

BRANDYWINE ZOO NEWS



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The Zoo News is a publication of the
 Delaware Zoological Society.



Meet the newest additions to the Brandywine Zoo's South America exhibit, 3 male Scarlet Ibis.



Photo by:
 Shannon McCabe



Meet Mark!

Introducing, Mark Shafer, the new interim executive director of the Delaware Zoological Society. Mark has held executive positions at the Risk Management Association in Philadelphia, and Bank of America and MBNA in Wilmington. He has deep experience in directing strategic marketing initiatives and building brands.

Mark says there is not that much difference between corporate marketing and marketing for a non-profit -- both focus on understanding the customer. However, the non-profit's mission more naturally permeates the culture of the organization.

Mark's business skills will help tremendously given the challenge of raising money and marketing during a pandemic. The Delaware Zoological Society runs the business enterprise of the Brandywine Zoo, which includes fundraising, memberships, admissions, marketing, advertising, website, Zootique, and snack bar.

Although originally from Connecticut, and after an 11-year stint in Manhattan, Greenville, Delaware became home for Mark and his wife, Celia, and it is where all three of his children were born. "My wife and I brought our kids to the Brandywine Zoo when they were young, and it helped develop their appreciation for animals and a broader world."

Even though his kids are all grown up, he fondly remembers being heavily involved in coaching their local Delaware sports teams in baseball, basketball and soccer.

Mark is an avid tennis enthusiast. He captained a team that twice competed in the United States Tennis Association's National Championships. He is quick to point out that his team lost both times. He is a recreational player now.

Mark and his wife like to vacation at their family cabin in the Maine woods. And of course, as animal lovers, they bring their two dogs, Bebe, a 14-year-old Westie and Luca, a four-year-old rescue from the streets of Baltimore.

Ruby Gems of the Coast

By: Lynn Klein, General Curator Brandywine zoo

Meet the newest additions to the Brandywine Zoo's South America exhibit! Candace the Capybara (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) is now sharing her home with 3 male Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*). These birds came to us from the Toledo Zoo in Ohio and are all confirmed bachelors. They range in age from 7 to 14 years old.

The scarlet ibis, AKA "Ruby Gems of the Coast" are beautiful red colored shore bird's native to the coastline of South America. The only color deviation they have as adults from their solid red feathers is at the very tip of their wings, these tips are black. When scarlet ibis first hatch, they are grey and black in color. During their second molt their feather color begins to change to red. After a period of two years their color change from grey and black to red is complete. Scarlet ibis adults weigh approximately 3 lbs. and have a wingspan of 21 inches.

Like most wading birds they have long legs and a long neck. They feed by probing under plants and in the sand with their beaks and are considered scavengers. They prefer to dine on beetles, shrimp, mollusks, small fish, amphibians and crustaceans. They are crepuscular by nature, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk.

They are a quiet species usually only vocalizing occasionally with grunts and croaks. However, the males will shake, bill pop, preen and perform high flying acrobatics to attract the attention of a female. Eggs are laid from

November to January. Gestation/incubation is 19 – 23 days and they usually have 3-5 offspring. "Fledging", also known as leaving the nest, occurs at 30 – 40 days. Scarlet ibis in the wild can typically live to be 16 – 20 years old but in captivity they have been known to live up to 31 years!

What are threats to the scarlet ibis? Habitat destruction, poaching and insecticides top the list. Why do we want to protect the scarlet ibis? Besides their beauty, they love to eat insects! This makes them very valuable to farmers and means they play a very important part in controlling crop pests. This in turn means more food for everyone!



Update from the Zoo Director

By Brint Spencer, Zoo Director

In the last issue of Zoo News, I opened the Zoo Director's letter by saying 2020 was going to be an exciting and challenging year. Little did I realize how true that statement was going to be! The Covid-19 pandemic brought unexpected challenges and changed some of the ways we operate.

The zoo was closed to the public. We divided the zookeeper staff into two teams to reduce potential exposure and assure we would have a crew that would be able to care for our animals if someone were to test positive. Managers worked remotely and were only on grounds on an as needed basis. Staff have increased our use of personnel protective equipment (PPE) around each other and the animals, as well as following an increased disinfection schedule. Elective animal procedures were postponed. Some scheduled animal moves were delayed. In person educational programming and events were cancelled or postponed. Zoom became both a verb and a noun to describe how we were communicating.

Despite significant operational challenges, there were a couple of things that did not change, the staff's commitment to the zoo and the animals! Zookeepers are an often-overlooked group of essential personnel. They came to work every day and provided the same high level of animal care they did pre-pandemic. Our education staff taught themselves how to film and edit videos so they could shift from providing in person programs to



developing online content for our guests who were not able to visit. The dedication shown by the zoo staff cannot be overstated and is greatly appreciated.

Fortunately, another thing that did not change was the progress being made on our new Madagascar exhibit. The contractors made alterations to their work schedule and there have been some slight delays in sourcing material, but there has not been a significant impact on the timeline and we are still looking forward to opening this exhibit in the fall.

This year is the 115th anniversary of the Brandywine Zoo. A lot has happened in Wilmington during that time and the zoo is very proud of its role as an integral part of the culturally diverse fabric of Wilmington and the surrounding communities. A trip to the Brandywine Zoo, and time spent in the surrounding Brandywine Park, has been a family tradition for generations. We look forward to helping create new memories and traditions for all of our neighbors.

Now that the zoo is open, we are thrilled to be able to welcome all of our guests back on grounds. Zoo staff is still following all of the recommended disinfecting, and safety guidelines that have become an expected part of our new normal. We are excited to once again be able to invite the community back to enjoy our little oasis.



Construction Update

By Brint Spencer, Zoo Director

The last construction update on the Madagascar project focused on demolition. The removal of aging exhibits and infrastructure, old wooden fences and confined sight lines. The situation now is very different. Like the proverbial phoenix rising out of the flames, a new and exciting exhibit is rising out of that space. It truly is “Our Zoo Reimagined”.

The new exhibit space has been defined by a series of five masts that will soon support the exhibit mesh. These masts are between 18’ and 27’ tall. This will allow the lemurs to display their arboreal activities above the visitor’s heads. For the first time in the history of the Brandywine Zoo, a professional rockwork company has created an artificial mudbank retaining wall with a recirculating pool and waterfall.

Taking advantage of the topography the exhibit is a fairly complex space that will have multiple levels for the animals and multiple viewing areas for the visi-

tors. Each viewing area will offer a different view of the exhibit. From the lower viewing area, you will be able to see the pool and waterfall while from the upper mesh viewing area you will only be able to hear the waterfall. The covered viewing pavilion has a glass viewing area located next to a heated rock area that will encourage the lemurs to sit close to the guests in cooler weather.

The animals that will call this new space home will include black and white ruffed, ring tailed and crowned lemurs, radiated tortoises and guinea fowl. The animals we are acquiring have been identified by working with the AZA Species Survival Plans (SSP) coordinators and are ready to move to Delaware.

Madagascar is the first project in our masterplan and an opportunity to showcase what we mean when we say “Our Zoo Reimagined”. Be sure to visit us this Fall.

“Our Zoo Reimagined”





WE'RE COMING!



SEE THE REST OF US THIS FALL

Welcome Back to the Zoo

By: Melanie Flynn, Visitors Service Manager

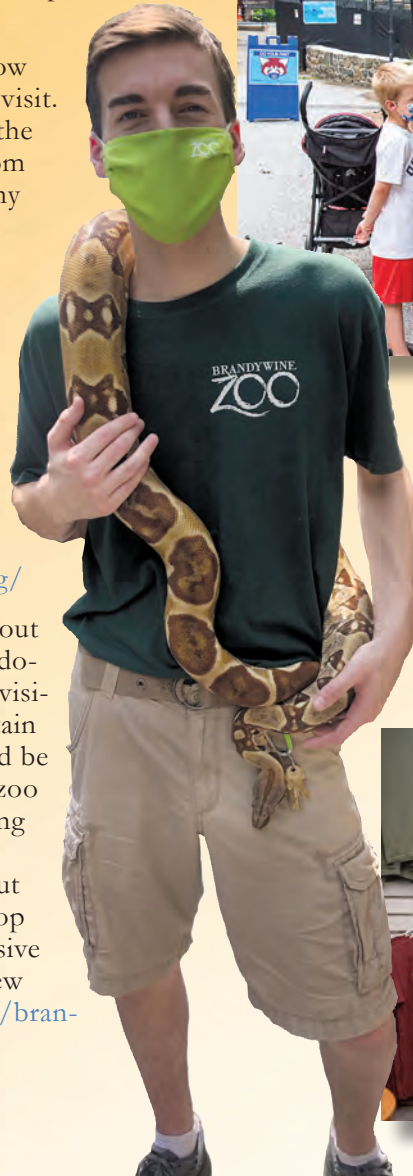
After months of being closed, the Brandywine Zoo happily opened again on June 11th! But just like everyone else, we have been facing challenges due to COVID too. We wanted to make sure that when we opened we had new guidelines in place to keep our guests, staff and animals safe and healthy.

Our biggest challenge was determining how and when we could safely allow guests to visit. We mapped the zoo and put graphics on the ground to help with social distancing. From there, we were able to figure out how many guests we could safely allow at one time. This number is much less than we would normally see on a busy summer day, but this allows each visitor to experience the zoo in a safe environment. Next, we had to decide how to set this capacity. Using phone reservations for the first week and now online ticketing, we are able to set a limit on the number of tickets sold per time slot. If you are planning a visit soon, you can purchase your tickets at <https://brandywinezoo.org/2020-opening/>

We know a lot of people are eager to get out and some people might be a little uneasy doing so. Please know that we are requiring visitors to comply with wearing masks, maintain social distancing throughout your visit and be respectful of other guests and staff. The zoo staff is hard at work cleaning and sanitizing too to help keep everyone safe! We have installed hand sanitizer stations throughout the zoo, put up face shields in our gift shop and concession stand, and perform extensive cleaning. For more information on our new protocols, please visit our website <https://brandywinezoo.org/2020-opening/>



Over the past few weeks it has been a real pleasure to be open again and welcome back so many guests. We hope to see you soon!



Conservation in the Time of Coronavirus

By: Jacque Williamson, Curator of Education & Conservation, Brandywine Zoo

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed or put a stop to so many things in our lives at home and at work. Here at the Zoo, we've shifted many of our routines and split staff into separate teams to still be able to take care of our animals and stay safe ourselves. Wildlife conservation programs, like everything else, have been affected by the pandemic, but here at The Brandywine Zoo, we're doing what we can to continue to conduct our important fieldwork while also taking the necessary precautions to stay safe.



Curator of Education and Conservation Jacque Williamson holds an American Kestrel adult female during a banding in June 2020.

American Kestrel Monitoring

The Brandywine Zoo has been operating a nest box monitoring project studying American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*) since 2014. In Delaware, the American Kestrel is listed as an Endangered Species. Researchers from the Brandywine Zoo have been monitoring their population in hopes of discovering a cause for their declines, and, hopefully one day, help determine a path to recovery through land management and best practices recommendations.

It's currently nesting season for Kestrels, prime time to put numbered leg band birds while they're in their nest boxes. When the pandemic started, we had conversations amongst our volunteers and staff monitoring nest boxes, as well as landowners, on how to proceed with the season. We have very low nest box occupancy in our study area, and missing a season of banding, even with a pandemic, was not an option we wanted to consider. Luckily, our field work is inherently isolated - only one person is needed to check a box for nesting activity, and there's no risk of contamination to birds (coronavirus is affecting mammals, not birds or other taxa at this time). This means that, with landowner permission, Zoo staff or volunteers have been able to keep monitoring boxes for Kestrel nesting activities.

Our staff are able to conduct bandings while wearing proper PPE, most importantly masks, since "social distancing" is not exactly possible when holding 130

gram bird to take measurements. We are otherwise able to complete all necessary work on the birds, including taking measurements and samples, and placing leg bands.

Urban Wild

The other main project the Zoo conducts is our urban wildlife monitoring project, *Urban Wild*. This project uses wildlife game cameras, also known as "camera traps," to monitor animals living across New Castle County. This project, again, was luckily able to continue all spring because this work is inherently low-risk and our landowners agreed to continue to give us access to their properties. Our researchers are able to deploy and check cameras alone, in the woods, and not need to encounter anyone else - making it ideal work to continue during a pandemic.



A quintessential urban wildlife photo- a red fox carries what looks like a bag of trash.

There have been many stories this spring about wildlife becoming "more active" in cities, or just reports of people seemingly seeing more animals than "normal." Is this a phenomena associated with the pandemic, or is it simply that people are home or in parks more to notice them? We're hoping to find out! Our partners in the Urban Wildlife Information Network have been collecting data all spring with game cameras across North America. Normally, as a group, we would have surveyed only in January, April, July, and October, but field partners that were able to get cameras out this spring, before city or state shut-downs happened (about half of the 25+ cities in the



Beaver on a mudflat at a site near the Christiana Mall.

network), have left them up all season to collect as much data as possible. Our cameras in Delaware have been out since late March and we're getting some exciting photos and species detections!



Program Apprentice Caylen Wolfer holds a 17-day-old American Kestrel female chick.

Together, this research team is collaborating on parsing out the data. While some areas may have seen decreased human presence, others may have seen higher than normal use by people. How have the changes in human behavior patterns affected wildlife at a city-wide scale and between cities? We're hoping to find out by comparing to previous field seasons and to other cities in the network, once we get through tagging (identify-

ing the species that are in the photo) all of our photo data as quickly as possible!

The only main effect the pandemic had for us this season was that we were hoping to begin training volunteers to monitor cameras for us. This has unfortunately been put on hold due to the pandemic because training would require some in-person time. However, we have actually started using citizen science volunteers to help tag our wildlife photos! Our data and photos are hosted online in a private database, and we've been utilizing the eyes of many volunteers to help us get through the mountain of wildlife pictures we've been collecting all spring!



Program Research Apprentice Caylen Wolfer and Conservation Intern James Morgan take measurements on a Kestrel chick.



Program Research Apprentice Caylen Wolfer holds a 27-day-old male Kestrel chick. [Photo credit: D. Norton]

If you're interested in helping this project by becoming a photo ID volunteer, you can visit <https://brandywinezoo.org/conservation/urbanwild/> to complete a volunteer application. Additionally, you can join our iNaturalist project and submit your own photos of the wildlife you've been seeing this year by visiting <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/urban-wild>.



Aging of chicks is done by comparing them to charts. This chick is about 17 days old, which can be determined by the amount of fluffy, downy feathers it still retains on its wings and head, as well as how well developed its flight and tail feathers are.

in what can only be described as incredibly challenging times! This program's success this year would not be possible without her dedication to details and data!

Thanks to All Involved

We are so grateful for the dedication of our landowners to allow us to continue to work this season on their lands, and even more grateful to our team of amazing volunteers who help monitor nest boxes and tag camera photos for us. I'd also like to give a HUGE thanks to Caylen Wolfer, our Conservation Programs Apprentice, for her amazing work this field season



After banding, the chicks are returned to their nest box with their new jewelry. Their parents will be by shortly after we leave to resume food delivery as if nothing happened. [photo credit: C. Wolfer]

Zoo Member Spotlight

By: Jim Smigie, Brandywine Zoo volunteer and photographer
Katherine Ward, executive director of Delaware Press Association,
and national award-winning author and editor

"I enjoy visiting every animal during my trips to the Brandywine Zoo," Jim Smigie says with enthusiasm. "Equally enjoyable is interacting with all of the zoo and Zoological Society staff. Everyone is always smiling and willing to share their information and ideas with me. They have made me feel like I am a part of their community."

Jim's favorite animal is Sandy, the Sandhill Crane. "When I'm the only person visiting Sandy, he often comes to the front of his enclosure and greets me by shaking his tail feathers, bowing, and rubbing his head on his shoulder feathers. I feel like he knows me and is glad to see me."

Jim's wife, Katherine Ward, says her favorites are the Red Pandas. "Jim and I first took our granddaughters, who live near the Jersey Shore, to the Brandywine Zoo seven or eight years ago. It was great fun, and we often take them back to the zoo when they are here for a visit. Because the girls fell in love with the Red Pandas, too, we gave them Red Panda 'adoption papers' and Red Panda stuffed toys from the zoo's well-stocked gift shop. The girls were delighted and now feel closely connected to the zoo."

Thanks to the reciprocal zoo pass, Jim has enjoyed free visits at the Baton Rouge Zoo, in Louisiana, and at the Wichita Zoo, in Kansas. All he had to do was show his Brandywine Zoo membership card.

In December 2017, a close friend of Katherine's, who knew Jim did a lot of photographic work and was familiar with programs such as Photoshop, Lightroom, and Topaz, asked if he would be interested in taking pictures for the Brandywine Zoo. Jim says, "I wasn't sure I had enough time to spend on what might be required to do a good job for the zoo but said I would try. Once I began visiting and taking pictures – of the animals, of children



and their families, of the various zoo events – on a regular basis, I realized I had found a mission that truly inspires me.

"Katherine and I obtained a family membership that includes our granddaughters, and we take advantage of it by learning as much as possible about the animals, how the Zoo supports conservation and education, and the means of providing a safe and interesting place for children and parents apart from daily life. The Parrot Party, Brew at the Zoo, Boo at the Zoo, breakfast with the animals, and a visit with Santa are just some of the wonderful events we look forward to every year."

Katherine adds, "After Jim and I traveled to Kearney,

Nebraska, in March 2019, to witness the annual migration of the Sandhill Cranes along the Central Flyway, Jim spoke to the zoo staff with great enthusiasm about our adventure on the North Platte River. There, some 650,000 cranes from Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico spend several weeks feeding in fields along the river to gain weight and strength for the rest of their journey north to Canada, Alaska, and, for some, as far as Siberia. Because of the zoo's resident Sandhill Crane, Sandy, we were asked to put together a cover story about the cranes' awe-inspiring journey for the winter issue of *Brandywine Zoo News*."

Katherine wrote the article, "*Sandhill Cranes by the Thousands*," and Jim's photographs graced the cover and served as illustration for the article. Submitted into the 2020 Delaware Press Association Professional Communications Contest, the article took a first-place award in the category of Specialty Articles – Personal Essay and went on to win a national award in the national communications contest hosted by the National Federation of Press Women.

Annual Fund Support

Our Zoo family has missed you and is very excited to welcome you back!

Over the past few months, while things have been quiet, the Delaware Zoological Society (DZS) staff has continued to work remotely, preparing for the Zoo Re-Opening with a focus on your safety when visiting the Zoo admissions ticket window, our concession area, and the Zootique. We have also been focusing quite a bit of our attention on our fundraising efforts to make up for the revenue loss from being closed in March, April, May, and a portion of June.

To date, we have raised just over \$35,000 (our original goal), for our Annual Fund, but we still need YOUR help. The zoo closure has had a significant impact on our operating budget, and even though we have opened our gates to welcome guests back, we anticipate a significant budget gap. We ask for your help as we change our goal from

the original \$35,000, which was set back in November 2019, to a new goal of \$50,000. Together we can reach this goal!

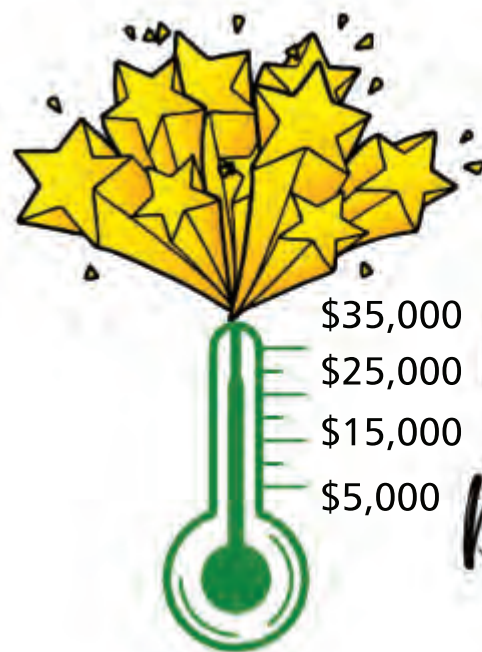
Today, you can make a difference with a donation to the Delaware Zoological Society. EVERY donation big or small makes a difference in the lives of the animals who call the Brandywine Zoo home. Your support now is more critical than ever.

Thank you in advance for your support, and for making a **BIG Difference** by going a **Little Wild** for the Brandywine Zoo.

Sincerely,



Mark Shafer
Executive Director
Delaware Zoological Society



**Delaware
Zoological
Society**

*You
Did It!*

Thank you to our Donors!
We reached our goal of \$35,000

Delaware Zoological Society Executive Director's Message

My first two weeks in April with the Delaware Zoological Society were exciting and surprising. I shadowed, Mike Allen, during his last two weeks before heading off to his new position at The Queens Zoo. During this time, the State directed us to delay the public opening of Brandywine Zoo as a safety measure. It was an odd time to get to know DZS members and staff. Everyone was in transition—not just me—even the animals seemed perplexed by keepers with facial coverings.

The fabulous DZS business and education team jumped into action by adopting new safety protocols, canceling upcoming events and camps, removing scheduled ads, and canceling the Travelling Zoo's schedule and group visits. We took a breath and had a reflective moment about how to support the daily operations facing serious revenue shortfall from no admissions, no program registrations and absent Zootique sales.

With no zoo visitors onsite and a revised hard closure through mid-June, we shifted our attention to expanding our social media engagement and built an education and entertainment website section called, ***Zoo to You Resource Center***. We loaded it with videos of keepers providing behind-the-scenes animal insights and videos of Story-time book readings with featured animals. We also added animal-themed information, games, coloring book layouts and developed a few paid options like offering a travelling zoo animal and handler as part of zoom meetings and virtual animal birthday videos. We quickly realized that the ***Zoo to You Resource Center*** was extremely popular and decided this will be an on-going offering with fre-



Mark Shafer

quent new content updates--long after the pandemic.

Our staff made videos to let you know what we are doing behind the scenes to get ready for a completely different public opening. Then we made the bold decision to ask our community for help, to support us with contributions to an Emergency Fund. You cared and responded, and contributions are helping to sustain us now. We have raised \$5,312 in less than 2 months. Thank you!

On opening day, we were so very happy to see our guests—the animals appeared energetic as well. Even though we were required to limit the number of people in the zoo and change how they experience the zoo for safety sake, it was a joyous and momentous time for all. I especially enjoyed hearing the kids squeal and the parrots' booming squawks, as if talking to guests.

I am pleased to report that DZS recently reached our Annual Fund goal – five months early and is in the process of establishing a new target given the serious revenue shortfall the delayed opening has created coupled with the drop in admission revenue due to limiting the number of people that can visit us at any given time.

Of course, we all rejoiced when the funds for the new animal services and quarantine building was approved in the passing of the Bond Bill FY2021 (picture below). Thank you to all those who communicated support to our State Legislators. We are most grateful to have a loyal and appreciative community. I hope to meet you personally when you come for a visit.



Delaware Zoological Society

1001 North Park Drive, Wilmington, DE 19802



Delaware Zoological Society
supporting the BRANDYWINE ZOO




DELAWARE STATE PARKS

The Brandywine Zoo is managed by the Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation with the support of the Delaware Zoological Society.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity and the diversity of its work force.

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Please let us know when you move; don't miss special invitations and Zoo News. Email to memberships@brandywinezoo.org or call 302-571-7788 Ext. 215.

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SUMMER NIGHTS ICE DELIGHTS

**Come and cool off
with the animals.**

Visit the Zoo during special 5-7pm evening hours!

Kona Ice will be selling their cool Shaved Ice. Gift Shop and Snack Bar open!

Masks required, guests will be limited and following Covid-19 cleaning protocols.

Join Us, Friday, August 14 & 28



Visitors will be limited, get your tickets **302-571-7747**

or **BrandywineZoo.org**

Adults: \$7, Children \$5, Kids under 3 years FREE

Brandywine Zoo members are FREE, just bring your ID.



BRANDYWINE



Go a little wild!