Zoo recycled or composted 2,000 tons of material. That's equal to the weight of about 500 fully grown elephants!
- The Zoo has saved an estimated 875,000 kWh of electricity annually through its high-efficiency lighting upgrades and green design for new construction. That's enough electricity to light nearly 600 Minnesota homes each year!
- In the first year of our Recycle for Rainforests program, the Zoo worked with local company MPC to recycle or refurbish over 8,000 cell phones! Program proceeds (more than \$8,500) have been used to support a great ape conservation program in the rainforests of the Republic of Congo.
- New construction at the Zoo has incorporated sustainably-harvested wood, recycled content and locally-sourced materials, native plantings and vegetative roofs, high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, low-flow water fixtures, and much more.
- The Zoo has adopted an Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and Environmental Policy. Environmental sustainability also has been incorporated into the job descriptions of all Zoo staff.

## **Did you know?**

Just by reading this article today online, you are making an important contribution to the Zoo's green practices. By switching from a paper-based to an online version of ZooTracks, the Minnesota Zoo has reduced its paper consumption by millions of sheets of paper each year.



# TOYS FOR TIGERS

Enrichment is all about enhancing the lives and wellbeing of animals. Toys are often given to the Zoo's animals as behavioral enrichment; they, along with other novel objects, provide physical and mental challenges by piquing an animal's curiosity.

Would you like to give a gift to the Minnesota Zoo animals this holiday season? Visit their Animal Enrichment Wish List on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) to see what the animals have asked for this year.



# DINO SAURS!

COMING SUMMER 2012

## {ZOO HOURS}

**Daily: 9 – 4**

**Closed: December 25**

For more information, call  
952.431.9200 or visit [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org)

### Winter Weather Advisory

The Zoo is a zoo for all seasons, but in inclement weather we may need to close the Northern Trail and the Monorail for the safety of guests and animals. To get the latest update, call 952.431.9200 after 8:30 a.m.

## {MEMBER NEWS}

For additional Zoo member information, visit us online at [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org).

### MEMBERS MONDAY

No large groups are scheduled the first Monday of the month from October-April. Receive a 20% discount on all Lancer Food purchases on Members Monday by showing your current Minnesota Zoo membership card.

### THE BEST HOLIDAY GIFT!

Make your holiday shopping easy this year. Purchase Zoo memberships for your friends and family for an entire year of fun and adventure.

## {EVENT HIGHLIGHTS}

### ANIMALS, BOOKS, AND CHILDREN WEEKEND JANUARY 14–16, 2012

Celebrate reading and wildlife fun with children's activities focusing on animal stories and costume characters. Families will make their own animal pop-up books and enjoy a story with a special animal appearance.

Sponsors – Wells Fargo, Chuck & Don's Pet Food, Rasmussen College

### TROPICAL BEACH PARTY FEBRUARY 18–20, 2012

It's all about the sand! Bring the whole family to our winter get away—the Tropics Trail at the Zoo. We'll supply the giant indoor sandbox, palm trees, exotic animals and more.

Sponsors – Rasmussen College

### LOVE TOUR FEBRUARY 14, 2012

Our annual Valentine event is a perfect way to spend a romantic evening out. This year's event will again provide a glimpse into the private lives of a variety of animals. From courtship to breeding, our furry, feathered, and scaly, indulge in exotic romantic rituals. For adults only (ages 21 +) the Love Tour is a one of a kind experience. After your tour enjoy a sumptuous dinner in Discovery Bay.

Online reservations start January 9.

## {SAVE THE DATE}

### MINNESOTA ZOO'S 7TH ANNUAL CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION BREAKFAST THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012 7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.

#### WINDOWS ON MINNESOTA—IDS 50TH FLOOR

From restoring the black rhino population in Namibia to investigating the cause of moose decline in Minnesota's north woods, find out what the Minnesota Zoo is doing to conserve wild animals and wild places both here at home and around the globe.

For more information, call Megan at 952.431.9310 or email [megan.hard@mnzoo.org](mailto:megan.hard@mnzoo.org)

### COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION AND RHINOS THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2012 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2012 6:30–8:30 P.M.

#### SPEAKER: JEFF MUNTIFERING

Jeff Muntifering, the Minnesota Zoo's field biologist, will discuss Namibia's unique community-based conservation strategy and whether it can save the rhino. We will also view and discuss, "Milking the Rhino," the first major documentary to explore wildlife conservation from the perspective of people who live with wild animals.

# Holiday Gift Membership

## Member Benefits:

- \* Free Zoo admission and Free parking for one full year, during regular Zoo hours
- \* Discounted admission to zoos across the country
- \* Zoo updates through E-News
- \* Discounts on education classes, Monorail tickets, Great Clips IMAX Theatre tickets and more!



**MINNESOTA ZOO**  
Changing how you see the world



## ADVENTURES

That Last All Year!

visit [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org) or call 952.431.9478

## { EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS }

[mnzoo.org/education](http://mnzoo.org/education)

**Have an animal lover in your family?**  
*Give the "wild" gift of Zoo education this holiday season.*



## DOLPHIN ENCOUNTERS

Give the gift you know will make a splash!

## PENGUIN ENCOUNTERS

Waddle over to meet the newest animals at the Zoo!

## WILD WOLF EDVENTURE

Travel to Ely with the Zoo for a once in a lifetime wolf experience.

## FAMILY OVERNIGHTS

Dream with the Dolphins!

## CAN'T DECIDE?

Buy a gift certificate good for any Zoo education program including our award-winning Zoo Camp!

A close-up photograph of a lynx's face and paw. The lynx has thick, spotted fur in shades of brown, tan, and white. Its eyes are a striking green color. The paw is large and covered in soft fur, resting on a mossy, rocky surface. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the lynx's body and the natural environment.

{ANIMAL SPONSORSHIP}

## DON'T BE THE MISSING LINK— SPONSOR THE LYNX TODAY!

The Minnesota Zoo is home to three lynx: an 18-year-old male and a younger breeding pair. As scientists' concerns grow that climate change will drive lynx out of Minnesota, the Zoo has supported research on wild lynx in northern Minnesota to determine distribution, habitat use, and behavior.

Your gift of \$50 or more will help provide food, enrichment activities, and medical care for all of the animals at the Minnesota Zoo. You will also receive a sponsorship package that includes:

- Your choice of a lynx plush OR the children's book *Lynx Twins Grow Up* by Stephanie Smith, illustrated by Robert Hynes.
- An animal sponsorship certificate.
- A lynx trading card with a photo and fun facts.
- The satisfaction of knowing you are making a difference at the Minnesota Zoo!

Please sponsor the lynx today by: mailing your donation to the Minnesota Zoo Foundation; visiting [mnzoo.org](http://mnzoo.org); calling 952.431.9216; or emailing [donations@mnzoo.org](mailto:donations@mnzoo.org).



# {THANK YOU}

*to the following partners for their generous support since the last edition of ZooTracks.*

**Cargill**<sup>TM</sup>

in support of the Zoo's general operations

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