

ROAR

Fall/Winter 2024



**Partners in Wildlife
Conservation**

**Discover The
Barry Ostrowsky
Animal Wellness
Center**

Keepers in Action



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive,
the Board of County
Commissioners and
Department of Parks,
Recreation and Cultural Affairs

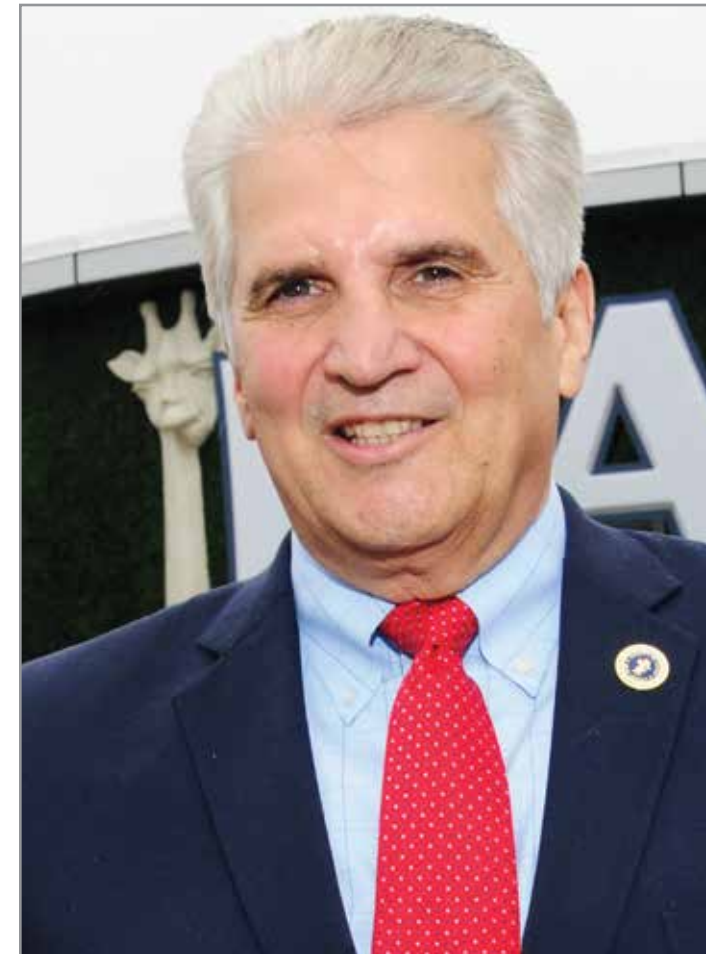
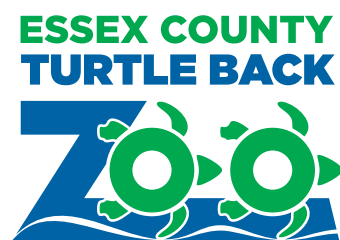
MISSION STATEMENT

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo is committed to providing an enriching recreational experience that fosters excellence in wildlife education and wildlife conservation, so that present and future generations are inspired to understand, appreciate and protect the fragile interdependence of all living things.



MEETING OUR MISSION

African penguins are experiencing an alarming and continuing decline in the wild—some scientists predict that they could be functionally extinct in southwestern South Africa by 2035. Turtle Back Zoo is a proud partner of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) SAFE African Penguin Program. SAFE works directly with stakeholders in South Africa & Namibia, non-profits such as the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) and other AZA institutions to help mitigate the threats and slow the rate of decline so future generations will be able to experience African penguins in the wild and not just at their favorite local zoo.



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.,
Essex County Executive

The Board of County Commissioners and
The Department of Parks, Recreation and
Cultural Affairs



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive



Daniel K. Salvante
*Director of Parks, Recreation and
Cultural Affairs*

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A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

There is more than meets the eye at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo!

As Essex County Executive, one of my ongoing priorities has been revitalizing Turtle Back Zoo, building state-of-the-art exhibits for our animals and providing an atmosphere that is educational and enjoyable for our visitors. While visitors may see our keepers, staff and Docents working throughout the zoo, there is a lot more that happens behind the scenes.

Many hours and great efforts go on to help promote conservation and to assist with the strengthening of animal populations around the globe. As a member of the American Zoological Association since 2007, Turtle Back participates in several of AZA's SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction) programs. This involves hosting endangered species such as African penguins, giraffes, Clouded leopards and Vietnamese pond turtles, to name just a few. But it also includes documenting vital statistics and medical records, supporting breeding initiatives and communicating with zoos and aquariums around the world.

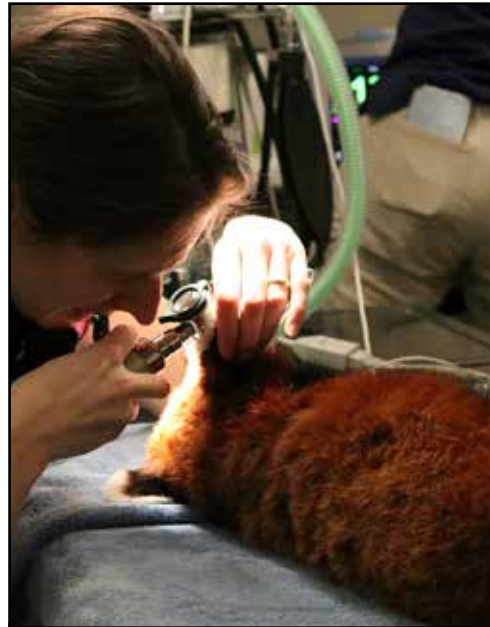
For many of our visitors, coming to Turtle Back will be their only opportunity to experience a connection to wildlife, including animals that are rare or exotic. We hope that in addition to having a wild adventure, they will take home a greater understanding about the complexities of nature and the steps we all should be taking to preserve it.

IN THIS ISSUE



PARTNERS IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

A world of information is accessible to zoos with the click of a button through Species 360.



BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BARRY OSTROWSKY ANIMAL WELLNESS CENTER

Travel the halls of the new Animal Wellness Center and learn how you can be part of our team.



KEEPERS IN ACTION

How professional development can expand global conservation efforts and bring new information home.

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DR. JILIAN FAZIO | Zoo Director

Here at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, we have five core principles—Safety, Communication, Animal Welfare, Inspiration, and Collaboration—that influence all of the goals we set as an institution and shape our culture.

In this issue we focus on our collaborations that contribute to our conservation mission. At TBZ, we believe that collaboration is at the heart of all good conservation efforts. Diversity, equity, access, and inclusion are integral to our collaborative efforts. Each individual's success, no matter how small, will be celebrated as a victory for all of us. Supporting each other enhances everyone's ability to reach our common goals! Collaboration with each other, national and international partners, will help us meet our common goal to preserve the diversity of this planet.

We know that conservation takes all of us. Each of us has a part to play in maintaining the health of our planet. As a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), TBZ is proud to be one of just over 240 institutions meeting the highest standards of animal care, guest education and conservation action. We are working hand in hand with colleagues around the world to save species and the ecosystems on which they rely.

Saving Animals From Extinction or SAFE programs are one of the ways AZA zoos collaborate to conserve species. These programs are designed to coordinate conservation efforts globally in order to maximize success. Zoos from around the globe work with not-for-profit organizations, academic institutions, and government organizations to build recovery plans, implement strategic conservation and engagement activities and measure and report on conservation

progress. From our keepers traveling the world to assist with SAFE Giraffe or SAFE African Penguin to our aquarist and education teams working together to set up guest education tables and activities to support SAFE Sharks and Rays, we are committed to the conservation of all the species in our care. This year, if you renewed or bought a new TBZ membership, even YOU contributed to SAFE Monarch through the Zoological Society of New Jersey's Turtle Back Blooms initiative.

The first step in our efforts to conserving biodiversity is ensuring we have thriving animals here at Turtle Back Zoo. The individual animals we house right here at Turtle Back Zoo are contributing to their species conservation by serving as ambassadors for their wild counterparts connecting to and educating our guests. These sustainable zoo-housed populations provide genetically healthy populations as a hedge against extinction when species are rapidly dwindling in the wild. As we look toward the opening of our Barry Ostrowky Animal Wellness Center, we anticipate our enhanced ability to maintain the wellbeing of the animals in our care, to ensure they are thriving and can contribute to their species conservation. We invite you to stop by and visit to learn more about the work we are doing behind the scenes every day to care for our animal family, collaborate with our colleagues internationally and preserve some of the most precious species on Earth.

Learn more about AZA SAFE Programs including details on specific species conservation plans at <https://www.aza.org/safe-species>. ♦



MEMBER ONLY EVENTS

TURTLE BACK BLOOMS

This year's signature conservation effort, TURTLE BACK BLOOMS, isn't over yet! In our efforts to support pollinator species, we've partnered with AZA Monarch SAFE and the Monarch Joint Venture to plant a milkweed seedling for every membership sold. In addition, all members will receive a Pollinator Pop Seed Stick to plant in their own backyard! Learn more at www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/blooms.

MEMBER APPRECIATION MONTH

OCTOBER 2024

If you're a member, enjoy a 15% discount at the Savanna Café all October long! Just show them your membership ID and mention the discount!

MEMBER LATE NIGHTS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 5:30PM - 7:30PM

The zoo will stay open for members only from 5:30PM to 7:30PM. Please bring a valid photo ID and membership for entry.

MEMBERS ONLY HOLIDAY LIGHTS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 5PM - 9PM

Save the date for an exclusive MEMBERS ONLY Holiday Lights evening! Enjoy the lights displayed throughout the zoo, entertainment and more! More information is coming soon!

All events are subject to change.

For more information on Member Only events, visit www.zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/events.



Scan Here to Join



MEMBER NAME: EMILY FRISCH

Visiting since: I've been visiting the zoo since I was a little girl in the mid-1980s, and I even celebrated my 4th birthday there!

Favorite Zoo activity: Every year, our entire family—including aunts, uncles, cousins, and their kids—gathers at the zoo to see the holiday lights. It's an absolute must-do tradition for us during the holiday season!

Must do on every zoo trip: My daughter Zoey is a big fan of penguins, so we always make sure to spend extra time at the penguin exhibit whenever we visit the zoo. And we can't forget the giraffes! The first time we took our daughter to see them, it was nearly impossible to tear her away. She even remarked on how beautiful they are!

Anything else you might want to highlight: My family has been visiting and supporting the zoo for as long as I can remember, watching it grow over the years. Some of my fondest memories are from visiting with my uncle John Doeffinger, who was a long-time docent and a member of the zoological society board. He would share his knowledge about the animals and show us all the latest and greatest attractions the zoo had to offer. Now, I look forward to watching my daughter create her own special memories at the zoo, just as I did growing up. ♦



PARTNERS IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



VULNERABLE Clouded Leopard

conservation. I am proud that Turtle Back Zoo and our zoo staff have a part in this worldwide effort," said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.

Let's take a closer look at one species in particular to understand the impact. Clouded leopards (*Neofelis nebulosa*) are a vulnerable species. It is estimated that fewer than 10,000 mature individuals remain in the wild. The population in human care is around 70, and genetic diversity is presumed to be very low. At TBZ, our staff maintains the international studbook for clouded leopards, which means all the information on births, deaths, transfers and even on reproductive and disease management are all recorded within ZIMS and coordinated by a single individual. There are currently 378 clouded leopards being monitored globally in ZIMS at 111 different institutions. In total, there are 371 institutions that have contributed data on 2,007 clouded leopards total.

When you visit, you may see our clouded leopards Jye (5 years) Mali (5 years) or Chai (1 year) in the Amazing Asia section. They are an Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan (SSP) recommended breeding pair. The SSP scientists determine which animals to breed by considering their genetic makeup, nutritional and social needs, temperament, and overall health. Offspring from clouded leopard pairs in the United States are moved internationally to assist with

creating a sustainable population of clouded leopards worldwide. We have sent cats for breeding to zoos in Europe, Singapore and Australia, just to name a few. Descendants of these clouded leopards could one day be reintroduced into wild protected areas where clouded leopards once roamed, but are now considered extinct, such as Taiwan.

At TBZ, our staff also maintains the regional studbook for the critically endangered Vietnamese Pond Turtles (*Mauremys annamensis*) also currently on view in Amazing Asia.

"We are proud to be a part of this international effort and its impact on animal wellbeing and wildlife conservation. As part of our commitment to species conservation, last year we shifted all our daily animal record keeping into ZIMS to ensure we maximize our contribution. Our Animal Care and Veterinary teams along with our Zoo Registrar work to meticulously record data on our individual animals. This ensures not only that our animals receive the best care but that they are also contributing to population management and conservation of their species. By continuing to share our knowledge and expertise, we can make even greater strides in protecting the planet's biodiversity," said Dr. Jilian Fazio, Zoo Director at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. ♦

SPECIES 360

Global information serving conservation.

Did you know that Essex County Turtle Back Zoo (TBZ) plays a pivotal role in creating the world's largest and most comprehensive knowledge base on over 22,000 species? As a member of global nonprofit Species360, Turtle Back Zoo contributes data on the animals and groups in its care every day, from lifecycle traits to environmental needs.

That information is recorded in the Species360 Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS), now 50 years old and the world's largest source of data on species. To date, Turtle Back Zoo has contributed data on more than 3,594 animals and 834 species, subspecies, and breeds to Species360 ZIMS.

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, like other zoos, aquariums, and wildlife facilities worldwide, uses ZIMS to stay well informed about each animal and group. ZIMS combines the data from TBZ with contributions

from like-minded species conservation institutions worldwide. For instance, Species360 Global Medical Resources, part of the ZIMS for Medical module, help veterinarians treat and prevent diseases by providing benchmarks for normal blood test results. The results inform what is known about animals and their environments, including insight into disease treatment, animal welfare, population health, and species conservation.

ZIMS for Studbooks is utilized by conservation teams worldwide to ensure the genetic diversity and health of animal populations in human care. This is critical for reintroduction programs, where conservation institutions work to reestablish native species in their natural habitats, ensuring these populations are healthy and sustainable.

"Visitors enjoy seeing exotic animals in our natural habitat-themed exhibits and participating in the many fun and exciting education programs we offer, but there is so much more that happens behind the scenes that they don't see. Zoos are on the forefront of developing care for animals, working to strengthen populations that are endangered and promoting



Animal Curator Courtney Torregrosa checking on TBZ's Vietnamese pond turtles. As the Studbook Keeper for this species, Courtney collaborates with all zoos that house this species and is responsible for maintaining the data in ZIMS about the entire population.

DISCOVER THE MAGIC BEHIND THE SCENES



Dr. Anderson assesses our red panda during an exam.

DISCOVER THE MAGIC BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE NEW BARRY OSTROWSKY ANIMAL WELLNESS CENTER!

Turtle Back Zoo is buzzing with excitement as we prepare to unveil our brand new Barry Ostrowsky Animal Wellness Center this fall! A 10,000-square-foot, cutting-edge facility promises to offer a captivating glimpse into the world of zoo veterinary medicine, much like the popular TV shows that delve into the daily lives of veterinarians.

INTRODUCING THE ANIMAL WELLNESS CENTER

The Animal Wellness Center represents a significant advancement in our commitment to exemplary animal care and wellbeing. This state-of-the-art facility will feature specialized viewing windows, allowing visitors to observe live how our dedicated veterinary and animal care professionals manage both routine examinations and emergency procedures. This immersive experience will provide a unique perspective into the intricate and vital work of our veterinary team.



Dr. Anderson closely examines an x-ray.

ADVANCING ANIMAL CARE

Since its opening in 2005, our current animal hospital has served us well, but as our animal family has grown and veterinary medicine has advanced, an upgrade was needed. The new Animal Wellness Center will include larger treatment and surgical suites, complete with the latest technology, including a CT machine allowing for advanced diagnostics right on site. Expanded quarantine and in-patient facilities will ensure we provide top-notch care for all our animals. This facility will also support enhanced educational opportunities, allowing us to share our expertise and collaborate with others in the field.

The Animal Wellness Center will be divided into four specialized wings:

Quarantine Wing: A safe space for new arrivals to adjust and acclimate.

Hospital Wing: Dedicated to providing specialized care for sick animals.

ANIMAL WELLNESS CENTER



TBZ's Animal Wellness Center staff. From left to right: hospital staffer Mackenzie Stewart, Veterinary Technician Jessica Reid, Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Kailey Anderson, Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Yasmeen Prud'homme.

Treatment Wing: Where routine wellness checks and emergency care take place, featuring viewing areas so you can watch our veterinary team in action.

Nursery Suite: Designed for our youngest and most vulnerable patients, with a viewing section to learn about how we care for our baby animals.

MEET THE TEAM AND SEE THE ACTION

Curious about what happens behind the scenes? Our skilled zoo veterinarians along with veterinary nurses and animal care teams, will be busy caring for our diverse animal family—from the smallest amphibian to the largest mammal. Some of our larger patients, like the giraffes, may require house calls, so keep an eye out for the team bringing the clinic to the animals.

We're also thrilled to collaborate with veterinary specialists who bring additional expertise to our Animal Wellness Center. These visiting experts enhance our care with advanced techniques and valuable insights. Stay tuned for updates on their visits and the impressive work they do with our animal residents.

EXPLORE ANIMAL WELFARE AND CONSERVATION

The Atrium of the Animal Wellness Center will feature engaging exhibits on the 5 Domains of Animal Welfare. These displays will highlight how we ensure our animals' physical and psychological well-being and how our care supports broader conservation efforts. Visitors will also get to meet Juneberry, our beloved education sloth, and the golden-headed lion tamarin, a new addition to

our zoo and a species critically endangered in the wild.

EXCITING INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

In line with our commitment to education, the Animal Wellness Center will offer several new internship opportunities starting next year. Whether you're a veterinarian-in-training or an undergraduate exploring a career in veterinary medicine, these internships will provide invaluable hands-on experience. Check our website for more details and application information.

JOIN US FOR THE GRAND OPENING!

We eagerly anticipate the opening of the Animal Wellness Center this fall and invite you to experience it in person! Come meet our veterinary team, learn more about animal care, and witness the incredible work being done to ensure our animals live their happiest and healthiest lives.

RECOGNIZING OUR SUPPORTER

The Barry Ostrowsky Animal Wellness Center is named for retired RWJBarnabas Health President and Executive Director Barry Ostrowsky. Mr. Ostrowsky was an executive at RWJBarnabas Health for over 30 years and oversaw the expansion of the hospital network to make it the largest health care system in New Jersey. He remains a strong proponent and supporter of Turtle Back Zoo. ♦

Written by Dr. Anderson



Kate Budion, Africa Keeper

NAMIBIA

KEEPERS IN ACTION

In March of 2024, I participated in a volunteer program with Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) on location in Namibia as a Conservation Supporter.

My job for 10 days was to assist one of their field researchers with their daily tasks, learning as much as I could about their role, what they do and why. We set camera traps, did scientific surveys on wild giraffes, spent hours comparing photographs to identify individual giraffes and even participated in public presentations for guests at neighboring safari lodges.

Not only was I excited to be traveling internationally again but I was even more thrilled that this specific trip would take me into the inner workings of giraffe conservation—boots on the ground as they say.

While I was anxious to see my first giraffe in the wild, I

was more excited that this would provide me with a professional development experience beyond any I've ever had. I was even more happy to learn that TBZ and NJZS wanted to help me get there.

The fund that were provided to me went right back into the GCF programs. Sending me (and any volunteer) to Africa not only provides GCF hands-on assistance, but opens the door for future networking and collaboration between the zoo world and the conservation world. Similarly to what I said before, those working in the field to study and save animals in the wild depend on the zoo and aquarium community to support their work by whatever means possible, and TBZ and NJZS did that by endorsing my trip. ♦

Kate Budion been working as a zookeeper for just over 14 years.

Wild Holidays:

Give the gift of the ZOO!

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO

Unwrap a year of adventure, wonder, and wildlife conservation with a Gift Membership!

Adopt an

Animal

Use code **ROAR24** at checkout for \$5 off a symbolic animal adoption

Offer ends December 31, 2024 at 11:59PM.



Educators Jared Moloshok and Katie Fenyar presenting a red-tailed boa at the Short Hills Mall during our Casino Night zoo fundraiser.



Snake skin biofact

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Outreach programs are one way that Essex County Turtle Back Zoo connects with our community, particularly for folks who may be unable to visit the zoo. Instead of coming to us, our educators and animal ambassadors travel to local communities to present our conservation programs and share our animals – and not only to schools, but other facilities as well including churches, synagogues, libraries, and senior care centers, to name a few. We coordinate with the facilities to present programs that best cater to their particular audiences so that everyone enjoys a meaningful and engaging educational experience.

The goal of all our education programs is to connect our audience members to wildlife and wild places through experiential learning opportunities that inspire

folks to be better stewards of the earth. As someone who has been leading outreach programs at TBZ for eight years, I can attest to their impact. Most people seldom encounter wild animals in this day and age, let alone in familiar surroundings, so to see such animals up close within their own communities is a special and memorable experience. Additionally, as with our on-grounds programs, the animal ambassadors we present on outreaches are not viewable on exhibit at TBZ, so to be visited by them adds an element of novelty, even for people otherwise familiar with the zoo.

To learn more about TBZ's educational experiences, please contact the Education Department at tbzprograms@parks.essexcountynj.org. ♦

By TBZ Education Specialist Jared Moloshok

SAFE HOWL-O-WEEN

Come trick-or-treating at the Zoo!

With candy stations throughout the grounds, this family-friendly event is sure to make everyone have a “sweet” time.

Thursday, October 31 from 4pm to 8pm
Last admission 7pm
Essex County Turtle Back Zoo

\$3 admission for current Zoological Society Members; \$5 general admission.

All attendees must purchase a ticket; walk-up tickets will be available.
 Purchase tickets in advance online at turtlebackzoo.com/discover/howloween/
 The zoo will close at 2pm on 10/31 in preparation for the event. Event is Rain or Shine. This is a separate event to general Zoo Admission. Note: This special event focuses on trick-or-treating and Halloween-themed shows, set to the backdrop of some animals. The Zoo is not fully open and not all animals will be out.

 **ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO**
 560 Northfield Avenue,
 West Orange, NJ
 TURTLEBACKZOO.COM



FUN FACT
Penguins can shoot their poop up to 3 feet! This allows them to keep their nest clean while incubating eggs & raising chicks.



AFRICAN PENGUIN

A favorite winter warm-up location is our indoor Shores of Africa exhibit featuring two bird species, African penguins (*Spheniscus demersus*) and pink-backed pelicans (*Pelecanus rufescens*). Feedings take place daily at 10:30am and 2pm.

Did you know most penguin don't live on snow and ice? The African penguin is one of the smallest penguin species and live in large colonies off the rocky southwestern African coast. The birds build nests in sand or deposits of their excrement, called guano, or under bushes or rocks. Shelter provides them protection from the harsh sun during the hot days.

African penguins are covered in an array of black, white, and gray dense, waterproof feathers that keep them

dry and warm in the cold waters. Dot-like markings flecked across their white chests individualize each penguin, as each penguin's feather pattern is as individual as a human's fingerprints. To help us out at TBZ, we have placed name bands on our penguins. Males are always banded on the right wing, females on the left.

African penguins are endangered, and populations have plummeted due to habitat loss, overfishing, and coastal development. You can help African penguins by supporting penguin conservation groups such as the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) and by using the Seafood Watch website to make sustainable seafood choices at restaurants and grocery stores. ♦

CROSSWORD

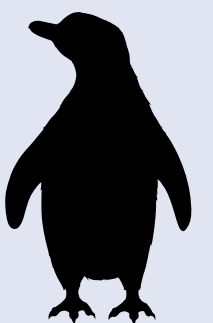
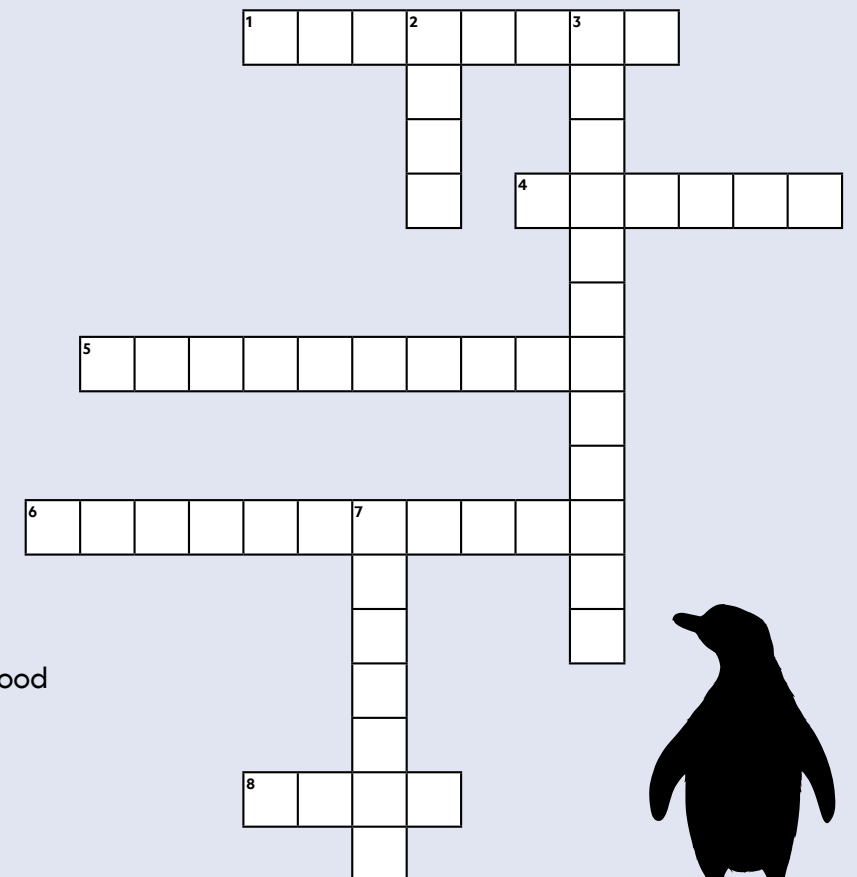
Use the clues to fill in the words. Words can go across or down. Letters are shared when the words intersect.

ACROSS

- 1. The African penguin is one of the _____ penguin species.
- 4. Continent African penguins are found
- 5. Conservation status
- 6. What a penguin's feather pattern is like on humans
- 8. Black, white and _____ feathers

DOWN

- 2. Wing we band our male penguins on
- 3. Website to help you make sustainable seafood choices at restaurants and grocery stores
- 7. Shares the habitat with our penguins



ANSWERS
Across:
1. smallest 4. Africa 5. endangered 6. fingerprint 8. gray
Down:
2. left 3. seafoodwatch 7. pelican



Featured in New Jersey Bride magazine as one of five unexpected places to get married in New Jersey.



OUR 2025 BOOKING CALENDARS ARE OPEN



Whether you're planning a first birthday or a 50th, a surprise proposal or a wedding reception, a family reunion, retirement party or a bat mitzvah, the zoo has a space for you! info@turtlebackzoo.com ♦



★★★★★ REVIEW

"The Corporate FunRun New Jersey 5k is a workplace fitness event, a nice team building platform, and a fun summer office party all wrapped into one. For the last 2 years, we have held the pre-race gathering and post-race party at the Turtle Back Zoo's public picnic pavilion with the 5k run/walk taking place at the South Mountain Reservoir. There are a lot of logistics associated with this event that need to be executed flawlessly on race day in order to provide teams and team members with a great experience. We deal with a lot of municipalities during our CFR season and I can unequivocally state that both the zoo staff and the Essex County Parks staff are amongst the best."

- Bruce Pienkny | Corporate FunRun

QUESTIONS FOR THE KEEPER

- Q:** How long have you been a zookeeper?
- A:** I've been working as a zookeeper full time for just over 14 years.
- Q:** What are your day-to-day responsibilities?
- A:** My job priorities involve all aspects of animal husbandry. This includes animal training, feeding, medicating, and cleaning up after them. Other non-animal related duties involve record keeping, exhibit maintenance and guest interactions. Some jobs can feel very monotonous but the fun part of working with animals is that anything could change in the blink of an eye! I enjoy being forced to think on my feet and learn to adapt to the changing environment.
- Q:** What's the weirdest thing you do as part of your job?
- A:** When giving tours to kids in the zoo, they always seem to react the most when I tell them I have to pick up animal poop everyday. Most of the time it is just for cleaning purposes but sometimes it's for medical reasons. Either way, you have to be OK with getting your hands dirty!
- Q:** What achievement are you most proud about in your job?
- A:** Developing individual relationships with animals is always something I've been very proud of. When an animal trusts you and you witness it in their behavior



You might see Keeper Kate when you sign up for a Behind the Scenes of our Giraffe Barn Saturdays at 2pm in November, December, January & February! This tour is only offered in the winter months so grab your spot today!



**Kate Budion
Africa Keeper**

and how they act around you vs other people always made my day and reminds me why I do what I do. Accomplishing training goals as a result of these relationships is also a major win.

- Q:** What made you want to work at a zoo?
- A:** Ever since I was very young I knew I wanted to work with animals, I just never knew in what capacity. After learning about the zookeeping field in middle school, I had instantly decided that caring for wildlife was what I wanted to do. I got my first hands-on experience with animals volunteering at a wildlife rehabilitation center in high school and I haven't looked back!
- Q:** What impact do you think zoos have?
- A:** I believe that zoos and aquariums and the keepers that work there are the voice for the voiceless. Many people wouldn't understand wildlife without witnessing it for themselves and the easiest way to do that is to visit the animals living in zoos and aquariums. Most of these facilities are also dedicated to conservation and help spearhead the efforts and programs currently in place to save wildlife. I believe it's true when they say that people won't want to protect what they don't understand and zoos and aquariums play a critical role in reaching out and educating our younger generations. ♦

ZOO HAPPENINGS

OCTOBER

- **Behind The Scenes Tours: AUSTRALIA** | Sundays in October
- **Home School Days: RADICAL REPTILES** | Wednesday, October 16
- **Animal Encounters: SLOTH SOCIAL** | Saturday, October 19
- **Kreative Kreepers Contest** | Saturday, October 19
- **Early Childhood: Explorers** | Sunday, October 20
- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, October 20
- **Sophisticated Science: Biology, Evolution & Adaptations** | Sunday, October 27



NOVEMBER

- **Behind The Scenes Tours: Giraffe Barn** | Saturdays in November
- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, November 3
- **Zoo Mini Camp** | November 5, 7, 8
- **Animal Encounters: Sloth Social** | Saturday, November 9
- **Sophisticated Science: Zoo Conservation & Stewardship** | Sunday, November 10
- **Early Childhood: Hatchlings & Tots** | Sunday, November 10
- **Wonders of the Wild: Animal Communication** | Saturday, November 16
- **Early Childhood: Explorers** | Sunday, November 17
- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, November 17
- **Home School Days: Misunderstood Creatures** | Wednesday, November 20
- **FIRST NIGHT of Holiday Lights** | Friday, November 22
See page 21 for full list of dates

DECEMBER

- **Behind The Scenes Tours: Giraffe Barn** | Saturdays in December
- **Early Childhood: Hatchlings & Tots** | Sunday, December 1
- **Winter Workshop** | Sunday, December 1
- **Teacher Professional Development Day** | Thursday, December 5
- **Wonders of the Wild: Radical Reptiles** | Saturday, December 7
- **Animal Encounters: Sloth Social** | Saturday, December 7
- **Sophisticated Science: Wild Careers** | Sunday, December 8
- **Early Childhood: Explorers** | Sunday, December 8
- **Home School Days** | Wednesday, December 11
- **Teacher Professional Development Day** | Thursday, December 12
- **Family Nature Club: Nature Guardians** | Sunday, December 15
- **Holiday Zoo Story Time** | Saturday & Sunday December 14 & 15
Thursday & Friday, December 19 & 20
Saturday December 21
- **Zoo Mini Camp** | December 23, 26, 27

JANUARY

- **Behind The Scenes Tours: Giraffe Barn** | Saturdays in January
- **Early Childhood: Hatchlings & Tots** | Sunday, January 5
- **Early Childhood: Explorers** | Sunday, January 12
- **Sophisticated Science** | Sunday, January 12
- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, January 12
- **Wonders of the Wild: Winter at the Zoo** | Saturday, January 18
- **Animal Encounters: Sloth Social** | Saturday, January 18
- **Zoo Mini Camp** | January 20

- **Home School Days** | Wednesday, January 22

- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, January 26

FEBRUARY

- **Behind The Scenes Tours: Giraffe Barn** | Saturdays in February

- **Groundhog Day** | Sunday February 2

- **Early Childhood: Hatchlings & Tots** | Sunday, February 2

- **Wonders of the Wild: Science Magic** | Saturday, February 8

- **Animal Encounters: Sloth Social** | Saturday, February 8

- **Family Nature Club: Nature Adventurers** | Sunday, February 9

- **Sophisticated Science** | Sunday, February 9

- **Early Childhood: Explorers** | Sunday, February 9

- **Family Nature Club: Nature Guardians** | Sunday, February 16

- **Zoo Mini Camp** | February 17 & 18

- **Home School Days** | Wednesday, February 19

MARCH

- **Wild Card Casino Night*** | Saturday, March 1

See zoo website for more details.

All ticketed events can be purchased at: essexweb.usedirect.com/EssexWeb/Default.aspx

*Zoological Society Fundraising Event.

**Sea Turtle Recovery Fundraising Event.



AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK PATH RENOVATION

Starting in November 2024, the playground will not be accessible as we work on a renovation to the boardwalk. The Australian boardwalk will be widened, and a new viewing platform will overlook the Australian Outback habitat. Updated seating and a concession area will be made to the current patio with a new pathway up to and down from the farm. We are excited to have everything back open for spring of 2025! ♦



WAY BACK WHEN...

ATTENDANCE

As early as 1938, the *Newark Ledger* reported on a proposal for a zoo in Essex County South Mountain Reservation. It took many years of study and planning for the Essex County Parks Commission to commit to entering this entirely different phase of recreation. In 1949, word reached the commission that Highland Park Zoo (now the Pittsburgh Zoo) had finished construction of a children's zoo. After a visit to the zoo, the same architect, W. Tjark Reiss of New York, was hired to design a children-oriented zoo in Essex County.

When Essex County Turtle Back Zoo opened on June 3, 1963, exhibits were based on children's stories such as the Three Little Pigs, Old Lady in the Shoe, Billy Goats Gruff, a Cheese Wedge, a Castle, and Okky the Jolly Octopus. The animal collection featured 140 animals representing 40 species. Operating as a seasonal zoo, the park was closed for the winter. Education staff took this time to focus on bringing animals outside the zoo to teach different groups and institutions throughout the state. It took until 1966 for the zoo to see its first one millionth visitor.

By 1973, the zoo began to be open all year and the animal collection had grown to 850 animals representing 275 species.



Today, the zoo bears no resemblance to the storybook theme it had six decades ago. The facility has been completely modernized so visitors can view animals in natural habitat-themed exhibit spaces and enjoy conservation themed attractions such as the Endangered Species Carousel, Treetop Adventure and miniGOLF Safari. Open 12 months a year, TBZ has 1,270 animals from all over the world themed by continent and outreach programs are some of our favorite programming (see page 14). To top it all, in 2023 we almost saw 1 million visitors just that year.

Whether it is for a field trip, a summer family meetup, trick-or-treating, or holiday lights, we hope you & your family are one of our million visitors in 2024/2025! ♦

**ESSEX COUNTY
TURTLE BACK**



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www.turtlebackzoo.com

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Zoological Society
of New Jersey, Inc.
AT ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO

WANT TO SUPPORT ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO?

Want to support Turtle Back Zoo? One of the most effective ways is by joining or renewing your membership in the Zoological Society of New Jersey.

Membership plans include unlimited free zoo admission, special tours, discounts, and more. Plus, your membership helps us care for the animals both local and abroad, making it a truly worthy cause.

For more information <https://zoologicalsocietyofnj.org/membership/>

