



# WOODLAND PARK ZOO

## ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

*May 1, 2013*

### SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

Attendance at Woodland Park Zoo in 2012 reached 1,167,041, third highest on record, and was aided by the first WildLights holiday lighting event that ran from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day.

Attendance at WildLights -- 66,000 -- resulted in the best December performance in the zoo's history, despite record wet weather. Weather continues to be a dominant factor in zoo attendance; 2012 saw the best April, August and September in the zoo's history, but also the worst June, reflecting weather patterns in those months.

The zoo ended the year with very positive net income, aided by generous bequests in addition to strong earned-revenue results. The final audited figures for 2012 will be available at the end of May.

The zoo began in March to offer "Rainy Day Discounts." When it looks like the next day will be wet, the zoo lists a Rainy Day Special on its website, and guests can download a discount coupon and come in for half price. In 2012, there were 22 days listed as Rainy Day Specials. The program continues in 2013, this time with loaner umbrellas available.

The zoo hosted its first-ever "Spring Fling" in April 2012, including six days, Friday through Sunday, over two weekends in mid-April. These weekends coincided with spring break at a number of local school districts, and offered increased zoo programming, keeper talks and animal feeding opportunities at the zoo.

In the summer, the zoo hosted two "Tasting Flight" evenings. And in early October, "Brew at the Zoo, an after-hours event, allowed guests to enjoy the products of local breweries. Other promotions for the community included free admission for veterans on Veterans Day and half-price for mothers the day before Mother's Day. The zoo offered its first-ever 5K run. "Pumpkin Dash" was held off-site in October with a course circling Green Lake, followed by post-race tickets to the zoo. Real Close tours, 90-minute, behind-the-scenes tours, continued for their second year. A free night for residents of the zoo's adjacent neighborhoods was held in September.

The inaugural winter lighting event, WildLights, attracted 66,000 guests. Because of careful planning, the zoo never really experienced an uncomfortable level of attendance from a guest perspective, and neighborhood levels of traffic and parking did not approach the levels regularly seen during ZooTunes concerts or heavily attended summer days at the zoo. The WildLights experience was perhaps an hour to 1.5 hours at most in duration, so guest and parking turnover was higher than during the day or at a concert, thus mitigating event impacts on the neighborhood. There were only three nights in which attendance exceeded 3,000, and only one night of more than 4,000. As a result, fears that the WildLights event would cause parking and crowding issues were never realized.

The zoo continued its aggressive and innovative programs in social media, with Give Ten for Tigers, an on-line fundraising effort that yielded more than \$140,000 for the upcoming tiger exhibit, a redesign of the zoo website, improvements to the smart-phone app and the milestone of achieving a total of 20 million views on its YouTube channel. The nearest competitor to Woodland Park Zoo, among YouTube viewers, is the London Zoo, with 12 million views.

In December, the Seattle Times published a two-part series of articles on the zoo's elephant program. A task force of community and board members was announced to take an independent look at the zoo's elephant exhibit and program and report back to the zoo board in 2013.

## **ANIMAL MANAGEMENT**

Among the significant additions to the animal collection were three new pig species: two warthogs, who went on display in the former African wild dog exhibit at the beginning of May; three Visayan warty pigs, who were in a new exhibit that opened May 5 in the Asian forest area, and two kunekune pigs, a domestic species native to New Zealand, who went on display in the Family Farm in July.

Four South African lion cubs (two males and two females) were born in November, and two sloth bear cubs were born in December. It was the first birth of lion cubs at the zoo in 20 years, and the first for the rare South African species Kruger lions.

Other significant births included the birth of the first wallaby at the zoo, the hatching of three Chilean flamingos and the birth of three snow leopards. Unfortunately, only two of the snow leopards survived, as the male was found to have multiple severe heart defects. The two remaining cubs both have deformed eyelids but are otherwise healthy.

The zoo's elderly Sumatran tigers, Rakata and JoJo, died in February and June, respectively. The zoo is planning to replace them with Malayan tigers when the new tiger-and-bear exhibit is built.

## **CONSTRUCTION AND MAJOR MAINTENANCE**

Construction began in September and continued in the final quarter on the zoo's Asian tropical forest exhibit.

The first phase, opening in May 2013, will include an exhibit of Asian small-clawed otters, an aviary and a children's nature play area. It will include a new crossover path between the east and west sides of the zoo. This new crossover path will provide guests with better access to zoo exhibits as well as creating improved access for fire and other emergency vehicles.

The new exhibit, when completed, will be the largest single project at the zoo in more than 15 years; the second phase will house Malayan tigers and sloth bears.

Woodland Park crews were responsible for renovating existing exhibits to be appropriate for the new pig species. Warthogs were housed in the former exhibit of African wild dogs, Visayan warty pigs in former old Asian Marsh, and Kunekune pigs in the Family Farm. These projects involved restoration of landscape, redesign of exhibit spaces, and new interpretive elements.

The Conservation Aviary was renovated by replacing the viewing "windows" with mesh, redesigning the signage, replanting many of the exhibits and building new benches, all as an enhancement to the guest viewing experience.

The zoo's continuing efforts in sustainability upgrades included the installation of occupancy sensors and final lighting conversions, removal of the last of the oil underground storage tanks and conversion of the oil furnace to a high efficiency heat pump system for the Maintenance office building.

The zoo completed an EPA funded waste audit to quantify the solid waste stream to and completed safety modifications in the Feline House (Adaptations Building.)

Funding for an expansion of the zoo's parking lot on the Northwest corner of the zoo, near the current administrative trailers, was proposed in the mayor's 2013 budget. To move the proposed 165-car expansion

forward, the zoo performed basic design of the expansion and took the proposal to the Design Commission, who approved the Concept Design Phase in November.

## **EDUCATION**

The zoo's early-childhood education programs grew significantly in 2012.

The "Adventure Packs" pilot program was developed for children 3-5 years old and their caregivers. Families check out backpacks filled with interactive tools, games and activities and explore the zoo.

Nearly 775 young children and their caregivers participated in "Little Critters" outreach programs presented at Seattle Public Libraries. Also geared for preschool audiences, Little Critters is centered on the library's summer reading program. Presenters told an engaging and interactive story using puppets and then introduced their audience to a live animal visitor from the story.

About 70,000 students/teachers/chaperones visited the zoo for programs or self-guided visits, including about 25,000 (36%) of them coming from King County schools with 30% or more students on free or reduced-rate lunch. This program is supported by the King County Parks Levy, which is up for renewal in 2013.

In addition, zoo outreach programs reached 13,373 students in King County and statewide. Education staff launched a new program, "Wild Wise: Coexisting with Carnivores," to seven classes of 6th grade students (approximately 200 students) at Issaquah Middle School in the fall. Middle school students developed science inquiry skills as they engaged in community-based science investigation about native large carnivores and their roles in ecosystems.

Nearly 220 educators participated in professional development opportunities offered by Woodland Park Zoo. Summer 2012 saw the launch of the zoo's second cohort in the Advanced Inquiry Program (AIP) Master's degree for educators, co-delivered by faculty at Project *Dragonfly* at Miami University and the zoo's professional education staff.

About 280 students were enrolled in ZooCrew, a new middle-school STEM enrichment program for low income, minority and underserved middle school students. This afterschool and summer program is focused on introducing new audiences to the zoo, fostering ecological and science literacy in underserved populations, and inspiring conservation action among students and their communities. It is taught at YMCAs, Neighborhood House and other centers with underserved populations.

The ZooCorps program, for high-school age students, provided ongoing training and mentoring for 98 students, who volunteered their time to help with the zoo's education program. In addition, 20 ZooCorps interns received paid positions at the zoo working in education, animal management and other program areas.

In addition to a wide variety of public programs presented by zoo staff and volunteers, the Summer Experience for zoo guests included a number of programs focused on climate change. Financed by a grant from The Boeing Company, the new programs included elephant poo papermaking (the ultimate "upcycling" activity) and a suite of hands-on, interactive activities around communicating climate change through invention and innovations.

Zoo visitors enjoyed measuring their carbon footprints at Innovation Station, learned about Tipping Points, and played "On Thin Ice," discovering how our actions here affect animals and ecosystems in the Arctic.

## **FIELD CONSERVATION**

Woodland Park Zoo's board of directors in 2012 approved a new strategic framework for the department to focus efforts more closely on wildlife conservation.

Within this new framework, the zoo will:

- More closely integrate field-conservation projects with other operations of the zoo, including the animal collection, education programs, veterinary services and fundraising.
- Seek more participation in field conservation projects beyond just offering funding.
- Launch a new “Living Northwest” program to better highlight our local species recovery projects and strengthen our regional conservation leadership role in Washington, especially in regards to carnivores and raptors.
- As part of our Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program, start and develop a new non-government organization in Papua New Guinea.
- Work with Panthera on a new project to protect tigers in Peninsular Malaysia with links to the new WPZ tiger and Bbar exhibit.
- Strengthen our African projects portfolio by reevaluating existing projects and seeking one or two new partnerships/projects.
- Highlight this strategy in communications projects.

The new “Living Northwest” program was designed to better highlight local species recovery projects and strengthen the zoo’s regional conservation leadership role. It will include working with local communities, schools and citizen scientists, conservation colleagues, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Among the cornerstone Pacific Northwest projects is the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project. In November of 2012, in conjunction with Fish and Wildlife, the Oregon Zoo and Woodland Park Zoo, a meeting was held to evaluate the 20-year program and develop a plan for the next 20 years by securing new release sites, standardizing process and procedures and increasing capacity.

The zoo’s program to help raise and reintroduce Oregon SilverSpot butterflies to Cascade Head in Oregon was commemorated by issuance, at the nearby Pelican Pub & Brewery, a new Silverspot IPA.

The zoo’s program to raise and re-introduce Oregon spotted frogs was given the top conservation award of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the North American Conservation Award. The Silverspot program also has been recognized by the AZA with a significant achievement award.

An agreement with the cat-conservation organization Panthera will lead to a new conservation program in Peninsular Malaysia. Working closely with the Malaysian government, the two organizations will invest \$1 million in protecting Malayan tigers over the next decade.

Also in 2012, the zoo began a new program, Quarters for Conservation, which donates 25 cents of each admission, to a conservation program. Guests receive a token which allows them to vote for the program of their choice in kiosks in two locations on the zoo grounds. A total of \$238,161.97 was contributed to field conservation on behalf of attendance and voting by WPZ guests.

The Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program, the zoo’s most extensive conservation program, helped arrange import of coffee beans from Papua New Guinea. Caffe Vita purchased beans directly from farmers in the conservation area.

The program in Papua New Guinea also sponsored a number of land-use planning workshops for 300 villagers, allowing them to prioritize development needs and the conservation needs of the community.