



**2009 Annual Report to the Board of Park Commissioners**  
**May 1, 2010**

**Summary of operations**

Woodland Park Zoo's 2009 operations included opening the new Humboldt Penguin exhibit, the most innovative new animal exhibit at the zoo in several years. Zoo attendance was the second-highest on record – for the second year in a row – indicating continual broad community support for the zoo and its mission.

A new food concessionaire, Lancer Hospitality, brought a variety of new, less-expensive and higher-quality food items to the zoo, further enhancing the experience of zoo visitors. Lancer renovated the former Outback Café into the Pacific Blue Chowder House, with Northwest-themed entrees. The food concessionaire is fully committed to the zoo's principles involving sustainability, waste reduction and locally sourced items.

More than 450,000 visitors participated in keeper talks, docent talks or other public programs during the summer season, in which zoo hours are lengthened and the number of keeper talks and other educational programs are increased. The year's theme was Share the Habitat, and research indicated that more than 30,000 people took specific conservation action as a result of hearing or experiencing a zoo program.

However, the success of the programs was made possible through strict budgeting, cost controls and a significant sacrifice on the part of staff. The zoo began its 2009 budget by continuing the hiring and travel freeze imposed in the fall of 2008. In addition, the budgeting included layoffs of two staff members, closing the Butterflies & Blooms exhibit and a two percent, across-the-board cut in non-personnel accounts.

By the first quarter, when it became increasingly clear that the recession would be longer and deeper than had been predicted, the zoo imposed additional reductions by imposing furloughs on senior staff and suspending retirement (403b) payments to all staff. (Represented staff took a combination of furloughs and reduced 403b payments.)

Those steps allowed the zoo to operate successfully through the year and to end the year with a budget surplus. Additional budget reductions were taken for 2010, as outlined in the Annual Plan to the Superintendent, issued in November, 2009.

## **Capital Projects**

Work began in September on the zoo's new West Entrance, a part of the Long-Range Physical Development Plan adopted by the City Council in 2004.

The new entrance, scheduled to open May 1, will replace the existing North and West entrances and provides crucial access improvements, including reduction of wait times at admission gates, membership services, first aid, stroller and wheelchair rentals, and a zoo store. A landscaped path will connect the north and west sides of the zoo.

Throughout the project, attention has been paid to the purchase of locally available and sustainable materials. The wood siding, Ipe, is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified; the sealant used is nontoxic; the concrete contains fly-ash, and the steel is fabricated in Centralia.

All rainwater that falls on to the new West Entrance infiltrates into the site via planting areas and an infiltration infrastructure. The project is on track for a LEED "silver" certification.

Work also began on renovation of the Rain Forest Food Pavilion. The pavilion has been open during construction, and renovations are scheduled to be finished in May as well.

## **Major Maintenance**

The boiler in the Adaptations Building, formerly known as the Feline House, was replaced with two, new, high-efficiency boilers allowing for redundancy. The original, 1950's secondary switchgear was replaced with new wiring and electrical panels, the design of which allows for a future upgrade to 3-phase power when the supply transformer is replaced. The hot water boiler in the elephant barn also was replaced with a new, high-efficiency, single-fuel unit.

Significant renovations were made to the Education Center auditorium, including new carpet, reupholstered seating, edge lighting of the stage for safety, a complete upgrade of theatrical lighting controls, new stage stairs and new exit doors. This project was funded by a private donor.

Animal shift door operating mechanisms in the colobus monkey holding facility were improved for safety and ergonomics. The old, counter-weighted manual system was replaced with an electric/hydraulic system which allows push-button control.

New fencing was installed in the southeast corner of the zoo to provide better security and improve operational efficiencies. Final renovation began on the Central Shops Office.

## **Animal care**

There were notable changes to the zoo's animal collection this year.

In March, 20 Humboldt penguins arrived from several zoos in preparation for opening the new, state-of-the-art exhibit May 1.

The exhibit contains significant sustainability measures. A filtration and recirculation system allowed the pool to be filled only once, significantly reducing water use. The water in the pool is heated to 55 degrees using geothermal wells. Porous concrete in the exhibit allows all rainwater to permeate into the soil.

The sustainability features allowed the zoo to use the area for conservation messaging and messaging about sustainable seafood and habitat preservation.

Twin snow leopards – one male and one female – were born May 25. They made their public debut on August 14, in celebration of Snow Leopard Day. The cubs continue to thrive and will live with their mother for the next couple of years.

On February 13, four laughing kookaburras and two tawny frogmouths arrived from the Taronga Zoo in Sydney, Australia. This importation was intended to enhance the demographics and genetics of the North American breeding population of these two species. The effort proved fruitful with kookaburra hatchings in June and October, as well as a tawny frogmouth chick on June 4. The latter represented the first hatching of this Australian bird species at WPZ, and is one of only four frogmouth chicks hatched in U.S. zoos in the last six years.

There were multiple hatchings of Chilean flamingo chicks, the first reproduction of this species at Woodland Park Zoo. To optimize chance for survival and reduce risk of predation from native species such as raccoons, the eggs were incubated and the chicks hand-reared by staff.

The zoo continued building its role in breeding, rearing, and reintroducing endangered Northwest species, including western pond turtles, Oregon silverspot butterflies and Oregon spotted frogs.

In addition, WPZ is participating with several other institutions and wildlife agencies to breed endangered northern spotted owls. The goal of the program is to produce offspring for possible eventual release to augment wild populations in British Columbia.

Other new animals in 2009 included a female giraffe, a pair of northern tree shrews (a new species for Woodland Park Zoo), and a male Matschie's tree kangaroo.

Animal deaths in 2009 included a Chinese crocodile lizard, female gyrfalcon, a mountain goat and male reticulated giraffe.

## Education

In Zoomazium, the zoo's venue aimed specifically at younger children, 56,079 young learners and their caregivers were reached through formal programs such as puppet shows and the opportunity to touch an animal.

At the new penguin exhibit, education staff, including a Peruvian penguin researcher, answered visitor questions and encouraged the purchase of sustainable seafood as a way to help penguins and other ocean animals. Maasai cultural interpreters shared their firsthand knowledge of African savanna wildlife, and habitat and conservation issues. Visitors made beaded bracelets and learned about African beading traditions through the Upapi program which generated \$23,000 in support of the Maasai Association Waterhole Restoration Project.

Nearly 74,000 students, teachers and chaperones visited the zoo for programs or self-guided visits as part of their school curriculum; of these 25,729 (35%) came from King County schools with 30% or more students on free or reduced-rate lunch programs. In addition:

- 12,418 students in King County and statewide participated in outreach programs, with 6,775 (55%) of these coming from Washington schools with 30% or more students on free or reduced-rate lunch programs.
- 280 teachers participated in professional development opportunities offered by the zoo; 30% of these teachers teach in Washington schools with 30% or more students on free or reduced-rate lunch programs. 23 teachers were active members of our Zoo Teacher Advisory Council
- 278 Seattle-area residents participated in backyard habitat sessions.
- 761 volunteers and nine service groups gave over 70,835 hours to the zoo, valued at over \$1.1 million.
- 85 Zoo Corps volunteers developed their ecological literacy through training and service at the zoo and participated in meaningful and inspiring habitat restoration and conservation experiences.
- 19 Zoo Corps interns received paid positions at the zoo for a portion of the year.

## **Field Conservation**

Woodland Park Zoo's Field Conservation Department supported the work of 17 field projects in the Partners for Wildlife program.

The Partners for Wildlife program (PFW) makes long-term commitments to comprehensive community-based conservation programs in the focus regions of the Pacific Northwest, Africa and Asia-Pacific. Partner programs stress practical solutions that incorporate habitat and species conservation, research, education, capacity building and community support that recognize the human element necessary for conservation to be successful.

In addition, the zoo provided funding to 16 projects and organizations related to our accrediting organization, the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, its Species Survival Plan programs, in situ field work, and through the Conservation Dues program. In 2009, WPZ awarded grants to four field projects in the Jaguar Conservation Fund program.

"Zoo in the World," a conservation-focused signage concept which was piloted in 2008, continued with six new informational boards on grounds throughout 2009. The project showed increased visitor awareness of the zoo's active role in conservation projects locally and internationally. Projects featured included: the Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Project, Snow Leopard Trust, Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program, the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project, Butterflies of the Northwest (Silverspot Butterfly), and the Mbeli Bai Gorilla Study.

Woodland Park Zoo's signature field-conservation program, the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program, celebrated the dedication of more than 187,000 acres of critical habitat at the YUS Conservation Area in Papua New Guinea on Earth Day, 2009.

In addition to the zoo, financial support comes from Conservation International and the German Development Bank. This initiative seeks to fund new protected areas in tropical forests and assist with local community development and livelihoods. Grants will expand health and education projects in villages; provide staff to implement a forestry projects as well as management of the protected area