

November 2020 - January 2021

# BRANDYWINE ZOO NEWS





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Jennifer Lynch\*\*

## PHOTO

## CONTRIBUTIONS

David Haring

S McCabe\*

D Norton

Jennifer Lynch\*\*

Jim Smigie

## WRITERS

Melanie Flynn\*\*

Karen Galanaugh\*\*

Lynn Klein\*

Jennifer Lynch\*\*

Mark Shafer\*\*

Brint Spencer\*

Meghan Hoopes

## DESIGN/PRINTING

Professional

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\* Delaware State Parks Staff Member

\*\* Delaware Zoological Staff Member

The Zoo News is a publication of the  
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Meet the newest additions to the Brandywine  
 Zoo's Madagascar exhibit.



Photo by:  
 David Haring

## Meet Tabitha



I was inspired to be a keeper when I was very young and had my first memorable trip to the zoo and a giraffe lean over and stick their tongue out at me. I had always had a fascination with animals and was always jealous of the people training and working with such amazing creatures. I always thought those people must love their job and never get tired of talking about it. So, I decided to turn my childhood dream into a reality.

Born in Charlotte, NC and grew up in Roanoke, VA. I went to college in Banner Elk,

NC at Lees McRae where I obtained a B.S in Wildlife Bio: wildlife rehabilitation. I worked at a wildlife rehabilitation center for 2 years while in college and from there interned at a small local zoo in Roanoke. I was then employed at Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Orlando, FL for 2 years working specifically with birds of prey and rehabilitating them to be released.

My favorite zoo animal to work with would be any avian species. I love birds and their diversity. It is also fun to notice their own little personalities or quirks even in flock species.

# Update from the Zoo Director

By Brint Spencer, Zoo Director

2020 has been a year unlike any that we have experienced and unfortunately most of the news has not been good. However, looking back at this year and contrary to the general trend, good things have been happening at the Brandywine Zoo in a steady and somewhat quiet fashion.

By the time you read this, the new Madagascar exhibit will be open. Months of meetings and planning, were followed by months of construction culminating in the completion of the first project in the zoo's masterplan and the largest single investment ever made in the zoo. We eliminated several aging outdated exhibits, moved some of our current animals to upgraded facilities and created a new modern exhibit space that will meet the needs of the animals, the guests and the keeper staff. The Madagascar exhibit will allow us to demonstrate excellence in animal care, guest experience, and conservation education.

The Madagascar exhibit illustrates a new exhibit philosophy for the Brandywine Zoo. We will incorporate as many mixed species exhibits as possible with animals that have conservation and education messages that we can relate to our visitors. The new exhibit will have three species of lemurs, radiated tortoises and guinea fowl. This combination will provide a more enriching environment for the animals and a more dynamic experience for zoo guests. Most of these species are listed as endangered or critically endangered. There are purchasing choices that Delawareans can make that can have an impact on the habitat in Madagascar that supports these fascinating animals.



and international conservation and research projects. The AZA annual conference was virtually held in September and the zoo was the recipient of two national awards. The first was Top Honors in International Conservation as part of a consortium providing long term support of Proyecto Titi. This project aids cotton top tamarins in Columbia. Our second award was a Significant Achievement in Research for the Urban Wildlife Network. The Zoo's trail camera images are part of our participation in this project. The Zoological Society secured a grant to support international conservation and we selected two Madagascar projects,

Conservation Fusion and the Madagascar Biodiversity Partnership. These two groups are actively involved with indigenous people to help conserve the animals and environment around them. The black and white ruffed lemur is one of the flagship species they are working with in Madagascar and one of the key species in our new exhibit.

All of this has been happening during a global pandemic. The zoo closed our gates like all other cultural institutions for the safety of staff, animals and guests. As information came in and procedures were put in place, the zoo and all other DE State Parks began to reopen. The zoo is committed to providing a safe experience for all of our guests. We require masks, disinfect high contact surfaces, provide hand sanitizer and encourage social distancing by capping our attendance and using timed tickets when we anticipate larger crowds.

We are excited to have guests back on grounds and share our new exhibit with you. The investments that are being made in the zoo are also an investment in the community and our local and global messaging. This is a responsibility we embrace. Come out and see Our Zoo Re-imagined.

William G. Conway International  
Conservation Award - TOP HONORS

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AQUARIUMS

Collaborating to  
Conserve Cotton-top  
Tamarins:  
Disney's Animal  
Kingdom and  
Proyecto Titi

Disney's Animal Kingdom



In addition to conservation messaging on our campus, the Brandywine Zoo and the Delaware Zoological Society have been acknowledged for our involvement in local





# Lemurs Arrive at Brandywine Zoo

By Lynn Klein, General Curator



After years of planning and construction it's finally happening. Brandywine Zoo is now home to three different species of lemurs and nine new individual residents. Not to mention their big new beautiful exhibit. We can't

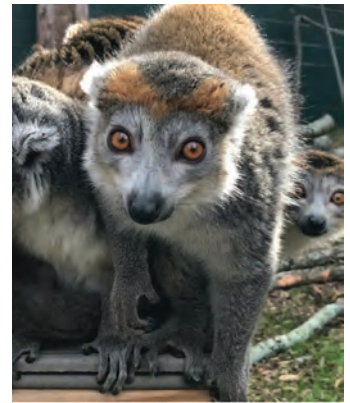
wait for everyone to come and meet them!

As of 2014 there have been 113 individual species of lemur identified on the island of Madagascar. We have three black and white ruffed lemurs, (*Varecia variegata*), a species of lemur that is critically endangered and like all lemur species are endemic to the island of Madagascar. The second species is ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur catta*) easily identified by the furry black and white rings on their tails. The ring-tailed are a family of four and the species is classified as endangered. Lastly, we have a pair of crowned lemurs (*Eulemur coronatus*) Crowned lemurs are one of the most sexually dichromatic lemur species. Which means that the males and the females have different coloration. Females are predominantly grey with an orange crown, while males are a darker red color with an orange and black crown. Crowned lemurs are also classified as endangered. The Brandywine Zoo is one of only 12 AZA accredited zoos to house crowned lemurs.

You might be wondering how the lemurs got here, it all started with the Prosimian (small monkeys or pre monkey) TAG (Taxon Advisory Group) and the individual SSP's (Species Survival Plan). Many species, that you see at AZA accredited zoos, are part of SSP's and overseen by TAG's. These are groups of animal care professionals that manage the species in order to ensure that the number of animals grow so that the species is sustainable in human care. In many cases these programs work so well that individuals can even be released back into the wild. A couple of great examples of this are the golden lion tamarin and the California condor. Brandywine Zoo received recommendations from the Prosimian TAG and the individual SSP's for our lemurs to come to Brandywine. Sometimes the recommendation is to "hold" the animals because there are times when the sex ratio of the zoo

population does not balance out. When that happens, certain zoos are asked to serve as "holding institutions". At other times, if the zoo has the proper exhibit, the SSP will make a recommendation to breed the animals.

Then came the logistics - when and how was the best way to get all nine animals here once the exhibit was ready, but also to give us enough time to introduce them to each other. Everything had to be timed out very carefully. When we started making plans to get the lemurs, we did not have an exhibit built for them. But as the time grew closer to when the Madagascar exhibit was due to be completed, we had to arrange for two separate teams of keepers, to get the lemurs at their former homes. The holding area (or bedrooms as some keepers call them), were due to be ready for lemur occupation on October 14th. That meant the team going to the Duke Lemur Center in North Carolina to get the crowns and the ruffs had to head out early the morning of the 14th so they could return on the 15th with the animals. The other team of keepers went to the Bronx Zoo in New York to pick up the ring tails early on the morning of October 15th



and anyone not going to pick up animals had to report to the holding area in order to organize all the supplies and make it lemur friendly. This all had to be done while feeding and caring for the many animals we have here at the zoo. It was all hands-on deck! We gave the holding area an extensive cleaning and hung hammocks, swings, branches and firehose; everything our new residents would need to climb around, swing, eat, drink and sleep.

All the lemurs arrived as scheduled on the 15th and settled into their new home. We initially kept all 3 species separate so they could get familiar with each other. Recently however, we have gradually been introducing them and it has been going very well!

It won't be long before the lemurs will all be out on exhibit for our visitors to see. Please keep in mind as we head into winter, the lemurs won't be out on exhibit when the temperatures turn cold. We can't wait to share them with all of you!

# Member Spotlight

By Karen Galanaugh, Public Relation

When Karina Russell, age 5, received an envelope with a money gift from her aunt, she chose to buy a family membership to the Brandywine Zoo!

Karina and her parents, Jamie and Christopher Russell of Wilmington, desired to stay home this summer instead of travel, so weekly trips to the zoo have become a delightful close-to-home excursion. Karina's mom, Jamie, says, "It is so nice to have a zoo close to home. We can enjoy the morning at the zoo and play down by the Brandywine River when we are done. Right now, it's even more special because it's a safe outdoor activity that we can enjoy."

Karina's favorite animals are the crane and the goats. She enjoys the keeper talks and close encounters especially.

Recently, while the sandhill crane received a foot treatment from a zookeeper, the keeper offered details about the crane's life and answered a stream of questions from Karina. When Karina returned home, she shared all the information with her father and explained how the keeper kept Sandy busy with treats during the treatment.

Karina's mom said the keeper was so patient and willing to educate the zoo guests that she never felt that they were getting in the way or taking up too much of her time. "This is our experience every visit—the staff and the keepers are eager to share their love of animals and the ways they care for them."

Karina was joined recently by her cousins for a zoo visit and this time they explored the zoo in a pack. They met a gecko and a snake up close. The condor docent shared info in a way that they could understand at their age. The keeper with the macaws went above and beyond answering all four kids' questions and then giving an unscheduled serval talk when she saw them at that exhibit, according to Karina's mom.



Jamie Russell remembers visiting the zoo with Mrs. Faux's Preschool over 30 years ago. She shared a vivid memory of the time when in the petting zoo area, one of the goats ate her nametag attached to her blouse. Karina loves the goats in the zoo's barnyard too.

Jamie Russell recalls a family story from the 1980's when her grandmother was in Memorial Hospital (which used to be located where the Park Plaza Condominiums are) and everyone thought grandmother was going a bit crazy when she insisted she could hear a tiger roaring. "Come to find out, when the wind was blowing in the right direction, she could hear a tiger roaring,

from the Brandywine Zoo!"

Although the Brandywine Zoo no longer has tigers, this family anecdote illustrates how experiences of the Brandywine Zoo throughout the years is interwoven into community memories.

"It's a wonderful place for young kids. It's fenced and safe and the pathways are paved smooth," says Karina's mom. "The kids can hop from bobcat to tamarin and engage when they choose. I am delighted that my daughter spent 20-minutes completely engaged in learning about an animal."

"I have a feeling we will be spending long stretches of time watching the lemurs," says Jamie. And Karina has made sure that we have tickets to the New Zoo Year's Eve Celebration. She is excited.





## Toys for Tots Drop-Off

The Brandywine Zoo is proud to participate in Toys for Tots again this year. Toys for Tots helps ensure that less fortunate children have a brighter holiday season. In 2019, several toy boxes were placed throughout Delaware State Parks (including the Brandywine Zoo) and collected almost 600 toys!



This year has been especially tough for so many, so the Delaware Zoological Society is asking our visitors to help out if possible. Please drop off a **new, unwrapped toy** to the Zoo before December 13th.

You can also purchase an item right from the gift shop and support the zoo at the same time! **For the month of November**, anyone who brings in a toy or purchases a toy from the gift shop will receive a guest pass to visit the zoo at a later date.

Toys can be delivered to the Gift Shop any day between 10:00am and 3:00pm. If you have any questions, please contact Visitor Services Manager Melanie Flynn at 302-571-7788 ext. 214.

Now Thru December 18



# Adopt a LEMUR

for the holidays

**A perfect stocking stuffer.**

This holiday season, adopt a Lemur for someone special.\* For only \$65, you will receive a certificate of adoption, a fact sheet about the lemur, two one-time admission passes to the Zoo, a gift bag plus an adorable plush animal of the lemur. And for \$100, a larger plush animal of the lemur.

\* To assure delivery of ADOPT packages by December 24th, orders to be sent by mail must be made by Dec. 18, 2020; orders to be picked up at Zootique, must be picked up by Dec. 20.



## BRANDYWINE ZOO

*Go a little wild!*

**302.571.7747, Ext.215 • [brandywinezoo.org](http://brandywinezoo.org)**

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



# Volunteering During Covid-19

By Danielle Levredge, Manager of Volunteers and Interns

Like every industry in our world today, volunteering has been affected by COVID-19. With restrictions in crowd gatherings or close quartered indoor activities and prohibition of corporate groups from serving during the pandemic, we certainly are seeing less of our volunteers than a

traditional year. Remarkably though, the pandemic has sparked a surge in volunteering on a more intimate and neighborly level. Millions of people are sharing their time, skills, and knowledge to support their fellow self-isolators — from food deliveries for the elderly to walking front-line health care workers' dogs. (Devex, O'Brien 2020)

At the Brandywine Zoo, we've made accommodations for our self-isolating volunteers which include bringing them into our virtual **Urban Wild Photo Tagging** opportunity, minimizing the hour's requirement for our **Docent Program** and encouraging lots of online professional development through our San Diego Zoo Global Academy portals. Those who are



able and interested to come into the zoo physically have been having a fantastic time running our Exhibit Interpretation Stations and engaging with our guests along our walking paths (socially distant, of course) or assisting with our remaining seasonal events. Due to our rigor-

ous following of safety guidelines, we are still able to have enthusiastic and welcoming Docents out on grounds to answer questions, chat about interesting animal facts and motivate learners of all ages.

We plan to move forward with both our Docent and VolunTEEN Program for 2021 through virtual trainings and coaching as we look forward to a busy Spring season with our newly completed Madagascar Exhibit.

If you or know of anyone who may be interested in our volunteer or internship programs, please direct them to our website, or contact our Manager of Volunteers and Interns directly at [Danielle.levredge@delaware.gov](mailto:Danielle.levredge@delaware.gov) for more information.



Many products we love come from Madagascar, including coffee, sugar, and vanilla. Madagascar is the world's leading producer of vanilla. Exotic hardwood harvest of valuable woods like rosewood decimate remaining forests. Purchasing sustainably harvested products is the best way to help lemurs.



Loved the porcupine. We could get a close look at her eating. We also had the opportunity to ask questions.

I called to discuss safety precautions and got comfortable with the boys out. Loved everything about this year!

BOO! THE ZOO

Fantastic and fun event for the entire family! Hoping for a Christmas/Winter event at the zoo.

Loved the animals and the fabulous decorations.

# Boo at the Zoo



The Brandywine Zoo hosted another successful year of Boo at the Zoo. Due to safety concerns and capacity limitations, we had to alter the way the event was held. This year, the zoo decided to host a daytime event, rather than a nighttime as we had done in years past. We had a fantastic turn out! The event was originally planned for 3 days, but it was so popular that we added a fourth. The zoo took great efforts to offer a safe,

clean and fun Halloween experience. We know it wasn't quite the same as in the past, but we appreciate everyone's understanding and participation. Thank you so much to everyone who attended and who continue to support the zoo. We also want to thank our sponsors, volunteers and donors. We wouldn't have been able to have such a successful event without your help! Hope to see you all at next year's Boo at the Zoo!





Loved the ability for my daughter to dress up and trick or treat in a safe environment despite the pandemic.



Loved the animals! Our kids are 4 and 6, and they had a great experience seeing a lot of animals we've never heard of.



The decorations were fun! It wasn't overcrowded so social distancing wasn't a problem. Definitely a fun time for this 3 generational family!



It was perfect for a one year old.





# Thank You For Your Support

What a year! Just when we were planning to open for our busiest season, we had to change course. Our closure was extended; we cancelled events, camps, education programs; and adopted new safety protocols above and beyond what the eye could see.

We made changes and adapted, and we couldn't have done it without the generous contributions made by you to last year's annual fund.

With your help, we were able to pivot and serve our members and public by engaging them online. We created the Zoo to You Resource Center on our website where families and teachers could access activities, animal videos, and virtual educational events.

And when it was time to open, we communicated with you about our new safety protocols and new limitations on the number of guests allowed onsite at any one time to enhance distancing throughout the grounds. We even shifted ticketing to online to reduce touchpoints and protect guests and staff.

Throughout it all, we have maintained our focus on local and international conservation missions, for example, supporting habitat protection for the remaining lemur populations of Madagascar, and contributing to a national research effort to learn about urban wildlife by using motion sensor cameras in Delaware. By the way, the Brandywine Zoo just won a national award for its contribution to Urban Wildlife Studies from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Given our admission limitations and resultant reduction in revenue, plus unforeseen expenses, we have been feverishly applying for grants and other revenue sources.

Our success through these extraordinary times is a direct result of donations from people like you.

We need your support now more than ever. We have creative and pro-active plans still to execute!

I sincerely appreciate any contribution you wish to make. Every dollar is important to us.

***Thank you.***

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# Like Nowhere Else on Earth

By Megan Hoopes, Education Programs Coordinator

In 2010, the year after I graduated college, I had a life-changing opportunity to live in Madagascar for a year to study ring-tailed lemurs. It was brutally difficult: no running water, no electricity, temperatures that rose to over 130° F in the summer, a cyclone, a forest full of thorns, and so many bugs! At the same time, it was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life, full of lemurs, tortoises, mongooses, and the beautifully alien plant life of the spiny forest (including the oldest baobab tree in the country). Madagascar is like nowhere else on earth.



After well over a year of construction and preparation, the Brandywine Zoo is bringing a tiny slice of Madagascar to Wilmington. The brand-new Madagascar exhibit will feature three lemur species, ring-tailed, black and white ruffed, and crowned lemurs, as well as radiated tortoises and guinea fowl.

The Zoo's lemur residents will have a custom designed habitat to live in, but their distant cousins living in the wild aren't quite as lucky. Lemurs are considered the world's



If you aren't familiar, Madagascar is an island country off of the coast of eastern Africa that is close to the size of Texas in terms of area (116 times bigger than Delaware!) Like many islands, Madagascar is home to a host of unique plants and animals; 90% of the plant and animal species, including lemurs, found on Madagascar are *endemic*, meaning that they are not found anywhere else.



most endangered group of mammals, and 33 of the over 100 species are critically endangered.

While traveling through Madagascar, the threats to lemurs, and the other animal residents were obvi-

ous. Foremost is habitat loss. Since the 1950s, half of the island's forest cover has been lost, often giving way to a type of slash-and-burn agriculture called tavy, and the clear cutting of forests to make way for sapphire mining.

The pet trade takes a heavy toll on lemur and radiated tortoise populations as well. It was a common sight to see baby lemurs stolen from their mothers kept by street vendors to coax tourists willing to pay for a picture, and radiated tortoises smuggled out of the country to be sold on the black-market.



I hope you will join us at the Brandywine Zoo soon, to visit our lemurs and the new Madagascar exhibit. You don't have to live in Madagascar to fall in love with the lemurs and the island's other amazing animals.





# Delaware Zoological Society Executive Director's Message

Wow. What a year it has been. And while I've only been on the job the last 6 months, the staff has been handling everything thrown at them all year. I marvel at their spirit, enthusiasm and dedication. And not just our permanent and seasonal staff; our network of volunteers and docents have also contributed significantly to making 2020 a memorable year for the Brandywine Zoo.

While it's only natural to look back at year's end to reflect on what's transpired, I'm really keen to look forward.



Mark Shafer

at the Zoo was more popular than ever. We changed the format (making it a daytime event), we employed a reservation system which helped us control the number of people in the zoo at any one time, and we handed out prepackaged bags of candy at the end. The feedback was extremely positive and new ideas for next year are percolating as a result!

Guests also tell us they love the care that the keepers take in talking about the animals in our creature features. They appreciate the steps we've taken



On November 19, we had a socially distanced ribbon cutting ceremony of the new Madagascar exhibit with DNREC Secretary Shawn Garvin, Governor John Carney and other dignitaries. The lemurs have arrived and are ready to introduce themselves to our many members and guests. The exhibit has exceeded all our expectations and we anticipate that it will bring years of joy to our community through watching the animals interact, learning about Madagascar, and also as a venue for social gatherings. *It really is that special.*

And as we turn our attention to programming for 2021 we need to consider what's possible in this new Covid era. Many of our traditional events and educational programs were either scaled back or cancelled outright this year.



But we've learned a lot. We've also seen a steady increase in guests returning to the zoo. Visitors tell us they see the Brandywine Zoo as a **safe and fun place** to take the kids. Our popular Boo

with respect to social distancing considerations and sanitizing the grounds and common areas. We hear these things all the time.

The Brandywine Zoo is a special place. And, thanks to our members, it will be staying that way for quite some time to come.

Thank you for your support. It means more than you could know.





# 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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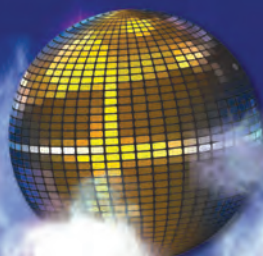
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# Happy Zoo Year's Eve!



**Celebrate the new year  
with your little ones  
at the Brandywine Zoo!**

*We'll drop the ball  
at 11am and 1pm  
(it's 12 o'clock somewhere!)*

**Program takes place in the zoo, so dress for the weather!  
Pre-registration required for Zoo members!**

*Tickets are limited. \$5 ages 3+  
Thursday, December 31st  
[www.BrandywineZoo.org/events](http://www.BrandywineZoo.org/events)  
302-571-7788 ext 215*

**BRANDYWINE  
ZOO**

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