

Because of you:

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ZooNews

Pueblo Zoological Society



The biannual newsletter for Pueblo Zoo supporters



Photo: Bethany Morlind

The Secret Lives of SSPs

There is a little known, complex web busily at work behind the scenes at all AZA accredited zoos. No, it's not the penguins of Madagascar. Or an underground cell of the CIA. We are talking SSPs – Species Survival Plans. As a general rule, accredited zoos no longer acquire animals from the wild. As a result, AZA institutions take an enormous amount of care in managing moves and breeding to ensure genetic diversity and maximize animal welfare. This not only helps zoos educate guests, but helps preserve species into the future. Species Survival Plans, (SSP) are how zoos and

aquariums manage populations. For each species, a team of animal care professionals make recommendations about animal moves and breeding based on data. Currently, there are approximately 500 SSP programs within the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), responsible for developing a thorough breeding and transfer plan. This helps ensure genetic diversity within captive populations to preserve species well into the future. It's a tricky but crucial process. In this issue, read more about what SSPs do and just some of our zoo's success stories.

Species Survival Plan

by, Curator, Gina Gley

Being a part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a point of pride for Pueblo Zoo. It indicates that we uphold the highest standards in animal care, education, guest experience, safety and business operations. As an accredited zoo, we participate in AZA supported programs such as Species Survival Plan (SSP). 34% of the animals at the Pueblo Zoo belong to an SSP. These managed groups make sure that AZA organizations are maintaining strong, and healthy animal populations. There are many factors that go into SSP recommendations – genetic diversity, space, zoo needs, companionship, expertise are just some. One reason we follow recommendations from the SSPs to ensure we don't over populate a species. You might think that if an animal is endangered, they should be allowed to breed. However space in zoos, much like the wild, is limited. It is also crucial to ensure genetic variability. The pairing process could take many years or in some cases a matter of months to find the perfect match. Just because the SSP makes a recommendation, doesn't mean the animals themselves will cooperate. Some years the animals are doing what is needed and there are lots of babies with lots of new genetics, then some years there are little to none. This all impacts where animals are recommended to go or stay. There could be a need for more females, but only males are born. The SSP makes the best decisions on placement and care, which could lead an institution to hold onto their males until needed elsewhere.

SSPs decisions are not only about reproduction. Sometimes an animal moves to a zoo as a companion for another animal of the species. This could be due to the age of the animals or over- representation of genetics. SSPs look at the population and decide the best placement for the animals. An example of this is two of our ring-tailed lemurs that went to another zoo to be a part of a bachelor group. This model enables zoos to have animals on exhibit, to show and teach about the species. Not all zoos focus on breeding, but they are still a vital part of the SSP, and the welfare of the population.

Being a part of the SSP program means a lot to the zoo and me personally. It means we are a part of the bigger picture. We are not here just to breed and make more animals, we are here to help species thrive so they are around for future generations, and on that one day in the future when we can learn to coexist with animals in the wild, we can start reintroducing the species back to the wild where they belong. We are a very long ways a way from that day, but until then we will continue to take great care of these species.

SSP HALL OF FAME



AN SSP AT WORK



A recent example of an SSP at work is the transfer of red panda, Priya. Successful in contributing to the population with the birth of twins in 2021, it was determined that Priya's valuable genes were a perfect match for Mowmow, a male red panda at Utah's Hogle Zoo. The zoos staged a fun Tinder match on social media to illustrate the SSP process. Priya left Pueblo in June 2022, and the pair are now settling down in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Meet the new Pueblo Zoo Curator, Gina



As Curator, Gina is the institutional representative for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and ensures that the Zoo meets the accreditation standards of the USDA. She plays a role in the safety committee, ACUC, Gun team lead, in addition to her other duties, such as record keeping, shipments, collection planning, and keeper responsibilities.

Gina plays a big role in SSP's at the Zoo, serving as the vice-coordinator for the meerkat SSP. As a Keeper she has extensive experience with the meerkats at the Pueblo Zoo, prompting her to apply for this position. Asking a Keeper to choose a favorite animal is sometimes unfair, but Gina will immediately tell you her favorite (and her spirit animal) is Barney the sun bear. As one of the longest residents at the Pueblo Zoo, Barney is a staff and guest favorite for his fun personality and cute stature. Sun bears are the smallest of the species and are vulnerable to extinction, making his care here all the more important to Gina, and all the Keepers.

A Pueblo native, Gina Gley earned her degree in Natural Resource Management, with a concentration in conservation, and minor in Zoology from Colorado State University. She has worked for the Pueblo Zoo for almost 10 years, after starting as a volunteer. Gina has worked in all animal care areas of the Zoo. As she has progressed through her career at the Pueblo Zoo, becoming Curator was the next logical step.

Through professional development, Gina works towards increasing her knowledge of animals and conservation and applying it to the Zoo. In 2018 she had the opportunity to travel to South Africa and work with Wildlife ACT at the Imfolozi Game Reserve, where she helped monitor, tag, and report on the animals, such as the painted dogs, cheetahs, and lions, in the park. The experience "solidified my enthusiasm for work in conservation," says Gina.

Gina recognizes that animals can't help themselves with the current challenges facing their habitat and it is the responsibility of people to step up and protect them and ensure their survival. In addition to conservation, Gina is focused on promoting the mission of the Zoo as an educational conservation institution that regards the community as a partner in the fight for animal welfare.



Curator, Gina Gley

Staff development increases knowledge across all areas of the Zoo, improves employee job satisfaction, which leads to employee retention and attracts qualified candidates for internships and open positions at the Zoo. You can help support staff development through your generous donation.

Humans - The Zoos "Other Half"

It takes many people in many different roles to keep a Zoo going on a daily basis. Meet some of those who play a vital role in the Zoo and our community.



Anne Casey, Virtual Program Coordinator

In 2018 Anne started as the Education Program Coordinator with a background in education and as a Vet Tech. When the pandemic hit and schools moved online, she worked to create online educational opportunities for schools, libraries and other community partners to serve the greater Southern Colorado area. Anne helped to secure a grant from IMLS to continue online programming, leading to her title and role change to Virtual Program Coordinator. Anne is, "excited to meet the challenges of my new position and hope to reach a wider audience with our educational programs through the online environment."

Zack Fodera - Section Zoo Keeper

Working as a volunteer and then as an intern while in college, lead Zack to the Keeper position at the Pueblo Zoo in May 2017. In addition to working with the hoof stock animals, Zack is passionate about training the animals, "to develop a bond with them and have them trust in me to be willing to cooperate in their care is a special feeling" says Zack. One example, is Harry the American white pelican, as an intern Zack worked with him and today is Harry's trainer. Zack is also a co-chair of the Diversity, Equity, Access



Gabbie Ellis, Associate Director of Guest Services

Starting part-time in the front gate, Gabbie left the Zoo briefly after completing college, but just couldn't stay away, and she returned a year later as the Guest Services Manager. As to why she returned, Gabbie says, "I loved feeling like I was working for an organization that was making a difference in the world." She wears many hats, including managing the gift shop, Safari Cafe, and the front gate. Gabbie has made great strides in incorporating sustainable practices in all areas; such as reducing plastic use through reduced packaging, providing products made of recycled materials and co-chairing the Zoos Green Committee.

Tony Rich - Irrigation Technician

After living for a couple of years in Moab, UT, Tony and his family were looking to return to Pueblo. In February 2020, Tony came home to Pueblo and jumped into his new position at the Zoo. His work as the Irrigation Technician is not only to keep our grounds green but to also implement our mission of conservation and ensuring that we use our water resources responsibly. Tony enjoys the ability to be outdoors, work as part of the Zoo team and with volunteers and those looking to work in conservation.



Kim Pranger, Veterinary Technician

Since starting at the Pueblo Zoo in August of 1999, Kim has worked in many roles, but has consistently been the Veterinary Technician. She started at the Zoo to gain more experience working with exotic animals, but stayed for the animals, the staff and Pueblo. Kim has a passion for training not only the animals but interns who come to learn about working at Zoo's. AS one of the longest staff members at the Zoo, Kim represents a level of commitment to all aspects of the Zoo's mission and culture. She continues to develop her medical training skills that she applies to our existing and new animals.

To learn more about volunteering and internships please visit our website - pueblozoo.org

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE!



ZooBoo and ElectriCrittters was back to full attendance in 2021! We gave candy to over 1,200 trick or treaters at ZooBoo and awed over 14,000 visitors with ElectriCrittters. We want to thank all attendees, volunteers and sponsors for the success of these events. We are excited to bring both events back for 2022 and can't wait to see you. If you are looking to sponsor ZooBoo or ElectriCrittters contact Patrice - pharrison@pueblozoo.org. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Nick - nwertz@pueblozoo.org.

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GIVING CORNER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

- Carolyn Jackson – camp scholarships
- Xcel Grant – Family Nights for D60 & D70 Title 1 Schools
- Johnson Family Foundation – commercial washer and dryer for the Animal Care Center
- Mary J Voelker Family Trust - general operations

Ever wonder how *ElectriCrittters* magically appears every year?

Our Critter Crew is an extremely dedicated small group that brings it all to life. **Do you have what it takes to join the team?** It's hard work requiring training, a multi-year commitment and hours of dedication. But if it IS right for you, the payoff is extremely rewarding when you see the wonder and discovery each year of kids big and small. Contact Nick for more information - nwertz@pueblozoo.org

pueblozoo.org/electricrittters

OUR MISSION
To empower people to
engage in conservation
of animals and their natural habitat

Photo: Ashley Bowen



Letter from the Director

AS WITH MOST THINGS IN LIFE, THERE IS MORE GOING ON THAN MEETS THE EYE IN RUNNING A ZOO. IN THIS ISSUE, YOU READ ABOUT THE INNER WORKINGS OF ZOO ANIMAL MANAGEMENT THAT HELPS ENSURE BOTH GENETIC AND PHYSICAL DIVERSITY. YOU ALSO READ THAT IT TAKES A VARIETY OF STAFF TALENTS AND BACKGROUNDS TO TAKE CARE OF OUR ANIMALS AND PROMOTE CONSERVATION. THROUGH THE WORK OF THE PUEBLO ZOO'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION (DEAI) COMMITTEE, THE ZOO HAS ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING DIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT: "PUEBLO ZOO BELIEVES THAT ANIMAL AND HUMAN DIVERSITY ARE KEY TO SUSTAINING A HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A WELCOMING, SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PLACE TO VISIT, LEARN AND WORK. PUEBLO ZOO VALUES INCLUSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION - SUCCESS REQUIRES ALL OF US."

SOMETIMES DIVERSITY IS PHYSICALLY SEEN, OTHER TIMES NOT. THE NEEDS AND TALENTS OF OUR GUESTS, VOLUNTEERS, AND STAFF, ARE NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS SO IT IS ALL OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT AND TRY TO MINIMIZE BARRIERS TO ACCESS. THAT MAY COME IN THE FORM OF REACHING OUT TO DIVERSE APPLICANT POOLS OR PROVIDING REDUCED PRICE ADMISSION PROGRAMS, SUCH AS MUSEUMS FOR ALL. IN THE ANIMAL REALM, OUR MIX OF ANIMALS MUST NOT ONLY BE DIVERSE TO KEEP IT INTERESTING AND EDUCATIONALLY RELEVANT FOR GUESTS, BUT OUR WORK IN ENSURING GENETIC DIVERSITY IS CRITICAL IN OUR EFFORTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONSERVATION OF SPECIES. EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY IN CONSERVATION. WE THANK YOU, OUR SUPPORTERS, FOR THE PART YOU PLAY CONSERVATION. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

- Abbie Krause, Executive Director

Upcoming Events

September 12-16: Senior Week

Honoring senior citizens 65+ with free admission, light refreshments, and sponsored daily activities.

September 14: Senior Safari

This day during Senior Week includes a souvenir tote bag, morning refreshments, lunch, fun activities, animal encounters, live music, and games! Seating is first come, first serve. Reserve tables, for a \$25 fee, please RSVP by Friday, Sept. 9. Visit our website, pueblozoo.org/events to complete the online registration form.

September 17: Red Panda Conservation Day

Join the campaign to raise awareness about saving red pandas. Featuring special keeper chats, crafts, and lots of information about one of our favorite animals at the Zoo! Participation is free with admission, 10am-2pm.

October 1: Winter hours begin

Open daily 9am-4pm. Safari Cafe closed for the season.

IN THE WORKS

October 1: Wine Festival presented by Big Bear Wine & Liquor

Sample wines while exploring the Zoo. More information to come!

October 15: Creations for Conservation Art Show

A fun art show throughout the zoo with online bidding, refreshments and DIY Artmaking Stations.

For more information on upcoming events, go to:
www.pueblozoo.org/events