

2016 ANNUAL REPORT TO SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION

June 2017, updated

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

Woodland Park Zoo remains a highly-utilized resource by people from all over the Puget Sound region. Instrumental in this success is the zoo's all-season model of engagement in conservation and learning and serving as a welcoming place of community and belonging. In 2016, the zoo recorded its *fifth year of continuous record-breaking attendance – 1.35 million visitors* – which surpassed annual projections.

Good fiscal stewardship, effective programs and operational improvements produced positive budget results. The combined effect of modest growth across membership, fee-based educational programs, ticketed special events, Historic Carousel rides, animal feedings, a nearly sold-out ZooTunes summer concert season, very generous donations, and cooperating weather through most of the year resulted in the zoo surpassing its operating revenue goal, to \$40 million from a projected \$38 million, as highlighted in a separate financial report provided in May. A small, biannual increase in admissions pricing and parking also went into effect. Based on guest feedback and annual exit surveys, guests highly valued the zoo as a community asset and conservation experience. In 2016, 98 percent of guests surveyed said “my visit met or exceeded my expectations,” and 97 percent said “my visit was worth the time and money, up 2 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

We were delighted to [welcome our new president and CEO](#) to help the zoo deepen and broaden the ways it inspires members, guests, and community partners to become even greater forces for nature. Alejandro Grajal, PhD, joined the zoo in May bringing [25 years of leadership](#) in conservation, animal welfare and science learning as well as his life-long passion for engaging people of all walks of life in protecting biodiversity. Underway are efforts to engage more people and diverse populations in zoo conservation, increase the role technology can appropriately play in accelerating learning and action, and advance the zoo's leadership in animal welfare and health.

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

Strong public and private support enabled the zoo to provide guests more up-close animal encounters, customer services and amenities.

A special highlight was *bringing a community favorite back to the zoo*, [Molbak's Butterfly Garden](#), which immersed visitors in the magic of 500 North American butterflies and the power of healthy pollinator habitats. Next to and doubling this space, the new Microsoft Pollinator Patio was a key design and planning project during the year, and is now open.

Next to Zoomazium, *a new outdoor feature debuted*: [the Alvord Broadleaf Theater](#). It features up-close animal experiences and keeper talks designed to spark empathy for animals and deepen the human-animal bond. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Zoomazium celebrated the 3.6 million early learners and their caregivers partaking in adventure and discovery since the award-winning nature play space opened in 2006. Altogether, these new features significantly expand and enrich nature and learning experiences.

Another major highlight was the [renovation and expansion of the Raptor Center](#). Enhancements included tripling the seating, improving sightlines for viewing animal and keeper activities, and an enhanced sound system. Many new animals joined the Ambassador Animal program –



a visitor favorite -- to increase up-close animal experiences on grounds and dramatically enrich the growing zoo education and outreach programs carried out in schools and community centers.

Spanning corporate, educational, and community organizations, several zoo partnerships enhanced access to zoo experiences, learning, and conservation.

- Generous in-kind support for Wi-Fi from Cisco and IT software from Microsoft Corporation improved access to online science learning, zoo apps, and web services.
- By expanding collaborations with local brew partners from 20-44, the sixth Annual Brew at the Zoo nearly doubling in size this season, increased from 700 to 1,200 attendees and drawing in Millennials and other new audiences to the zoo.
- Our winter festival, WildLights, presented by Sound Credit Union, expanded its themes to attract new segments of the community with Pokémon Go Nights, a Seahawks 12s Night, and College Nights. All told, a record 91,000 people enjoyed this season's winter festival with nearly half taking part in Snomazium's early learning activities.
- The Community Access Program enabled more than 5,000 kids and families from underserved communities to enjoy special WildLights evenings and a staff-led winter coat drive. On December 14, the zoo board hosted homeless women, families and children from Mary's Place for an evening with Santa who brought gifts, cocoa and snacks. By year's end, the program had [welcomed a record 55,000 guests from underserved communities thanks to the King County levy](#), and another 27,000 through educational outreach, school district partnerships and after-school opportunities enhanced by city funds, private donors and grants. That's the equivalent of filling 1,130 school buses and a 33 percent increase over the past five years.
- Along with several other science, arts and heritage institutions, the zoo board and senior leaders continued planning for 2017's community-wide Access for All ballot initiative, aiming to help such nonprofits equalize access for children and families from underserved areas with new and expanded programs and transportation.
- In a digital first for conservation, a [collaboration between zoo scientists, Microsoft Research and Idaho Fish & Game created a high-tech scent lure dispenser](#). The game-changing device significantly enhances the monitoring of wildlife during the North Cascades winter months, a dangerous time for field work. Used with motion-triggered camera traps, the 100 devices deployed to date have increased sightings of North Cascades' wolverines – an very elusive Northwest native species that is difficult to research in the wild – by four-fold in just one year.
- In October, the zoo held its first [Zoohackathon](#) a gathering of talented coders, technology experts, and zoo and conservation scientists to design creative software solutions to end illegal wildlife trafficking, made possible by support from the U.S. State Department, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Vulcan Inc., Google, Socrata, Microsoft Research, City of Seattle, and the UW Center for Conservation Biology.

For its innovative approach to community engagement and [25-year partnership](#) with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, the zoo and its partner Oregon Zoo, [earned the Association of Zoo and Aquarium's North American Conservation award](#), a high honor. The partnership has achieved a 566 percent increase in the once-vanishing endangered native Western pond turtle population.

CAPITAL PROJECTS, MAJOR MAINTENANCE & FACILITIES

Thanks to voter-approved [Seattle Park District funding](#), the zoo made significant progress in four areas of much-needed infrastructure improvements: capital assets and guest experiences; enhancing animals' habitats; increasing safety for guests and staff; and stewarding park resources and facilities for generations of park users to come.

Highlights included:

- *Replacement of the orangutan boardwalk using FSC certified sustainable lumber restored guests' unique "tree top view".* The original 1996 boardwalk was dilapidated, and frequently closed for repair. The new all-season, fully accessible area allows guests to see and learn about orangutans. New fabricated trees encourage the animals' natural behaviors and provide enriching ways to explore their Asian forest habitat.
- *Renewal of horticulture for landscape health and vibrancy, authentic experiences and safety for guests and animals.* Highlights included renovations to the award-winning Northern trail landscape; new landscaping with native flora for Molbak's Butterfly Garden; and mitigation of tree hazards as part of an assessment for 300 trees of concern to increase safety for guests, staff and animals.
- *Replacement of the feline building roof* resolved the ongoing problem of water incursion thus improving staff and animal welfare. New insulation also improved energy savings in this historic 1940s structure.
- *A Facility Condition Assessment was completed* to guide all forecasting, budgeting and prioritization of critical and cyclical major maintenance needs of zoo infrastructure.
- *The tree assessment was completed* to guide hazard tree mitigation and increase safety for guests, staff and animals.
- *In the Otter Parking Lot, new LED lighting was installed and paving repaired*, improving weather- and age-degraded areas while adding a safe, welcoming feel for guests.
- December's tragic Night House fire put a hold on plans for re-opening the Night Exhibit and also rendered the adjacent Day House currently unusable. As reported on our blog and covered by media outlets, successful animal rescues, carried out by zoo staff and supervised by Seattle Fire Department firefighters, saved 182 individual creatures, largely amphibians and reptiles, which were quickly and safely relocated to appropriate temporary housing elsewhere on grounds. Several were successfully re-homed to other accredited zoos. The zoo continues to evaluate information coming forth from insurance investigations with a goal of sharing, as soon as viable, what options are possible for moving forward. The animals rescued from the fire are doing very well. Many of them have begun breeding again—a testament to their resilience and to the excellent care they receive at the zoo.

Making zoo access easier for the Puget Sound region's rapidly growing population and reducing traffic around the zoo's perimeter remain top priorities. By monitoring usage of the additional 165 surface parking spaces installed in 2015, the zoo learned that guests consistently took full advantage of the additional lot on the zoo's west side, and that such spaces were instrumental in handling increased visitation and meeting the community's needs for convenient, safe and close access to the zoo.

SUSTAINABILITY

With the number of guests constantly rising, the zoo must be steadfast in its commitment to reducing carbon emissions, waste, and water use, and to educating guests, staff and volunteers on the most environment-friendly practices.

To better guide guest and staff behavior, the Grounds Crew began installing new interpretive recycling sort stations, rodent, bird, and rain proof and made of recycled water bottles, part of the Waste Receptacle Replacement project funded by Seattle Park District funds. The zoo will be among the first of major Seattle institutions to adopt a completely uniform sort station system with more consistent messaging to better aid our Zero Waste Goal. Along with reducing litter and wildlife impacts, the system improves the purity of compost diversion by reducing contamination.

Each year, approximately 110 animal representing more than 25 species of herbivores “make contributions” to what loyal Northwest gardeners know as ZooDoo. Approximately 780 tons of raw materials (herbivore manure and bedding) generate more than 1,000 cubic yards of finished compost. Between sales of ZooDoo to the public and savings in removal/landfill costs, the program’s annual financial benefit is estimated to be \$132,000. In 2016, the zoo recycled 31% more materials and produced 30% more compost than in 2015, and 54.2% and 57.6% more than in 2012, respectively. This result is not only thanks to the animals, but to improved staff practices for green waste diversion, ensuring that more leaves, logs and mulch also remain out of the waste stream.

Altogether in 2016 the zoo diverted 454.5 tons of waste materials from the landfill.

ANIMAL CARE & HEALTH

The big story of the year was [Yola’s first birthday in November](#) – a milestone in her development into a fully socialized member of her western lowland gorilla troop. Earlier in the year keepers and veterinarians had concerns about whether first-time mom, Nadiri, would demonstrate strong maternal behaviors toward her baby daughter, this being the 19-year-old female’s first pregnancy and she herself having been hand-raised as an infant. Extraordinarily patient, persistent, and expert animal care and health staff, in an off-view area, helped Nadiri slowly but naturally exhibit the skills and interest needed to form a bond with the infant and enhance her acceptance by the rest of the gorilla family. By June, mother and daughter were doing extremely well. Yola had already formed unique bonds with other members of her family, and was enjoying the full range of natural gorilla behaviors – as Animal Care staff planned. Nadiri and Yola carry very important genes for the Gorilla Species Survival Plan, a North American cooperative breeding program to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of gorillas for the next 100 years.

The [expanded Ambassador Animal program](#) grew to a total of 68 animals, a key component in our plan to engage more people safely and up close. Smaller species, including a raccoon, porcupine, opossum, guinea pigs, snakes, lizards and raptors, are trained through positive reinforcement. Such up close encounters are a key experience in how young children establish, develop, and show greater empathy for all beings.

Other new animals joining the zoo included two bontebok, a species of antelope new to the zoo in the African Savanna, a new Francois lemur family from another zoo, a new red panda, as well as a red-breasted goose, axolotl, a giant Flemish rabbit, king cobra, and many more.

Significant births and hatchings included six Humboldt penguin chicks. The zoo has one of the most prolific Humboldt breeding programs in North American zoos. Several new species joined the zoo family, among them Taveta golden weavers, emperor and barnacle

geese, and two female pot-bellied pigs who are now part of the Ambassador Animal program. Other births and hatchings included Edwards pheasant, tawny frogmouths, Bali mynah, northern shoveler, puna teal, and Chiloe wigeon.

In April, the zoo's veterinary team completed the [final endodontic tooth repair for Junior](#), a 16-year-old jaguar, who recovered well from the procedure thanks to a medical partnership with a board-certified veterinary dentist.

All zoo staff and volunteers were saddened by the loss of 48-year-old orangutan Towan in the spring due to an aortic aneurism which was not medically treatable. Towan and his surviving twin, Chinta, represented the oldest orangutans born in a U.S. zoo. His keepers were touched by the outpouring of sympathy from the public.

SAVING SPECIES & HABITATS IN THE WILD

The zoo and Wilburforce Foundation co-hosted the [Washington Wildlife Leaders Forum](#) with 50 leaders spanning public and nonprofit wildlife organizations, sportsmen and landowners. The goal is to identify viable options for increasing investment in conserving all the state's species for all its citizens. Governor Jay Inslee subsequently issued a policy directive to the Department of Fish & Wildlife to establish a "Conservation Task Force" to advance the Forum's goals.

A new, non-invasive wildlife monitoring device was designed and deployed by the zoo's Living Northwest team and Microsoft Research to aid conservation of elusive wolverines and other North Cascades' native species. [KING 5 featured these computerized devices' innovative design](#)—emitting scents (scent lures dispensers) to attract wildlife to remote cameras which transmit data to researchers. The devices quadrupled the sightings over previous years, enhancing scientists' mapping and comparison of data on how wildlife is faring with increases in nearby human populations.

The zoo [launched a new citizen science initiative, Otter Spotter](#), to engage the community in collecting data on the state's little studied North American river otter populations. It is part of the research project, River Otters of Western Washington and focuses especially on this species in the Lower Duwamish Waterway to inform cleanup efforts of this Superfund environmental remediation site.

[Another new effort, the Urban-Wildland Carnivore Project](#), a collaboration with University of Washington researchers, engaged 80 households in eastern King Co. who volunteered their properties as sites for camera traps to monitor the presence of wildlife and ultimately mitigate increased human-wildlife conflict in the face of population expansion and infrastructure development.

The year 2016 marked the 20th anniversary of the zoo's flagship Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program (TKCP). Thanks to TKCP's new grant from the Rainforest Trust, the previously established 187,000-acre Conservation Area in the Huon Peninsula in Papua New Guinea is on track to double to 391,000-acres over five years. The program was [honored with a prestigious Whitley Award](#), bestowed on an in-country program leader, and [recognized by the United Nations Equator Initiative](#) as a model of innovative, community-based conservation, education, health, and sustainable livelihoods. In the fall, TKCP's [Healthy Village, Healthy Forest](#) project conducted a health-care workshop, bringing U.S. volunteer physicians, led by former zoo board member Rob Liddell, MD. to train providers in remote villages in basic health care. Also, business development training and technical support provided helped TKCP conservation coffee initiatives increase performance 400 percent over 2015 levels, and 1,000 percent over 2014 as more communities join in successful sustainable livelihood ventures, thanks to purchases by Seattle's Caffe Vita and a new coffee partner in Australia.

SCIENCE EDUCATION & PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Thanks to growing partnerships with the Seattle Housing Authority, YMCA, Refugee Women's Alliance, East African Community Services, and nine branches of Seattle Public

Library, new program began, Wild City, which with our existing UpCLOSE programming, has expanded live ambassador animal experiences with visitors on and off grounds in more diverse areas of the community. In addition, the zoo's Family Nature Club provided nature-play curricula to 300+ preschoolers and mentoring to more than 30 early childhood educators in greater Seattle. Coexisting with Carnivores, a zoo partnership with the Issaquah School District, more than doubled the number of 6th grade students served in hands-on science learning curricula. Participation in ZooCrew (middle school) and ZooCorps (high school) science learning and youth development program remained strong. Design of new programs in conservation education began for people who visit the zoo through the Community Access Program, to deepen their learning experiences and take more programs out into diverse communities. Bus reimbursement was also broadened to King County Head Start and ECEAP preschools with 30% or more free and reduced-rate lunch participants.

The zoo hosted its [second annual Seattle Youth Climate Action Summit](#), partnering 100 teenagers from 39 local schools and youth programs with seasoned community leaders and mentors from Seward Park Audubon Center, the UW College of the Environment, King County Metro Transit, and YMCA Earth Service Corps. Teens learn about climate science and community action while building leadership skills and career pathways.

To date, more than 60 adults have earned a master's degree in the zoo's Advanced Inquiry graduate program (offered with Miami University), all going on to inspire positive change for species and planetary health in communities and schools.

Our volunteers are our heroes. Our annual [Celebration of Volunteers](#) honored 45 long-serving volunteers who have together contributed more than 144,000 hours of service to the zoo. We are grateful to the huge volunteer corps—totaling 750+ individuals and 300 corporate service volunteers—dedicated to the zoo's mission.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS & COMMUNICATIONS

May's issue of *Connect*, the magazine of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, featured the zoo's landmark collaboration with Vulcan Philanthropy, Seattle Aquarium, Point Defiance Zoo and others to help pass Initiative 1401 to curb illegal wildlife trade in our state.

Zoo species conservation stories earned significant local and national media coverage. Popular stories included the zoo's first-ever [Zoohackathon](#), [acupuncture and massage in animal health care](#), [Yola's first birthday](#) and her developmental milestones, Bear Affair and awareness week, [a flamingo chick naming contest](#), [zoo animals enjoying the snow](#) – all of which were amply picked up by NPR, KUOW, KING, KIMO, KNKX, Q13, *Seattle P-I*, *Seattle Times*, *Puget Sound Business Journal*, *Geekwire*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. The zoo was featured more than three times on *Evening Magazine*, including stories on butterflies, new ambassador animals, and gorilla baby, Yola. The [innovative wolverine research device story](#) ran in *Motherboard*, a global innovation webzine, reaching over 39 million people. The [Night House fire](#) was also covered by various news outlets. The community's outpouring of hope and support on the zoo's social channels was astounding and extremely appreciated by all staff members and volunteers.

Two national features of zoo experiences and WildLights reached a potential 4.5 billion views on MTV's *The Real World* and NBC's *Sunday Night Football* (multiple airings).

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