

An insider's view of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

SUMMER 2025

# My Zoo Magazine

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# A Message from the Friends Executive Director

As we step into another vibrant Central New York summer, I want to express my deepest gratitude for your continued support of the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Your involvement—whether through membership, volunteering, attending events, or simply visiting the zoo—fuels the heart of everything we do.

The zoo is alive with excitement this season. Our summer camps are in full swing, our educational programming continues to grow, and we’re thrilled to introduce an exciting new attraction:

Canine Champions for Conservation – A Dog Show Like No Other! This high-energy, family-friendly performance features rescue dogs showing off their agility and talents, and it will become a fan favorite. It’s a joyful addition that reminds us of the deep bond between humans and animals of all kinds.

Behind the scenes, our Friends team is advancing major initiatives that will shape the zoo’s future. One of the most visible changes is the transformation of our public gardens throughout the grounds. These new, thoughtfully designed green spaces will create beautiful and accessible places for guests to gather, reflect, and enjoy nature—enhancing both the visitor experience and connection to conservation.

We’re thrilled to unveil our brand-new event space at the Zoo—transformed from the former elephant yard into a one-of-a-kind venue that blends history, nature, and celebration! The space will first host the beloved dog show for a bit, and then it will be ready for private bookings. Whether you're planning a clambake, wedding, or organizational outing, this unforgettable space offers a wild twist!

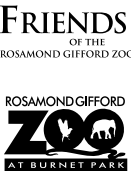
Looking ahead, we’re filled with excitement and momentum. From the highly anticipated Fall Conservation Bash to game-changing capital projects and bold new partnerships, there’s a powerful energy driving us forward—and it’s all fueled by your support. Together, we’re building a more innovative, inclusive, and inspiring future for the zoo and our community.

Thank you for standing with us. Here’s to a summer of connection, celebration, and conservation.

With gratitude,

*Carrie Large*

Carrie Large  
Executive Director  
Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo



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**Printing by:** Upstate Printing

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Our printing process complies with the highest social and environmental standards on the market.  
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Please direct questions regarding this publication to [editor@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:editor@rosamondgiffordzoo.org).

**ON THE COVER:**  
Red Wolf Pup  
*photo by Camille Murphy*

## From Our Board



*I'm thrilled to be serving on the board of our local zoo — a truly unique place that brings people of all ages closer to wildlife and conservation. The zoo is more than just a place to see animals; it's where kids get inspired, families connect, and we're all reminded of the importance of protecting the natural world. Being part of a team that supports animal care, education programs, and community events is both fun and deeply meaningful. As a board member, I'm honored to help guide the zoo's strategic direction, ensure its financial sustainability, and advocate for initiatives that protect endangered species and engage the next generation of environmental stewards. For me, this work is about strengthening a beloved community institution and helping people build a deeper connection to the world we share.*

**John Harris**  
**Friends of the Zoo Board Member**  
**VP for Mortgage Lending in New York at M&T Bank**

# Flown First-Class and Now a Father: Red Wolf Sage Lands at Rosamond Gifford Zoo with LightHawk’s Help

*On January 25, 2025, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo welcomed Sage, a four-year-old, male red wolf from North Carolina. He joined female red wolf, Evie, at the Matthews Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve on the zoo’s Wildlife Trail.*

Any animal’s arrival at the zoo entails a complex, coordinated collaboration across the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s animal care team as well as the animal’s previous caretakers, but Sage’s arrival was particularly unique. To ensure his trip was smooth, safe, and as quick as possible, Sage was flown to his new home courtesy of LightHawk, a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating conservation success through the powerful perspective of flight. Sage’s arrival to the zoo was the first step in a major conservation success that recently took place at the zoo: Sage and Evie welcomed a litter of red wolf pups on May 3, 2025. This litter of red wolf pups represents hope for their critically endangered species.

Prior to the 1960s, red wolves were native throughout the southeastern region the United States, but today, their habitat has been drastically reduced to northeastern North Carolina. Red wolves are the most endangered species of canine on the planet. As defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), red wolves are critically endangered, meaning that the species is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. Currently, the number of red wolves in the wild is fewer than 20 individuals, mostly due to illegal poaching and habitat destruction. With their brownish-reddish coloring, broad muzzles, and pointed ears, red wolves look remarkably similar to coyotes, meaning that they are often mistaken for the species and hunted despite being protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1967.

As an institution accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), the Rosamond Gifford Zoo contributes to the survival of red wolves, which is why we are a proud participant in the Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) program for the species. Our participation in this vital SAFE is one exciting example of the wildlife conservation efforts that go on at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo every day. SAFE is a collaborative program designed to coordinate healthy breeding and management of a certain species. By carefully tracking the genetics and demographics of red wolves who live in human care at AZA zoos, expert SAFE coordinators make breeding recommendations for individual animals that will result in a sustainable, genetically diverse population. Sage was brought to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo because he was recommended to breed with Evie.

Before breeding was even a possibility, Sage and Evie first had to meet.

That’s where LightHawk comes into play.





ANIMAL  
UPDATES

Welcome, Willa!

Eastern hellbenders are a species of giant salamander native to rocky streams in eastern regions of the United States. Their flat, slippery body is an effective adaptation that allows for easy movement through narrow crevices between rocks.



CREATURE  
FEATURE:  
NORTHERN  
TREE SHREW

AT THE ROSAMOND GIFFORD  
ZOO: 1 MALE, TURMERIC  
1 FEMALE, ODESSA



On April 10, 2025, **male Amur tiger Zuzaan** departed for the Great Plains Zoo.

On April 13, 2025, **male Humboldt penguin chick Domingo** hatched. His parents are Peru (father) and Cuatro (mother).

On April 15, 2025, a **female eastern hellbender** arrived from the Sedgewick County Zoo. She has been named **Willa**.

On April 19, 2025, **male Humboldt penguin chick Ramon** hatched. His biological parents are Peru (father) and Cuatro (mother), but he will be fostered by experienced Humboldt penguin pair Luis (foster-father) and Calypso (foster-mother).

On April 21, 2025, **female gray wolf Sylvia** was humanely euthanized at 13 years old. She had inoperable cancer.

On April 24, 2025, a **male Von der Decken's hornbill** departed for the Kansas City Zoo.

On April 25, 2025, a **female troupiat** departed for the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo.

On April 30, 2025, a **male Luzon bleeding heart dove** departed for the Fort Worth Zoo.

On May 2, 2025, **one female and one male Black Welsh Mountain sheep** were born to parents Bryson (father) and Blackberry (mother).

On May 3, 2025, **six red wolf puppies** (four females and two males) were born to parents Sage (father) and Evie (mother).

On May 7, 2025, **three female Northern bald ibises** departed for the Miami Zoo.

On May 13, 2025, a **male troupiat** arrived from the San Antonio Zoo.

On May 15, 2025, **male eastern box turtle Elliot** departed for Binder Park Zoo.

On May 16, 2025, **three male Humboldt penguins (Elmer, Maverick, and Felix)** departed for the Roger Williams Park Zoo.

On May 19, 2025, **female Amur tiger Cobra** departed for the Smithsonian National Zoo.

On May 20, 2025, **male Amur tiger Metis** arrived from the Smithsonian National Zoo.

On May 27, 2025, **male Amur leopard Rafferty** departed for the Philadelphia Zoo.

Say Hi to the Northern Tree Shrew!

*The northern tree shrew is a small-bodied mammal species native to moist, humid rainforests across South and Southeast Asia, including areas of China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.*

Northern tree shrews are quite small, typically growing to approximately 12-21cm and weighing between 50-270g. They have brownish-grayish fur, a fuzzy tail, and an elongated snout. Male tree shrews sport a white ring around their eyes. Although squirrel-like in appearance, tree shrews are not classified as rodents. In fact, the approximately 20 species of tree shrews are the only mammals that make up the order Scandentia.

Surprisingly, shrews’ closest relatives are primates, and their sleep cycles closely resemble that of humans. Rather than nap throughout the day like other small mammals, northern tree shrews will usually sleep for a consolidated period of time. That behavior suggests northern tree shrews might have stronger memories than other mammalian species (Dimanico et al, 2021). Tree shrews also have the highest brain to body mass ratio of any mammal, including humans. They are omnivores, primarily eating insects, seeds, small vertebrates, and fruit. Northern tree shews share a unique, mutually beneficial relationship with pitcher plants. After eating the pitcher plants’ sweet nectar, northern tree shrews will defecate onto the plants, providing them with important nutrients (Clarke et al, 2010).

***FUN FACT:**  
Although humans are the only documented species to purposefully seek spicy sensation from food, northern tree shrews consistently display a willingness to consume spicy food, with a strong preference for Piper boehmeriaefolium, a spicy pepper plant (Han et al, 2018).*

Turmeric, the northern tree shrew currently living at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, is a 4-year-old male. Like most northern tree shrews, Turmeric is extremely energetic. He can often be found skittering around the floor of his habitat or climbing around the multi-level perching. Turmeric’s diet consists of dry cat food, Mazuri brand insectivore diet, finely chopped leafy greens, a variety of fruits and vegetables, and insects, with his favorite treat being live crickets. He also enjoys a variety of enrichment activities, especially puzzle feeders and paper bags.

Per a breeding recommendation from the Northern Tree Shrew Species Survival Plan (SSP), the Rosamond Gifford Zoo recently acquired a female northern tree shrew named Odessa. She arrived from the El Paso Zoo on May 9, 2025. Once Odessa finishes her mandatory 30-day quarantine period, the team will slowly begin to introduce her to Turmeric. Turmeric will move from his habitat in the USS Antiquities Cave so that he and Odessa will live together in a larger habitat in the Social Animals Building.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) designates the northern tree shrew as a species of Least Concern, meaning that their wild population is widespread and not currently at immediate risk of extinction.

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Founded in the late 1980s, LightHawk’s mission began when pilot Michael Stewart recognized that flight offered a unique perspective that motivates and inspires people to protect the environment by showing the vastness, complexity, and beauty of natural ecosystems. According to Clint Burson, Strategic Communications Manager at LightHawk, “Flight puts you in a position to see the world in a new way. You can access places that are often hidden or unreachable, landscapes that you can’t see from the ground. It allows people to see how something in one area impacts another, how connected we all are.” Today, LightHawk’s work has expanded, encompassing monitoring habitats, tracking movements of wildlife, transporting endangered species, and more.

Although aviation is a highly valuable resource, it is often inaccessible to conservation groups due to cost. To overcome that challenge, LightHawk calls on its network of ~300 volunteer pilots who donate their expertise, time, aircraft, and fuel to support the project, making their flight resources available at no direct cost to the project’s partners. The LightHawk team serves as consultants, co-designing flight campaigns to achieve conservation outcomes, educational objectives, and outreach strategies. “LightHawk’s ability to provide wildlife transport is unmatched,” asserts Joanna Weitzel, Chief Advancement Officer at LightHawk. “There are no conservation organizations that have the scale LightHawk has. We can’t overestimate how amazing our volunteer pilots are, and we couldn’t do this work without them.”

“Our capabilities for wildlife transport have grown immensely,” Burson notes. “Because we fly directly, there’s no need to go from airport to airport, which are often not close to project sites. [LightHawk] is able to operate more efficiently. We minimize the time animals are in crates or experiencing stress during transport. They’re not being shoved into a cargo hold or sitting on a ramp at an airport for hours and hours,” he describes. “We load them in the plane and take off. When we get there, we land and immediately unload. It’s significantly quicker and minimizes stress for the animals.”

In other words, Sage caught a private and direct flight from North Carolina to Syracuse, piloted by LightHawk volunteer David Morrison on a Cessna 206 aircraft. Theo Campbell, Collection Manager of Carnivores at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, also joined the flight as a handler to monitor Sage throughout the journey. No layovers, no boarding pass, and no baggage claim lines for the canine. He didn’t even have to redeem his airline rewards points.

LightHawk’s partnership with Sage’s transportation process was more than a first-class flight for an individual red wolf. As with all of LightHawk’s work, their participation with Sage’s transport was a significant contribution to conserving a species on the brink of extinction.

“LightHawk saved us a lot of money, time, and stress on Sage,” confirms Campbell. “It’s a professional courtesy for receiving institutions to cover costs related to transport. That includes travel, lodging, fuel, overtime pay, everything. The beauty of LightHawk is that it’s all volunteers, so that drastically reduced the cost for us. [A direct flight] also eliminates a lot of travel time and expedites the whole process, which is huge for red wolves. The species is especially susceptible to stress-related health complications such as cardio myopathy.” In other words, high levels of anxiety can induce heart attack-like symptoms in red wolves. Campbell continues, “Flying takes a fraction of the time it would’ve taken to drive, so it’s a lot safer for the animal.”

As an experienced Collection Manager, Campbell has participated in a variety of transportation projects as animals arrive and depart the zoo. “Typically, transportation requires a lot of coordination and logistical organization between institutions. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires us to have a variety of contingency plans, including what we’d do if there was a motor vehicle accident, a crate fails to contain the animal, or an animal was in distress due to a health emergency,” he lists. “Prior to any move, we check with other zoos along the route, preferably accredited [by the AZA], to alert them that we’ll be passing through and ask if they were able to assist us if something were to happen during the journey.”

By providing their services for Sage’s transport, LightHawk helped make sure his journey to our zoo was as quick and safe as possible. A direct flight limits the possibility for something to go wrong in transit by cutting down on travel time. Perhaps even more importantly for the future of red wolves, LightHawk’s partnership in the move contributes to the overall goal of maintaining Sage’s wild instincts by limiting unavoidable stress and human contact as much as possible. “Sage was pretty relaxed while we were in the air,” Campbell recalls. “It was a quick flight, and we set the plane at a nice, cool temperature to keep him comfortable.”

As a Wildlife Program Manager at LightHawk, Brooke George takes on the gargantuan task of arranging wildlife transport travel plans, including coordinating Sage’s flight. “It’s a lot of coordination,” she admits. “But everyone has the same goal, and that makes it easy to get everyone to move together and do what needs to be done.” George positions LightHawk as a bridge between United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and zoological facilities to ensure smooth transports when endangered animals receive breeding recommendations that necessitate they be moved across the country. Remarkably, George often has to plan for a mission to take place between a window of time, but she might have as little as 24 hours to solidify flight plans. For Sage, those plans included arranging for a volunteer pilot and aircraft to arrive on site, capturing and crating Sage in accordance with American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) guidelines for humane transfer, conducting safety briefings for everyone involved, monitoring status during the flight, communicating with the receiving party throughout the process, and ensuring safe touchdown.

“It’s always a challenge,” reports George. “A lot of things can happen where we have to pivot and find a solution, but everyone comes together and works as a team to make it happen.”

Not only did Sage take his flight and change of scenery in stride, but he also responded positively to Evie, who shares the habitat space with him. To ensure Sage acclimated well, the carnivore care team monitored him under constant watch well into the night. For a species as skittish as red wolves, observation poses unique challenges. “It was tough because we actually had to back off quite a bit,” explains Campbell. “Our being there makes them nervous and prevents them from exhibiting their normal behaviors, but at the same time, we want to see their behaviors without any outside influence to make sure everything is alright.” To gauge Sage and Evie authentically, Campbell retreated as far as the elephant viewing space next door to the Matthew Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve to watch the pair with binoculars. He stayed there until nearly midnight, even after it got so dark that he could only make out the wolves’ shadowy silhouettes to watch their interactions.

Sage’s ability to settle into his new home so quickly is a testament to the high-quality care he receives at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Moving to a new location, even one as naturalistic and private as the Matthews Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve, is a big change. Facilitating successful breeding for animals in human care is not as straightforward as it might seem. Even when animals’ physical, environmental, nutritional, and medical needs are met and a pair is considered to be well-matched genetically, it is ultimately up to them if they choose to engage in breeding behaviors together. There simply are no guarantees. For Sage and Evie to have felt safe, healthy, and comfortable enough to breed successfully is a major indication of the carnivore team’s expert care and a significant conservation accomplishment for the species.

Because the wild population of red wolves has declined so sharply, the resulting offspring from the Red Wolf SAFE might be viable candidates for reintroduction to the wild through USFWS. Reintroduction is the ultimate goal to help sustain the species, but the process takes an incredible amount of planning and logistics to manage. In fact, USFWS’s regulations demand specialized treatment for red wolves under human care, to which Rosamond Gifford Zoo carefully adheres. Nearly every other animal who lives at Rosamond Gifford Zoo receives regular training and opportunities to build trust with their caretakers, but Evie and Sage do not. Instead, the carnivore care team aims to preserve Sage’s and Evie’s ingrained wild instincts as much as possible so that they will impart their wildness to their litter of pups.

As part of the overall commitment to wildlife conservation and animal welfare, all of Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s habitats and behind-the-scenes holding areas are designed to provide animals with the proper amount of space, terrain, elevation, and other environmental features of their wild habitats, thereby encouraging the animals to behave as they would in the wild. A natural habitat helps facilitate breeding by providing animals the safety and security they need to engage in such behaviors. For red wolves, privacy is a vital concern. The Matthews Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve is set at quite a distance from guests’ pathways compared to other animals’ habitats. Additionally, their den has no viewing window. In accordance with USFWS guidelines for red wolf care, their den mimics a burrow that wild red wolves would create to stay protected. Although this means that it might be difficult for guests to spot the red wolves, their individual comfort and the species’ collective survival must be prioritized.

After all, if those pups are to one day have their own litters that might be candidates for rewilding, they will need strong instincts to survive. Developing a dependance on humans could spell disaster for a wild red wolf. Even a lack of fear towards humans might make the wolf more likely to be hunted. By taking every step to minimize human interaction and to mimic their natural habitat, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo fosters an ideal environment that encourages Sage and Evie to raise their pups with the survival instincts intact. The future of the species is at stake.

Reintroducing red wolves to their wild habitats is a long-term project that poses complicated challenges along the way and requires collaborative conservation efforts across many institutions. Our entire zoo community is deeply grateful to LightHawk for the integral role they played in Sage’s journey to his new home and the successful birth of his and Evie’s pups. Learn more about this critically endangered species and congratulate Sage and Evie on their new family when you visit the Matthews Auto Group Red Wolf Preserve at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo!

To learn more about LightHawk and support their mission, please visit <https://www.lighthawk.org/>.



A LightHawk volunteer pilot takes to the skies for conservation!



# Conferencing and Collaborating: Creating an Elephant Knowledge Archive

*Animal care and husbandry is a collaborative field that constantly evolves.*

Animal care and husbandry is a collaborative field that constantly evolves. To be a successful animal care specialist is to commit to continual learning, growing, and adapting as the field develops. When the ultimate goal is providing the best possible quality of life to the animals under your care and conserving wild populations, neither stagnancy nor isolation are options. Animal care specialists immerse themselves in cutting edge research and ongoing conversations regarding their field, always striving to seek others' expertise and to contribute their own knowledge to colleagues. One important way animal care specialists help advance their field is to participate in professional organizations and conferences such as the Elephant Managers Association (EMA). Rosamond Gifford Zoo Elephant Care Specialists Heather Jennings and Alinda Dygert serve on EMA committees and partake in conference workshops, which gives them the opportunity to learn more about elephant management practices as well as to support a growing archive of elephant care knowledge that helps shape the trajectory of the field. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo celebrates their recent contributions and positive impact their work has on the field of elephant care.

Originally formed in 1988, the EMA is an international, professional organization made up of over 200 individual members and 19 institutions. EMA's work is dedicated to the welfare and survival of the world's elephants through improving communication, husbandry, research, education, and conservation amongst elephant professionals.

A member of the EMA Training and Husbandry Committee, Jennings recently submitted a series of videos depicting four training behaviors that are part of the elephants' routine as part of a virtual conference. The videos walk viewers through typical training sessions as elephants voluntarily participate in an eye exam, mouth exam, bath/scrub-skin procedure, and enter a spatial system known as an elephant restraining device (ERD). By recording training sessions that feature these behaviors, which are just a sampling of the 40-60 behaviors the elephants at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo train consistently, Jennings provided a helpful resource to other EMA members who might be interested in adopting some of the training and husbandry procedures that help our elephants live happily and healthily. In fact, the chairperson of the EMA Training and Husbandry Committee specifically reached out to Jennings to submit videos, a testament to the success of elephant training at our zoo.

EMA virtual conferences bring together a variety of videos, photos, and shaping plans from zoos that care for elephants, offering everyone the chance to learn new techniques and to draw from each other's experiences to find the best action plan for each facility's collection of elephants. "Having an archive built up of materials gives EMA members the ability to explore what our colleagues are doing, how they're doing it, and why," explains Jennings. "It's a way to keep and to share the elephant knowledge we have— to preserve our collective experiences. That's especially helpful for members who are new to caring for elephants. Instead of having to reinvent the wheel again and again by yourself, you can learn from your colleagues who understand what it's like to do this kind of work and have figured out options that might be a good solution for an issue you're encountering. Small adjustments can have big results."

Establishing good training and husbandry practices is essential for promoting high-quality welfare for elephants living in human care. When elephants train with members of the elephant team, they are stimulated both physically and cognitively as they figure out what the trainer asks them to do and how to execute the behavior properly. All training is voluntary for the animals, meaning the elephants choose to participate because they associate training with positive experiences they enjoy, such as receiving high-value treats, engaging with their care team, and other enjoyable activities.

A solid, effective training routine also paves the way for providing necessary medical care to the elephants without causing them extra stress. According to Jennings, "Training normalizes us being around the elephants and gives us a baseline for monitoring them. They get used to opening our mouths for us and having us look inside. They get used to us touching them, which minimizes their stress levels." Routine training increases the likelihood that elephants will tolerate some examinations and procedures they need without experiencing anxiety or needing to be anesthetized. For instance, in October 2024, elephant calves Yaad and Tukada received a groundbreaking trial vaccination for the 1A strain of elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV). One reason that the twins were able to participate in the trial was the elephant team's diligent and consistent work training with Yaad and Tukada to desensitize the twins to the vaccination process prior to the actual procedure.

Sharing training approaches and materials through EMA means that the elephant care team at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo helps to improve the welfare of many elephants in human care throughout the nation and beyond. "Our team always says, 'Once you know better, you do better.' The more we all learn, the better we can all be for them," asserts Jennings. "That's why we got into this line of work— to give elephants, all elephants, the best life we can give them."

Jennings and Dygert recall a presentation by the Houston Zoo's elephant team when one of their female elephants was experiencing difficulty training certain behaviors. Her shorter height prevented the Houston Zoo elephant team from being able access her safely for certain procedures. To solve that problem, the Houston Zoo team trained the elephant to step up onto a platform that allowed her to place all four feet onto the elevation. By doing so, the elephant stood taller, making it easier and safer for the elephant team to perform the procedure. "We took that idea and modified it to solve an issue we were noticing with Batu," Jennings says.

When Batu, a male calf who tragically passed away in 2020 due to EEHV, stood at a station in his indoor holding space, his back happened to line up at the same height as one of his enclosure bars, making it difficult for the elephant care team to perform certain diagnostic and medical procedures. Inspired by Houston Zoo's presentation, the elephant care team at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo created a platform for Batu and trained him to step up onto it. Once Batu was elevated, the bar didn't pose a problem. Although the exact specifications of the problems and solutions were different, the exchange of ideas captures just how meaningful communal discussion can be for both caretakers and animals.

In addition to the direct educational benefits that conference participation and EMA membership provides, Dygert notes the professional benefits, as well. "Making connections and establishing a network is really helpful," she says. "All our programs are different, and we all have slightly different needs. Having the option to talk to so many others about what they've done and how it might've helped them give us all the chance to take that knowledge and modify it to fit us, whether now or in the future. It's always helpful to grow your network. Plus, that means we get to talk with people who share our passion to care for elephants, and we enjoy that a lot."

Dygert appeared in the training videos created for this recent video conference. In the past, she also helped create a set of videos depicting training sessions with Yaad and Tukada when they were younger. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo's approach to training the baby elephants had differed from some established practices, but the approach's ingenuity and success indicated that other facilities could benefit from adopting techniques similar to Rosamond Gifford Zoo's. Baby elephants currently living under human care, as well as those who will be born under human care in the future, will be able to experience higher quality training thanks to our elephant care team's expertise and willingness to share that expertise. Dygert also serves as a member of the EMA Conservation Committee to help support EMA meet its elephant conservation goals. She just recently organized a "Pizza for Pachyderms" event at local wood-fire pizzeria, Toss & Fire. When guests presented their "Pizza for Pachyderms" coupon while dining in or used a special code to order online on May 2, 2025, 10% of the tab was donated to Asian Elephant Support, helping wild elephant populations be protected in their native ranges abroad. (Stay tuned for more exciting events aimed at helping wild elephants!)

"Being around people who are just as passionate as you has a way of reenergizing and refocusing you," Jennings describes. "That's a shift I always feels after presenting at a conference. As much as we all love our work, there are times it can be extremely tiring and extremely challenging. Burnout is common in the zoo field," she reports. "But participating in a conference, or really any chance to continue my education, helps center me back onto the elephants, because they are absolutely the most important thing." Jennings even currently participates in a leadership cohort program through the EMA to learn about elephant program management. "The elephants are always the top priority. I think that's why we're always so cooperative with each other. It makes no sense for any program to gatekeep knowledge that could help everyone."

Perhaps it should be no surprise that the elephant care team understands the great impact that collaboration and sharing have on the field of elephant care. The elephant care team routinely experiences the positive power that comes from consulting with experts by working with John Moakler. As a former elephant collection manager at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Moakler has garnered decades of experience caring for elephants. A legend of the zoo and elephant care world, Moakler continues to assist our zoo's elephant care team on a part-time basis, offering his cumulative wealth of knowledge and inspiring the next generation of elephant care professionals. "We learn from him every day," Jennings praises as Dygert nods in agreement.

"Plus," Dygert adds pointedly, "The elephants love him."

"Our elephant program has a rich history," Jennings says, "and he was here living that history as it happened." During Moakler's time at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the elephant program has seen a variety of milestones, including the arrival of female elephant Romani in 1985, the program's first live elephant birth in 1991, and more. Jennings continues, "We're so lucky to have [Moakler] as a mentor. Because he's here and shares with us, our history isn't lost."

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo elephant care team certainly takes that sentiment to heart. Whether discovering and implementing new training methods, collaborating with other facilities to brainstorm solutions, preserving and publishing their own knowledge through helpful media content, organizing events that benefit wild elephants, or sharpening their own leadership skills, our elephant team commits to doing everything possible to better care for elephants all around the globe.

The entire zoo community congratulates Jennings and Dygert on their recent achievements and looks forward to continuing to track their success as elephant care specialists.

To learn more about the Elephant Managers Association, please visit [www.elephantmanagers.org](http://www.elephantmanagers.org).





# Rescue-Recover-Repeat: The Work of Wildlife Rehabilitation

*Throughout the year, concerned community members will often reach out to the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to collect an injured wild animal or even bring injured wild animals to the zoo in hopes that our animal care team will be able to help.*

During the spring and summer seasons, we see a sharp uptick of these requests. Some of the most common animals brought to the zoo include raccoons, opossums, squirrels, deer, turtles, and a variety of birds of prey, waterfowl, and songbirds. We are honored to know that our community readily associates the Rosamond Gifford Zoo with providing high-quality animal care and deeply grateful to have earned this trusted reputation in the eyes of the animal-loving public.

Finding an animal that appears injured or in need of help can be an extremely stressful situation. In the heat of the moment, it can be hard to evaluate the situation and to figure out the best course of action. How do you act in the best interests of the animal while keeping yourself safe? To help educate our zoo community about wildlife rehabilitation options, we compiled this handy guide of FAQs and supportive resources!

## I found an injured animal. What should I do?

If you come across a sick or injured wild animal, please contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), or your local police. Do NOT attempt to intervene yourself. To access a list of licensed wildlife rehabilitators in New York State organized by location and accepted species, visit <https://appfactory.dec.ny.gov/SpecialLicensesSearchSystem/rehab>. You will be provided with contact information for local licensed wildlife rehabilitators who specialize in the species of animal you've found. This tool is endorsed by NYSDEC.

Local wildlife rehabilitation facilities the zoo has worked with previously include the Page Wildlife Center (<https://www.pagewildlifecenter.com>), Critter Crossing Wildlife Rehabilitation (<https://cnycrittercrossing.org/>), Kindred Kingdoms Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (<https://www.kindredkingdoms.com/index.htm>), and Mission Mayhem Wildlife Rehabilitation (<https://www.missionmayhemwildlife.org/>).

It might be difficult to tell if an animal is injured, sick, abandoned, or completely fine. If you have any questions about a wildlife emergency that occurs during typical office hours, you can contact your region's NYSDEC Regional Wildlife Office. Find your region's contact information here: <https://dec.ny.gov/about/contact-us/statewide-office-information>. Onondaga County is part of Region 7. The contact number for the Region 7 Syracuse suboffice is (315) 426-7400. If the wildlife emergency occurs outside of typical office hours, you can reach out to the Environmental Conservation Officers dispatch line at 1-877-457-5680. They will be able to help determine the best response for the animal.

## Can I bring an injured, sick, orphaned, or abandoned wild animal to the zoo for help?

No. Please do not bring any wild animals to the zoo. We cannot accept them. Introducing a wild animal poses health and safety concerns to our animals as well as our team members.

When new animals arrive at the zoo, we often receive as thorough a medical background as we can obtain and implement a quarantine period before any introductions to current zoo residents take place to keep everyone safe. Transferring animals from one facility to another takes coordination, cooperation, and preparation.

## Why don't you accept wild animals? What's the difference between a wildlife rehabilitator and a zoo?

Accredited zoos and licensed wildlife rehabilitators are two types of facilities that provide high-quality animal care, but their functions are quite different.

Accredited zoos, such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, provide the best possible care to the animals living at the zoo while participating in local and global conservation efforts. Our mission is to connect people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education. When it comes to caring for our animals, we accomplish that mission with habitats that closely mimic their natural environments, proper nutrition and medical care, enriching training opportunities that foster mental and physical stimulation, management of breeding populations within accredited zoos, and more. The Rosamond Gifford Zoo also works with our nonprofit partner, the Friends of the Zoo, to provide robust conservation education through programs, signage, and publications.

Licensed wildlife rehabilitators, however, serve a different purpose. They aspire to give injured or orphaned animals the chance to recuperate before returning to their wild homes. Rehabilitated animals receive compassionate, professional care from expert and qualified individuals. That includes providing the animals with species-appropriate nutrition, suitable spaces for recovery, and veterinary examinations and procedures. According to the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA), "Wildlife rehabilitation is the treatment and temporary care of injured, diseased, and displaced indigenous animals, and the subsequent release of healthy animals to appropriate habitats in the wild" (2021). Although the outcome of rehabilitation efforts will vary animal by animal, the overarching goal is to return animals to the wild. Because of this, wildlife rehabilitators focus on helping the animal recover from injuries and do so while preserving the animal's natural instincts.

Limiting human contact and socialization is a key component of that goal. Rehabilitation demands a delicate balance between a hands-off approach while still giving an animal the treatment and food it needs to recover. Rather than teach the animals to associate humans with positive experiences (such as receiving food), wildlife rehabilitators aim to reduce contact with the recovering animals as much as possible. In terms of public education, wildlife rehabilitators might promote practices that minimize human impact on wildlife.

That said, sometimes accredited zoos do have the exciting opportunity to participate in reintroduction efforts for species with dwindling wild populations, but this work is not considered rehabilitation because the animals introduced into the wild were born/hatched under human care. (Read more about the Rosamond Gifford Zoo's work with red wolf rewilding on page 3 of this issue!)

## What does it mean for a wildlife rehabilitator to be "licensed?"

When you come across an animal in need of help, it is vital to seek a licensed wildlife rehabilitator to ensure that the animal will be taken care of properly and legally. Laws and regulations pertaining to wildlife usually vary from state to state and region to region, but generally, in each state there exists some kind of law that would typically prevent someone from seizing an animal from the wild, even if that person intended to provide the animal with care. By obtaining a permit or license as required by the state, a wildlife rehabilitator can provide care while still complying with the law.

To be licensed by a state or local authority, wildlife rehabilitators typically need to demonstrate competency on topics such as animal biology, nutritional needs, habitat, and other relevant subjects. Some states also require letters of support from veterinary professionals who will be an available resource to the facility when animals require medical care, necessitate that wildlife rehabilitators uphold minimum standards of care during treatment, ensure that wildlife rehabilitators have adequate facilities and spaces to carry out their work safely, and outline any other unique specifications (designating which species a wildlife rehabilitator can admit, how many, and other factors) for wildlife rehabilitators to operate lawfully.

## The animal I found looks young, maybe abandoned or orphaned. Should I take it in and care for it myself?

No, please do not attempt to rescue or to take in any wild animal yourself. This could be extremely dangerous to you, that animal, and even other surrounding wildlife. When animals feel threatened or are in pain, they could attack. Being in close proximity of wild animals also increases the chance of zoonotic disease transfer or parasitic infection.

Frequently, what might look like a case of abandonment is anything but. For some species, it is perfectly natural behavior for mothers to hide their young as a means of protection. Remaining with their parents gives animals the best chance for survival. According to NYSDEC, the most likely animals who are mistakenly 'kidnapped' due to perceived abandonment in our state are white-tailed deer fawns, cottontail rabbits, and fledged songbirds.

Not sure if a baby animal needs help? Use the contact information above to consult with a professional.

## Do zoos and wildlife rehabilitators ever work together?

Yes, sometimes!

During an animal's treatment, wildlife rehabilitators will take the utmost care to keep the animal as wild as possible. This is a key facet of wildlife rehabilitators' work. If animals are to be returned safely, they need to be able to survive in the wild. Wildlife rehabilitators do everything possible to prevent animals from becoming too comfortable with humans. Despite their best efforts, however, this isn't always possible. Animals might've arrived at a rehabilitation facility quite young, meaning they are at risk of imprinting on humans. Without a natural fear of people, they would not be able to survive in the wild. Even older animals who receive substantial care for a long period of time sometimes develop habits or behaviors that deem them unable to be returned to the wild. Additionally, some animals recover well enough so that they no longer need the intense care of rehabilitation, but not so well that they would be able to survive without human intervention. For example, if a bird of prey couldn't fly even after treatment, the bird could not hunt successfully. When wildlife rehabilitators observe signs that an animal will no longer be able to survive in the wild, that animal is deemed non-releasable.

In the event that an animal is non-releasable, a wildlife rehabilitator works with conservation authorities to find a permanent home for the animal, which very well might be an accredited zoo. For instance, red-tailed hawk Stellar arrived at a wildlife rehabilitation facility with a wing injury. Although his injury fully healed, he had to stay in human care for an extended period of time. Stellar was no longer able to hunt independently, so he needed a permanent home. Now, he resides at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. His presence at the zoo serves as a great example of what a positive difference wildlife rehabilitation can make for animals. Other rehabilitated animals the Rosamond Gifford Zoo cared for in the past included a bald eagle named Chevayo, who had been shot and left with a wing injury, and an eastern screech owl named Pigwidgeon, who had been hit by a car and left blind.

## How can I help wildlife rehabilitation efforts?

Please remember, if you spot an animal in danger, it is best to observe from a distance and contact professional help. Never feed a wild animal. To help prevent wildlife injuries, keep your pets away from wild animals. Interested in learning more about wildlife rehabilitation? Check with your local licensed rehabilitation facilities for volunteer opportunities.

Thank you for respecting wildlife!

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MYZOO JR.

# HUMBOLDT PENGUIN

Humboldt penguins are native to rocky, coastal areas along western Peru and Chile.

International Union for the Conservation of Nature Status:  
**Vulnerable**

Humboldt penguins are predators. They hunt fish.

*Paddle power!*  
Their flippers function like paddles, helping Humboldt penguins swim up to 20mph (~32kmph).

Loud and proud! Humboldt penguin mates can recognize each other's unique vocalizations.

A group of Humboldt penguins is called a colony.

This year, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo welcomed two male Humboldt penguin chicks to the world, Domingo and Ramon.

RAMON

DOMINGO

FRIENDS  
OF THE  
ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO

ROSAMOND GIFFORD  
ZOO  
AT BURNET PARK

ONONDAGA  
COUNTY  
Parks

ACCREDITED BY THE  
ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS  
& AQUARIUMS

MyZoo Jr. Photo by  
Camille Murphy



# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## Programming for Kids

### Summer Zoo Camp

**Ages 4-17 | Monday-Friday | Check online for times**

Explore, observe, design, create, and build in a learning experience beyond your imagination. Each week, campers will engage in STEAM challenges, animal encounters, zoo tours, creating animal enrichment and practicing conservation skills that will bring out their inner zooper-hero. At the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics have never been more fun!

**June 30-August 29**

**Before and After Care available and runs from 8–9 a.m. and 4–5 p.m.**

### Wild Beginnings!

**Ages 1-3 | Mondays | 9:15 - 10 a.m. or 10:30 - 11:15 a.m.**

Join the education team for a special program tailored just for the little ones, ages 12 months to 3 years. Each themed class includes animal biofacts, nature-themed sensory play, a story, and hands-on learning! Young ones will explore with their senses as they develop language and motor skills in this early-learning adventure. **This program is designed for one child/one caregiver pair.**

**September 15: Animal Sense and Sounds**

**October 20: Trunks, Tusks, and Toes**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$15 per child/adult pair

### Stroller Safari

**Ages 1-5 | Saturdays | 9:45 - 10:30 a.m. or 2 - 2:45 p.m.**

Get ready for an exciting journey through the zoo designed just for our youngest adventurers! Join us for **Stroller Safari**, where kids aged 5 and under, along with their adult companions, will embark on a fun-filled exploration of the animal kingdom. Together, we'll stroll through the zoo, discovering amazing animals, engaging in interactive activities with unique biofacts, and enjoying captivating stories about wildlife. Each stop on our safari is packed with sights and sounds that will spark curiosity and wonder!

**August 2: Exploring Habitats**

**September 6: Uncover the Colors of the Zoo**

**October 4: What Do Animals Eat?**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$15 per child/1-2 adults  
Additional child (in same session) – \$5

### Kids' Night Out

**Ages 6-12 | Fridays | 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

Looking for a night out? Drop your kids off at the zoo to party like an animal! Kids will enjoy pizza upon arrival, learn about animals, tour the zoo after hours, make crafts, and play games all night long.

**September 5**

**October 24**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$40 per child

### One-Day Zoo Camp

**Ages 6-12 | 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

Join us for a dive deep into the incredible world of animals for a full day of Zoo Camp! Each camp day is different, allowing your child to explore something new about the animal world through hands-on science, artistry, technology, and engineering projects – whether they're registered for just one or multiple days! **For your convenience, you can select to pre-order lunch from the HoneyBee Café during registration.**

**October 13**

**November 11**

**November 26**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$65 per child

All members will receive a 7% discount on camps.

Pre-registration required. Sessions fill fast, sign up today! Register online at [rgz.campbrainregistration.com](https://rgz.campbrainregistration.com)

Questions? Call the education department at (315) 435-8511 x8559 or email [zoocamp@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:zoocamp@rosamondgiffordzoo.org)

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## Adult Programs

### Adult Learning Series

**Grown Ups (18+) only! | Saturdays | 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.**

**Learning is a lifelong adventure!** Discover the untold stories of wildlife conservation with our adult learning series. Join our education team in the classroom for a seminar-style program to learn about the animals who live at our zoo, the exceptional animal care we provide every day, exciting scientific research, and more!

**July 19: Energizing Enrichment**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$25

### Adult Zoo Camp

**Grown Ups (18+) only! | Saturdays | 1 - 4 p.m.**

**Zoo camp is NOT just for kids anymore!** Immerse yourself in an elevated and active zoo adventure designed just for adults. Join our educational team for an afternoon of hands-on projects, themed walking tours, and engaging activities as you learn how the Rosamond Gifford Zoo provides exceptional animal care and works to conserve wildlife. Adult campers should be ready to move, ready to learn, and ready to have wild fun!

**July 19: Energizing Enrichment**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$60

### Nature Journaling

**Grown Ups (18+) only! | Sundays | 10 - 11 a.m.**

**Want to deepen your connection and understanding of the natural world?** Try your hand at nature journaling! Join our education team as we guide you through a series of observational exercises to fuel your creative writing. Learn more about plant life and wildlife throughout zoo grounds as you craft STEAM-based expressive narratives. This immersive program offers a unique opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Darwin, Thoreau, and other writers who blended scientific discovery with the art of language. Whether you're drawn to flora or fauna, prose or poetry, this class is for you. All you need is a notebook and something to write with—coloring supplies, binoculars, and cameras are optional but welcome, as they can help enhance your experience and capture meaningful moments.

**July 13  
August 10**

**Tuition per session:**  
Members receive a 7% discount  
Non-members – \$25



**Don't forget to register your child for Summer Zoo Camp!**

**Week-long day camps for children ages 4-17.**

**REGISTER NOW!**



#### Questions?

Call the education department at  
(315) 435-8511 x8506  
or email [education@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:education@rosamondgiffordzoo.org).

**Sessions fill fast, sign up today!**

Register online at  
[rgz.campbrainregistration.com](https://rgz.campbrainregistration.com)  
or  
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW



Register for Adult Programs  
SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW







# Class is in Session: Inside Adult Education Programs at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo

Before we can take action to help nature thrive, we first need to learn about what nature needs from us. Conservation goals evolve, informed by the latest scientific research and the current state of our world’s environments. Conservation educators are the bridge between cutting-edge research and the public, disseminating vital information to the world as accurately and engagingly as possible. The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo boasts a robust Education Department, designing and delivering over 500 educational programs that reach over 10,000 people annually. As a zoo accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), it is no surprise that we offer a variety educational programming and opportunities for children as young as 12 months or as old as 17 years. What might be a surprise is that we also offer educational programs created exclusively for adults!

Two program offerings, Adult Zoo Camp and Adult Learning Series, provide participants with a unique chance to experience all the fun of zoo education in a more mature setting. Offering educational programs for adults is a growing trend within AZA-accredited zoos, and with good reason. According to Kim Arnold, Director of Education at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, “Including adults in conservation education is essential because they play a key role in shaping policies, managing resources, and influencing the next generation. By educating adults about conservation, we empower them to make more sustainable choices, support environmental initiatives, and become advocates for change.”

Whether visiting the zoo on a sunny afternoon, watching as a fuzzy caterpillar crawled along the sidewalk, or hearing birds call out as they flew overhead, children have an intrinsic knack for connecting with nature. Even as we age, that connection doesn’t disappear. If anything, it deepens. It grows. It transforms into an appreciation for all species who call our planet home and a motivation to help conserve them. To ensure that everyone can partake in education classes, the Friends of the Zoo developed two distinct adult class versions that cover each topic. “Teaching adults presents unique challenges, especially because each adult’s baseline knowledge of a topic can vary widely,” describes Mary Rice. As Senior Education Coordinator at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Rice designs the course materials. “This requires tailoring content to meet individual needs, while ensuring it’s relevant and accessible to all. Balancing complexity and engagement is key; lessons must be concise yet flexible to accommodate different learning styles.” The classes are conveniently offered on the same day with the same topic so participants can select which version of the course best suits their needs.

## Adult Learning Series:

The Adult Learning Series class is a one-hour seminar-style lecture class. The class provides a deep dive into a conservation topic, featuring informative discussions and engaging activities that help participants comprehend the material. In March 2025, for example, the class’s theme was “Native New York Species” and led by Noelle DeMara, Conservation Education Manager at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

DeMara kicked off the class by inviting participants to the interactive map of New York State projected on the newly installed SMART Board. Participants selected a location on the map and listed any wildlife species they could recall seeing in that location. The map came alive with the many species participants reported seeing: robins in Syracuse, woodchucks in Rochester, raccoons in Manhattan, deer in Utica, hawks in Binghamton, skunks in Albany. This activity led to a lively discussion about the diverse wildlife and plant life commonly spotted in New York State as well as those who are not as well-known but are nonetheless native to the area. North Atlantic right whales, a critically endangered species of whale, are native to New York State. Just a few months ago, researchers observed more than 25% of the entire estimated population along the coast of Long Island (NF Staff, 2024)! To provide more context about why protecting native species helps New York State ecosystems thrive, DeMara also discussed examples of invasive species in the state and the threat they pose to both native species as well as agricultural crops. Her advice to the class if they encounter a spotted lantern fly? “Squish on sight!”

As participants learned about these native species and their vital role in keeping New York State’s environments healthy, DeMara discussed ongoing conversation efforts aimed to help preserve these species. One local conservation action DeMara discussed was the ongoing cleanup efforts at Onondaga Lake. Previously considered to be one of the most polluted lakes in the nation due to raw sewage and industrial dumping, Onondaga Lake is in the midst of being restored, much to the benefit of surrounding plant life, wildlife, and the Syracuse community (Chanatry, 2012). DeMara asserted, “Cleaning up Onondaga Lake is a perfect example of what’s possible for conservation when we all work together.”

Once participants were more familiar with the many native species within New York and the ongoing conservation efforts aiming to protect them, DeMara shared an interactive quiz that helped participants further reflect on wildlife’s presence in their daily lives and learn how to recognize that wildlife when they encounter it. She played recordings of various native animal sounds and asked participants to guess which species they heard. Some of the animal sounds included a majestic bald eagle’s cry, a hoary bat’s ringing call, and even the haunting howls of a coyote pack. When the class concluded, participants took with them a newfound appreciation for and drive to protect the diverse native species of New York State.



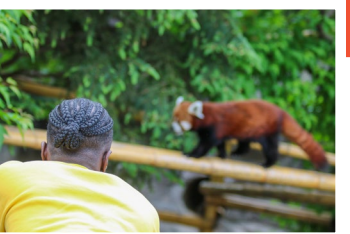
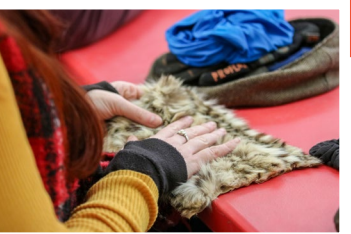
## Adult Zoo Camp:

Although Adult Zoo Camp and Adult Learning Series cover the same topics, the classes are quite distinct from each other when it comes to activities and duration. Adult Zoo Camp is a three-hour active zoo adventure designed just for adults. Like children’s camps, Adult Zoo Camp offers an afternoon of animal demonstrations, themed walking tours, and even a crafting project all focused on the conservation topic at hand. “Having fun at the zoo is not just for kids!” Arnold says. “Adult zoo camp is a chance for adults to have fun learning and even be a kid for an afternoon.”

After an initial discussion about native New York State species, DeMara invited a special guest to the camp: two animal ambassadors representing Eastern box turtles, a native New York species currently listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable to extinction. Eastern box turtles Matilda and Ethel arrived for an animal demonstration led by Sarah Kohler, Senior Ambassador Animal Specialist at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. She offered each turtle a few wiggling earthworms, discussed eastern box turtle facts and the challenges they face in the wild, answered questions, and offered campers an up-close-and-personal look at these fascinating creatures. “[Animal demonstrations] allow us to explore topics like animal welfare and behavior, the importance of enrichment, their IUCN status and threats, and the unique traits of the individual ambassador animal, all of which help foster empathy and encourage behavior change—the ultimate goal of conservation education,” explains Arnold. Matilda and Ethel, for instance, were once part of a wildlife trafficking ring, but they were confiscated. By showing the eastern box turtles to campers, Kohler shared a direct result of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s conservation work.

The Education Department strives to frame the Rosamond Gifford Zoo as a “living classroom,” encouraging campers to learn directly from nature. This philosophy was evident as campers made their way through the zoo, binoculars in hand and bird call-identification app open while searching for wild birds visiting the zoo. Almost immediately, campers heard the unique song of an American robin. Additionally, campers spotted a group of European starlings perched in the trees beside the African red river hog habitat. Unlike the American robin, European starlings are invasive in New York State. The class’s observations lead to an impromptu discussion about invasive species and the harm they pose to native species.

Other stops on the tour included the endangered eastern massasauga rattlesnake and North American river otter habitats. In fact, the eastern massasauga rattlesnake’s New York State range is limited to just Onondaga and Genesee Counties! Campers were treated with short presentations about each species. Additionally, the group even got to go behind the scenes for a second private animal demonstration, this time featuring Eurasian eagle owl, Eagon. Kohler explained that although Eurasian eagle owls are not native to New York State, they are similar to great horned owls, which are native to the area.



Upon campers’ return to the classroom, the class put their newfound knowledge to the test with activity stations. One activity asked campers to examine accurate molds of paw prints for a variety of native species, noting the physical adaptations of each to deduce which paw belong to which species. Another activity had campers inspect fecal models from a variety of native species and match them to corresponding species. DeMara led campers through a craft activity to create unique window decals that deter birds from accidentally crashing into windows. The craft gave campers a chance to engage in artistic expression and emphasized that small actions can have big conservation impacts. Up to 1 billion birds annually die from window strikes in the United States (American Bird Conservancy, 2025). The colored window decals deter birds from flying into windows. When adult campers use their new window decals, they actively contribute to preventing bird deaths.

Whether you’re an adult who gravitates more towards the scholarly lecture of Adult Learning Series or the active adventures of Adult Zoo Camp, we have the right class for you! We strive to ensure our classes are accessible to everyone interested in learning more about conservation in a fun, engaging environment. If you’re looking for an exciting, adult-only experience that connects you to wildlife, look no further than the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

To learn more about  
our Adult Program offerings  
and upcoming dates, visit:  
[www.rosamondgiffordzoo.org/learn/education](http://www.rosamondgiffordzoo.org/learn/education)



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# EVENT RECAPS



## Book Signing

On Saturday, March 8, 2025 a full house of guests attended an event to launch the publication of Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park, a brand-new book chronicling the century-long history of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo! The captivated crowd listened as author Barbara Sheklin Davis, Ph.D., read an excerpt of her book about a cast of changemakers whom she called the “unsung heroes” of the zoo and the public support they garnered to initiate the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s transformation into a leader in wildlife conservation. After her riveting reading, everyone had the exclusive opportunity to ask questions to Dr. Davis and Ted Fox, recently retired Executive Director of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, as they signed books. Catering at the Zoo (CATZ) provided sweet snacks and hot drinks to attendees. Have you gotten your copy yet? Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is now available for purchase at the Curious Cub.



## Zoo Run Run

The Friends of the Zoo’s annual Zoo Run Run event took place on April 6, 2025. With **801 registered participants**, this fun run was our biggest yet, raising **\$53,251.33!** You’d never know it was a grey and drizzly morning based on the high energy and bright enthusiasm of the crowd. Starting at 7 a.m., scores of runners across five waves (including our kid-friendly 1K Lamb Loop) gathered at the start line before dashing through our Wildlife Trail. Many of our animal residents joined the fun as they watched runners pass by their habitats. The Zoo Run Run is perhaps the only race where it’s common to see runners stop on the route to view a variety of animals! The alpacas, Andean bear, and red pandas were especially intrigued by the flurry of humans racing along the trail! After crossing the finish line, runners received their exclusively designed medals, enjoyed a post-race snack to refuel, and toured the zoo. The best part of this community event? All funds raised support the zoo’s mission of animal care and wildlife conservation. **34 volunteers** provided 161 hours service to make this incredible event a success. We are grateful to have partnered with so many sponsors: Akl & Associates, PLLC, Community Bank, Countryside Credit Union, Cumulus Media, Empower FCU, Girl Scout Troop 60500, McDonald & Kimball, P.C., New York Life, Salt City Coffee, and Tops Friendly Markets.



## Earth Day Clean Up

Tuesday, April 22, 2025 was a day of volunteer service for the Rosamond Gifford Zoo! Hosted by the Friends of the Zoo Volunteer Department, our Earth Day Clean Up celebration brought **98 volunteers** to the zoo from a variety of community groups and organizations starting at 9:00 a.m. and lasting throughout the day. Everyone pitched in to do their part to clean, to beautify, and to naturalize habitat spaces and public walkways. Volunteer crews gardened, scrubbed, raked, and more—all while smiling and enjoying the satisfaction that comes with helping the planet we all call home. Earth Day Clean Up is a powerful reminder of all that we can do when we work together! **Thank you to our Earth Day Clean Up sponsor, Equitable.**



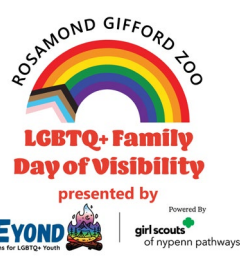
## Novelis Party for the Planet

On April 26, 2025, our zoo was the place to be for everyone ready to show our planet some love during the Novelis Party for the Planet, hosted by the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. **854 partygoers** enjoyed the day’s many festivities and giveaways celebrating the natural world, all while helping support the zoo’s mission of wildlife conservation. **40 dedicated volunteers** assisted with the event and helped give guests a party to remember. A slew of conservation-themed exhibitors filled the upper lobby area, Animal Health Center, and Social Animals Building, each one offering educational materials, promotional swag, sustainable craft opportunities, and more! Guests even had the chance to complete a passport by visiting each exhibitor and earning a stamp for the chance to win a prize. **75 intrepid guests** completed and submitted passports! During the event, the animal care team gave special, informative creature chats about our elephants, decomposers (dairy cow isopods and panda king isopods), red wolves, seahorses/other aquatic species, and golden lion tamarins. **Thank you to our title sponsor, Novelis, as well as Energy Savers, Energy Smart CNY, and New York Life for making this event possible.**



## Senior Citizens Appreciation Day

**442 adventurous senior citizens** celebrated Senior Citizens Appreciation Day, presented by Hill Insurance Service, LLC, hosted by the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo on Wednesday, May 14. The day began with complimentary admission and continental breakfast for all registered guests. Lots of senior-specific exhibitors lined the zoo courtyard, offering giveaways, games, and informational materials. Ambassador animals Alex the Harris hawk, Kio the Meishan pig, and Eagon the Eurasian eagle owl joined the fun so guests could see the animals up close and learn about the species from the animal care team. Other creature chats held during the day focused on animals living at the zoo who are considered geriatric, including an elephant yoga demonstration with Asian elephant Romani, a talk about Amur tiger Zeya, a feeding demonstration with the Humboldt penguin colony, and chat featuring siamang apes Abe and Fatima. **14 Friends of the Zoo volunteers** were also on-site to enhance guests’ experience, answering questions and assisting exhibitors with a collective 40 hours of service. Seniors from all over our community enjoyed a whole day specially designed for them! Senior Citizen Appreciation Day, presented by Hill Insurance Service, LLC, is a reminder for us all that wildlife conservation and connecting to nature is something we never outgrow! **Thank you to our sponsors, Aetna, Alzheimer’s Association, Bousquet Holstein PLLC, Energy Savers, Excellus BCBS, Hearing Aid Consultants, Hill Insurance Service LLC, Humana, Loretto, New York Life, Seneca Savings, and Wellcare.**



## LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility

The rain only made our rainbows more vibrant! On Sunday, May 4, 2025, the Friends of the Zoo hosted LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility, presented by BEyond powered by NYPENN. Families come in all shapes and sizes. Our zoo is proud to celebrate that fact by inviting everyone for a day of fun and fabulous experiences as we all come together to support the zoo’s mission. **821 guests** enjoyed browsing a variety of exhibitors in the Animal Health Center and special enrichment activities. 19 volunteers provided 65 hours of service to help make this inclusive event a wonderful time for all! **We hope everyone enjoyed our LGBTQ+ Family Day of Visibility, presented by Beyond Binary, powered by Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways, Inc, with additional sponsorship from The Q Center at ACR, Health, Advocates Inc, Community Bank, Energy Savers, and New York Life.**



## Dreamnight

Dreams came true for **1,079 attendees** at the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo’s annual Dreamnight event on June 6, 2025. Guests were treated to stress-free and accessible activities throughout the zoo, including music and dance performances, delicious food that accommodated dietary restrictions, creature chats throughout the evening, and even a free plush animal upon arrival. Originating in the Netherlands at the Rotterdam Zoo in 1996, Dreamnight is an inclusive and educational cost-free evening for children with special health care needs and disabilities to enjoy the zoo. Every year more than 100,000 participants and their families and friends celebrate Dreamnight on the first Friday in June across six continents and in 23 countries around the world. **15 Friends of the Zoo volunteers** provided a collective 50 hours of helpful services and friendly smiles for all. 47 volunteers across our 12 partner agencies provided over 100 hours of service. **The event wouldn’t have been possible without presenting sponsor, Kevin and Kathy LaGrow and Off-Peak Ministries and additional sponsors, the Jim and Juli Boheim Foundation, the O’Donnell Family, PathFinder Bank, and Tops Friendly Markets.**







## Canine Champions for Conservation at the Zoo

The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo is howling with excitement to welcome Canine Champions for Conservation to the zoo this summer!

An extension of Stunt Dog Productions, Canine Champions for Conservation is a dazzling display of rescue and shelter dogs performing feats of astounding agility, all while inspiring guests to protect our natural world and to be responsible pet owners.

"The Canine Champions for Conservation show is an inspiring blend of entertainment and purpose," said Carrie Large, Executive Director of the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. "It showcases the incredible talents of rescue dogs while highlighting their important role in conservation education. This high-energy experience connects our guests with the stories of rescued animals and reminds us how every creature—big or small—can make a difference."

Attendees will watch as dogs run, jump, and perform other amazing stunts as their trainers spread important education messages about conservation, animal welfare, and how dogs actually assist with wildlife conservation efforts. These fantastic, four-legged athletes will showcase behaviors such as high jump, scent detection, prey drive, and more. The athletic animals wow guests of all ages and demonstrate the very same behaviors that dogs use to help conservationists conduct research and protect wildlife.

The dogs and trainers will reside at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo from July 17-August 11, 2025. Shows will run Thursdays-Mondays at 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. in the Amphitheater adjacent to the zoo's courtyard. Each show lasts approximately 20 minutes. Canine Champions for Conservation is FREE for members or included with admission.

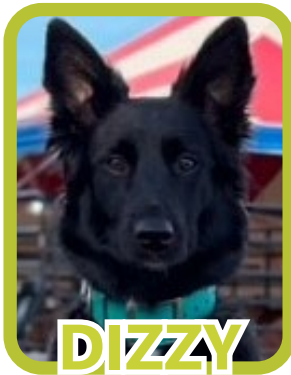
We can't wait to bring our guests this paws-itively amazing entertainment with an important educational message. See you at the zoo!



## MEET THE DOGS!



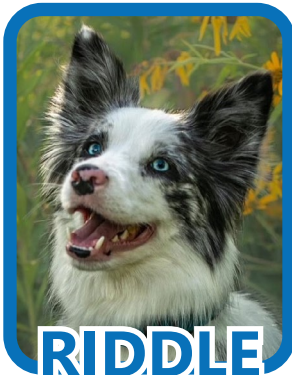
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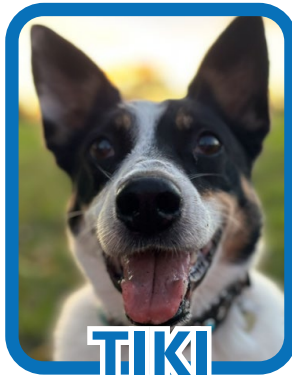
DIZZY



HOTSHOT



RIDDLE



TIKI

MEET MORE OF THESE FUR-TASTIC PUPS!  
JULY 17 - AUGUST 11



## MEMBER NOTES

# Membership

Brand new this summer, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo gives our members **MORE** with **Membership Appreciation Days!**

**Membership Appreciation Days will be a special summertime celebration of our members.**

Join us on **July 27 and August 9** for a day of:

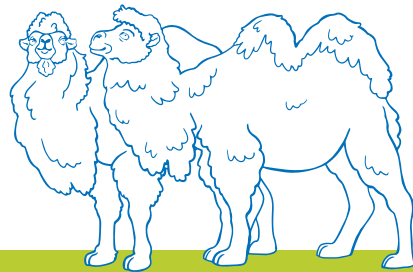


During regular zoo hours  
(10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.)

- Increased discounts on gift shop purchases
- Increased discounts on food and beverage purchases
- Docent tour opportunities
- Education and animal opportunities (Meet our wildlife ambassadors)
- Raffle prizes at the Membership Desk

Membership Appreciation Days are just one of the many other **amazing benefits** included with membership, such as **FREE** zoo admission, giftshop discounts, food and beverage discounts, educational program discounts, MyZoo magazine delivered to your door, "Early Bird" Mornings on select days, early-access and discount pricing to ticket purchases for special events, and reciprocity with over 150 participating facilities across the country accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Best of all, **being a member** is one of the most impactful ways **you directly support** the important work of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. We couldn't do what we do without you.



**Not a member? Not a problem!**

Join or renew your membership now or call (315) 435-8511 x8503 or x8537 to enjoy Membership Appreciation Days and **MORE!**







Pictured above:  
Guests enjoying the elephant calf statue made possible by Candace and John Marsellus.

## Remembering John Marsellus

*With a heavy heart, the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo celebrates the life and legacy of John Marsellus (1939-2025). His unyielding positivity, enduring commitment to his community, and generous spirit will be remembered by all those who knew him, including the Friends of the Zoo. We will miss him dearly. Prior to his passing, our team had the privilege of working with John to write the following spotlight piece celebrating his generosity:*

Over the last several decades, John, along with his wife, Candace, strengthened their relationship with the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo with a variety of initiatives, programs, and improvements throughout the zoo. If you've visited the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, you've experienced the positive impact that Candace and John Marsellus have had on our zoo community. In addition to being long-time members, Candace and John:

- cosponsored (along with the Rotary Club of Syracuse) upgrades to the slides at the North American river otter habitat.
- helped erect an elephant calf statue at the Helga Beck Asian Elephant Preserve, now one of the zoo's premiere spots for photo opportunities.
- sponsored the Staff Training Room of the Animal Health Center.
- provided extensive professional development opportunities for our team with the Disney Institute Program and San Diego Zoo Global Academy.
- supported Zoo Crew, a volunteer program.
- and more!

These beloved supporters of our zoo have continuously come to the Friends of the Zoo with exciting ideas and worked with the team to shape those ideas into truly spectacular initiatives.

*The Friends of the Zoo would like to express gratitude to Candace and John for their generous support and condolences to our community as we all mourn our friend. John's memory lives on at our zoo in all he did, including an upcoming educational, interactive Asian elephant-themed exhibit coming soon.*

## The Curious Cub GIFT SHOP



A friend from the zoo, sent just to you! Let someone know you care with a special box from Rosamond Gifford Zoo! Each package comes with a themed greeting card and an adorable plush animal buddy, perfect for cuddles and comfort.



Can't come to the zoo?  
Scan the QR code to visit  
our online store or go to  
[syracusezooevents.org/shop](https://syracusezooevents.org/shop)

**Members Receive  
10% OFF!**

Best of all, your purchases  
benefit animal care at the zoo  
and conservation in the wild.

## Adopt an Animal Senior Keeper Special \$55



### Package includes:

A certificate of adoption, 4x6 color photo, animal fact sheet, 12" Asian Elephant plush, an adopt parent gift, copy of *MyZoo Magazine*, and listing in online adopt parent board for one year.

Adopt an Animal online at [thecuriouscubgiftshop.org](https://thecuriouscubgiftshop.org)  
Looking to adopt another animal at the regular rate?  
Call (315) 435-8511 x8563  
or email [giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org](mailto:giftshop@rosamondgiffordzoo.org)



**The Dog Haus**  
Located in the courtyard  
across from Primate Park  
**SUMMER HOURS:**  
11 a.m - 3 p.m.

**Trunk & Tusk Canteen**  
Located across from the Red Panda  
exhibit on the Wildlife Trail  
**SUMMER HOURS:**  
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.



**Dippin' Dots**  
Located at HoneyBee Café,  
stall located outside across  
from Explorer's Outpost  
**SUMMER HOURS:**  
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

## BEAT THE **HEAT** & ENJOY TASTY *TREATS!*

During the hot summer days, there are  
plenty of places to stay cool  
and enjoy delicious food!

*Check them out during your next visit!*



**PERFECT FOR A  
COMPANY OUTING!**

## BOOK YOUR NEW ENGLAND STYLE CLAMBAKE



**CONTACT US!**



## SAY "I DO" AT THE ZOO



Scan to  
Learn More

## CELEBRATE WITH CATERING AT THE ZOO!

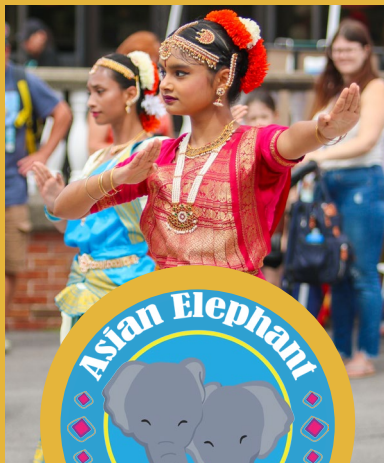




# Upcoming Events!



**AUGUST 1  
FRIDAY**



**AUGUST 17  
SUNDAY**



**SEPTEMBER 10  
WEDNESDAY**



**SEPTEMBER 26  
FRIDAY**



**TIME FOR A  
BARK-TACULAR  
DAY AT THE ZOO!**

**THURSDAY - MONDAY  
11 A.M. & 1:30 P.M.**

**JULY 17 - AUGUST 11**

