

October 2025 - January 2026

BRANDYWINE

ZOO NEWS



BRANDYWINE ZOO NEWS

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

On the Cover:

What are AZA Zoos doing for
 Black and White Ruffed Lemurs?

Their zoo population is managed through conservation breeding programs called Species Survival Plan programs, which ensure genetic diversity and species health. There are 170 B&W ruffed lemurs at 46 AZA-accredited facilities. AZA zoos fund and participate in field research focusing on the ecology of lemurs in Madagascar, the health of wild populations, genetics, training local residents in lemur protection strategies, and partnering with conservation organizations. Learn more at <https://brandywinezoo.org/animals/black-and-white-ruffed-lemur/>



Cover photo by Lead Keeper
 Allyson Coleman*

**Friday, Oct. 17 • Saturday, Oct. 18
 Sunday, Oct. 19 10am-3pm**

A MERRY, NOT SCARY EVENT

DE529 SPONSORED BY THE STATE OF DELAWARE
 ON BEHALF OF THE DE529 SAVINGS PLAN

Tickets: brandywinezoo.org/boo

Delaware Zoological Society Executive Director Message

Well, we're coming down to the stretch run here in 2025 and what a great run we've had.

We kicked off 2025 with a members annual meeting to recap our activities and successes in 2024 and to highlight many of our plans for 2025—the Brandywine Zoo's 120th anniversary. We were delighted to welcome over 40 members to the Blue Ball Barn that night. The evening was rewarding, and we plan to hold an annual member meeting each January. We will announce the date for the 2026 meeting this December. I hope you will be able to join us.

In March we held an inaugural gala in support of the "Our Zoo Re-imagined" Capital Campaign. The event was held at the DuPont Country Club and was "sold out" two months in advance! We honored Verino Pettinaro with the Brandywine Zoo Champion Award for his unwavering support of the zoo over the past 25 years. I'm delighted to say we raised over \$112,000 that night in support of our Capital Campaign.

In June we were notified that our Community Redevelopment Fund application submitted to the Joint Finance Committee as part of the Bond Bill was approved for \$300,000. That grant has put us very close to the total funds we need to begin work on the multi-species habitat. At the time of this writing, we are in the final stages of securing construction bids, and we hope we'll be in position to begin construction on this very



Mark Shafer

important habitat upgrade this winter.

In August, the Delaware Zoological Society Board of Directors held an off-site retreat. With the help of an outside facilitator, we focused our attention on topics essential to our mission. Chief among them, not surprisingly, is the need to continue to fundraise-- both for

the Capital Campaign as well as for annual operations. We also discussed the opportunity to expand the Board. If you have an interest in exploring your candidacy in joining us, please reach out to me directly: mshafer@brandywinezoo.org.

Our Fall Annual Fund appeal will kick off in a few weeks. We will, once again, rely on the generosity of our members to help us reach our goal of raising \$45,000. The money we raise allows us to continue our important conservation efforts both here in Delaware as well as around the globe.

We know how important our little zoo is to you all. In this issue we'll be able to read some of the heartwarming memories we received through the "My Zoo" stories campaign we've run in celebration of the Zoo's 120th anniversary. These stories capture the magic of this zoo in the most wonderful way. The Brandywine Zoo has meant so much to our community for these past 120 years. With your help, we can continue to flourish and help to create new memories for generations to come.



Left to right: Bill Montgomery, Verino Pettinaro, Mark Shafer



DZS Board Retreat August 23, 2025

Heartfelt Stories from Zoo Visitors: A Journey Through Memories and Moments

Exploring the Profound Impact of the Brandywine Zoo on Generations of Visitors

By Karen Galanaugh

Introduction

For many, stepping into a zoo is much more than a casual day out. Zoos are landscapes of memory, learning, and emotion, where visitors forge connections with nature and with one another. Over the years, countless individuals have walked through the gates of the Brandywine Zoo, carrying with them unique stories—some echoing from the tapestry of childhood, others freshly painted in the colors of today.

Two months ago, we invited the community to share “My Zoo” stories on the occasion of our 120th anniversary. What followed was an outpouring of heartfelt stories shared by Brandywine Zoo visitors, capturing how these experiences have shaped, inspired, and comforted them across generations.

Childhood Wonder and First Encounters

Strolling down winding paths, a child grips a parent’s hand, eyes wide as the world. For many, their first zoo visits mark the beginning of a lifelong fascination with animals.

“Growing up in Delaware, the Brandywine Zoo was always a “go to” place. Now as a parent, I get the joy of taking my child! We had his first zoo trip with his grandparents from out of town, and it was such an awesome experience for everyone. From seeing a Bobcat curled up nice and cozy, petting the sweetest goats, admiring the sleeping Red Pandas, and getting to show my child.” – Erika Trowbridge



For some, these moments were tied to special occasions. Birthdays at the zoo are a rite of passage for many children.

“I had my birthday at the Zoo. All my friends and family came. My mom, my sister and three of my friends walked with me to visit the animals while my

dad picked up my Ariel cake. When all my friends got there, the party began! First, we all held turtles. Then me and a friend picked turtles to race. Mine won. Then we all got pizza and cake. After that we all got our faces painted. It was the best birthday ever!”

– Charlotte Cloud

Zoos often serve as the backdrop for formative educational experiences. School field trips, scout programs, guided animal encounters frequently appear in many stories.

“We came there for the first time recently to the ZOO and did a behind the scenes with the red pandas. They are my daughter’s favorite animal! It was so much fun. The staff shared so much info on the red pandas. We would love to do it again!! We had so much fun!”

– Cindy Candelore

Family Bonds and Shared Traditions

The Brandywine Zoo nurtures family traditions and is the destination to reconnect with generations. It’s the place where visits are woven into the rhythm of family life.

“We have been visiting the Brandywine Zoo since the early 1980’s when I was kid. We frequently would visit after attending church on Sundays and walk around checking out all the animals before heading over to the Monkey House. We would also make a day of it with friends of the family on nice days in the summer and have a picnic lunch by the Brandywine before entering the zoo. Flashing forward to my adulthood, we would go up every now and then on a nice day. Once we had kids, we became members again and we would frequently bring the kids up to share the traditions that I had when I was their age. Our visits became our weekend routine in the summer and our boys and later our daughter would always ask if we can go to the zoo today? The Brandywine Zoo will hold a special place in our hearts for the traditions and memories that we have experienced! Thank you!” – Kevin Fillingame



Moments of Awe and Unexpected Connections

Sometimes, the most impactful visits are those that offer a window into the unexpected.

"I brought my now-wife to the zoo one day. We were up looking at the eagles when we heard "*brring brring* Hello?!" and we looked around and saw the security guard walking around down by the macaws, so we thought it was his walkie. But we went over to the macaw, Chelsea, and started saying hello to her. She talked back, saying hello, wolf whistling, doing her head bob dance and sticking her feathers out. And then as we left, we said, "bye bye" and she yelled it back to us many times. From that day on, every time we went to the zoo, we'd go see Chelsea and say hello. She would come running out from the back to talk to us and show off. It was clear she knew who we were."

– David Vagnoni

(read the entire story online)

For some, the magic lies in the small, serendipitous encounters.

"We stopped at the goat yard, and one goat immediately came over to me. I spent a few minutes petting and talking to him. But when I tried to move on, he wouldn't let me. He would inch closer and walk along with me. Seems like I made a friend, and a pretty cool one at that. Eventually, a zookeeper came by and got his attention. I said my goodbyes, but that goat made my day."

– Ken Cumpston



Other visitors have favorite animals and share sweet memories.

"My husband Nate and I fell in love with the Brandywine Zoo in 2019. We've been coming for many years and one day we entered the Zoo's auction to meet Candace the Capybara. We won the encounter, and we were

both able to meet and feed Candace. She was so gentle and nice, and we were so thankful that the Brandywine Zoo was able to provide her a forever home with her duck and Ibis friends. We were given a painting that Candace created as well. We know that Candace crossed the rainbow bridge but no matter, she will always have a special place in our hearts.

– Michael Straw



A Place of Healing and Reflection

Beyond fun and learning, the zoo often becomes a sanctuary for personal healing and solace. Others have turned to the zoo during challenging times, finding its natural beauty and animals a respite from stress.

"Growing up in Newark, the Brandywine Zoo was always a staple in my life. As I got older, it was one of the few places that I could take my grandmother, who has dementia, for a fun, stress-free day to do something she loves – be around animals. On this particular day in 2018, it was raining, but we were still having a great time watching the ducks enjoy their pond. It will always be one of my fondest memories!"

– Emily Kelley



Adventures in Volunteering and Conservation

Some visitors' relationships with the zoo deepen over time, blossoming into acts of service and advocacy.

"Quite a few years ago, my grandfather pushed me in my stroller to the Zoo almost every day, I am now an ordained Animal Chaplain, and I know I got my great love and compassion for animals from that early exposure to them at the Brandywine Zoo. I still visit the Zoo to this day and follow on Facebook. It will forever be a part of me." – Patti Garver



For others, the Brandywine Zoo ignites a passion for conservation that shapes their careers. Two members of the Brandywine Zoo community, who attended the Brandywine Zoo Camp as children, attribute their choice of careers as influenced by early Brandywine Zoo experiences, namely, Lauren Barczak-Domingo, Curator of Conservation Science & Learning, employed at the Brandywine



Zoo, and Robb Dehney, who attended camp and was a zoo camp counselor, studied animal law at Harvard Law School and is passionate about protecting animals. Robb is a volunteer member of the Board of Directors of the Delaware Zoological Society of the Brandywine Zoo.

Finding Joy and Lifelong Memories

Our Zoo is often the setting for new beginnings and celebrations of love.

"When I was a child, I came to the Brandywine Zoo every year for Zoo Camp. It was a magical experience that has left me an animal lover to this day. Now as an adult, I still find that beautiful joy at the Brandywine Zoo, whether it be from attending events like Valentine's Day trivia night or strolling around the zoo itself!"

– Nicole Rash

For some, the zoo becomes a touchstone throughout their lives.

"My husband and I moved to Wilmington a couple years ago and had our first child! For his first birthday, we took him to the Brandywine Zoo (our first visit). Now, it will forever hold a special place in our hearts and will visit often."

– Charity Martinez



"When I was three, I went to the zoo and fell in love with red pandas. Then I got Boww-Bo, my favorite stuffy. I go to camp at the zoo. I had my 8th birthday party at the zoo. One day I hope to be a zookeeper at the Brandywine Zoo. I would love to sit with the red pandas. This was made by a kid." – August Newell



Looking Back and Forward

"Going to the zoo with my friend in the 1950s' was the best Saturday adventure. Of course, we loved the tiger and the Monkey House. The zoo was a wonderful part of our childhood. I have taken my grandchildren to the zoo many times and I've loved the changes that have been made. I love animals and should have been a zookeeper! I'm sure the Brandywine Zoo is a big reason that I love animals now. Congratulations on your 120th anniversary."

— Margery Schuyler

Conclusion

These MY ZOO stories of past and present reveal the enduring magic of the Brandywine Zoo. They form a tapestry woven from curiosity, joy, healing, and hope—a space where people connect with the natural world and with each other. These stories are our history and connect us as a community. As the Brandywine Zoo evolves, these memories remain, ready to inspire the next generation of animal lovers, conservationists, and storytellers.

Read all the stories in full on our website and even add your "My Zoo" story. Go to <https://brandywinezoo.org/my-zoo/>



SPIRITS AT THE ZOO

Friday, October 24
Ages 21+ Only • 5:30–8PM

Celebrate Halloween without the kids and enjoy an evening of holiday revelry.

Tickets: brandywinezoo.org/spirits
Members: \$5 • Non-members: \$10 • Drink Tickets: \$6 • Food sold separately

Your Stories...
Our History.

MY



SHARE YOUR STORY

Your stories make up the history of the Brandywine Zoo. Share them with or without photos or videos, of how you connect with the Zoo, the experiences, amazements, favorite animals, traditions, and family memories made at the Brandywine Zoo.

Here are quotes from some who have:



...Once we had kids we became members again and we would frequently bring the kids up to share in the traditions that I had when I was their age...

...Bring my grand babies there is always a fun thing we do. They love the zoo...



See all the details and read others stories:
brandywinezoo.org/my-zoo/



By sharing your story and images you give permission to the Delaware Zoological Society/Brandywine Zoo to use your name and submission on our social media, website, print, exhibit, and marketing materials.



BRANDYWINE

ZOO

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS

A Look Back at our Spring & Summer Events

Family Fun Night



BBC Guest Bartending



Storytime



Sip & Stroll



Pride Day



Brew at the Zoo



What a wild night! THANK YOU for making Brew at the Zoo 2025 a roaring success!

To our amazing guests, dedicated staff, incredible volunteers, and fantastic vendors - we couldn't have done it without you. Your energy, support, and love for wildlife made this year's event unforgettable. Every sip, smile, and shared moment helps support Brandywine Zoo and our conservation mission.

Special thanks to our Brew vendors & sponsors

Bellefonte Brewing

Del Pez

Dogfish Head

First State Brewing Company

Franks Wine

Green Eggs and Jam

Iron Hill Brewery

La Pizzeria Metro and Café Riviera

Lucky Shot Coffee

Misphillion River Brewing

Nothing Bundt Cakes

Prime Hospitality

Santa Fe

Wilmington Brew Works



KID'S CORNER ACTIVITY

By Alex Carper, Conservation Science & Learning Intern

Domino Logic Puzzle

Find the correct spots for the missing dominos and fill them in with the corresponding color or letter!

The puzzle consists of a grid of dominoes. Each domino is a rectangle divided into two halves. Some halves contain an image of an animal or object, while others are blank or contain a symbol. The grid is as follows:

- Top Row:**
 - Domino 1: Left half has a red-tailed tropicbird, right half has a red panda.
 - Domino 2: Left half is blank, right half is blank.
- Second Row:**
 - Domino 3: Left half is blank, right half has a bald eagle and a yellow star with the word "FREE".
 - Domino 4: Left half has a red-tailed tropicbird, right half is blank.
 - Domino 5: Left half is blank, right half has a green tree frog and a toucan.
- Third Row:**
 - Domino 6: Left half has a bobcat, right half is blank.
 - Domino 7: Left half is blank, right half has a giant panda.
 - Domino 8: Left half is blank, right half is blank.
- Bottom Row:**
 - Domino 9: Left half has a monarch butterfly, right half is blank.
 - Domino 10: Left half is blank, right half has a Galapagos tortoise.
 - Domino 11: Left half is blank, right half is blank.
 - Domino 12: Left half is blank, right half is blank.

Numbers 1 through 5 are placed next to specific dominoes: 1 next to Domino 3, 2 next to Domino 7, 3 next to Domino 8, 4 next to Domino 12, and 5 next to Domino 2.

Below the grid are five options, each in a colored box with a letter below it:

- A (Teal):** Top half has a toucan, bottom half has a green tree frog.
- B (Yellow):** Top half has a monarch butterfly, bottom half has a Galapagos tortoise.
- C (Green):** Top half has a red panda, bottom half has a green tree frog.
- D (Red):** Top half has a Galapagos tortoise, bottom half has a toucan.
- E (Orange):** Top half has a bald eagle, bottom half has a bobcat.

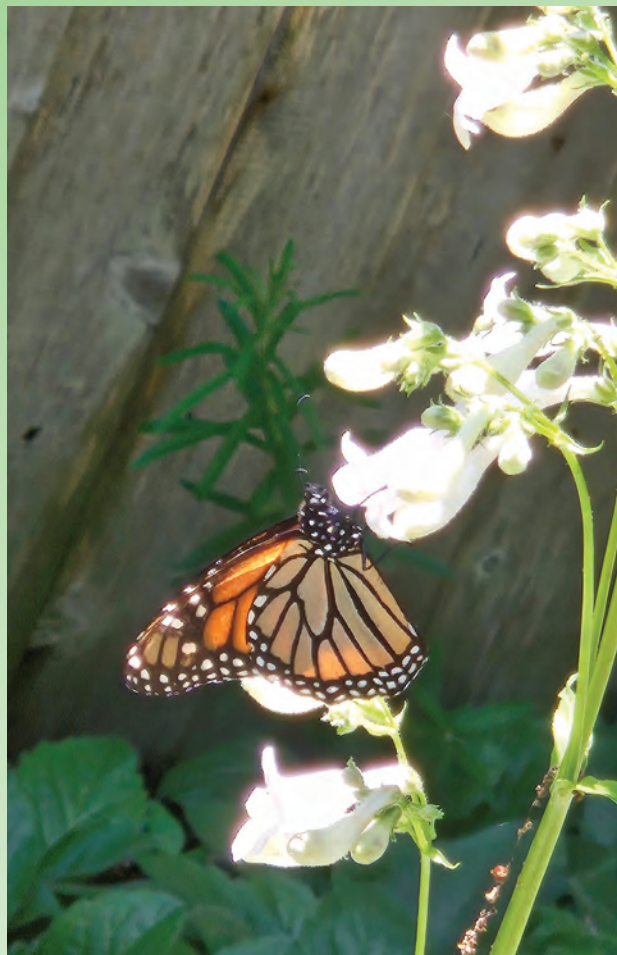
If You Plant It, They Will Come

By Jen Klotz, Community Engagement Specialist

As many of you know, we have been participating in the citizen science program called Monarch Larva Monitoring Project (MLMP) for a number of years. It requires us to check milkweed plants growing on grounds for any life stage of the monarch butterfly. As you can see in these charts, while we have found eggs and caterpillars before, the numbers this year have really spiked! Why would that be?

We have a few theories, starting with the addition of a volunteer patch of common milkweed. By “volunteer” I mean they just appeared, we did not plant them. Milkweed seeds are dispersed by wind like dandelions and some landed here! One of our keepers pointed it out and we added them to our checklist. Research, including years of MLMP data itself, has shown female monarchs seem to prefer common and swamp milkweed varieties when given the choice. How lucky for us to have 26 common milkweeds spring up on grounds! Not only did they up our chances of finding caterpillars, but it doubled our plant count. However, even with a 100% increase in the number of milkweeds, the increase in our findings was still evident on existing butterfly weed. Therefore, even without the common, we would have seen a spike. Onto the next theory.

Birds? One of our MLMP monitoring areas is located by our bird feeders at Nature Play. Due to the threat of avian influenza around the area, we did not hang them throughout spring and summer. While many birds do eat caterpillars, especially during the summer when hungry hatchlings wait in nearby nests, they avoid monarchs. These particular caterpillars and adults are toxic due to the milky liquid of their host plant- milkweed. One yucky taste or upset stomach and monarch caterpillars are off the menu! So, while there is never really a threat of predation by birds, adult monarchs may not feel comfortable in the vicinity and hustle-bustle of feeding time they cause. Cardinals, chickadees, doves, and woodpeckers,



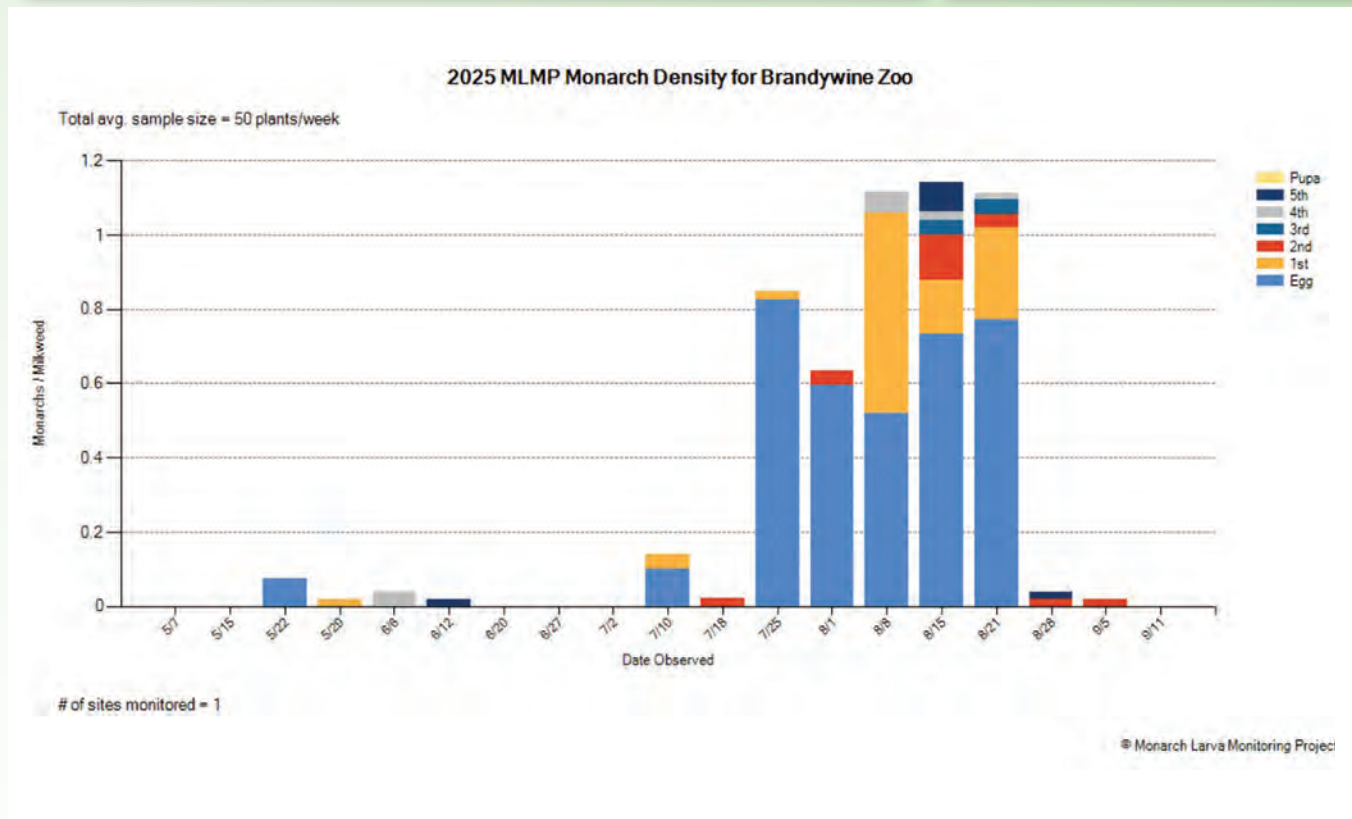
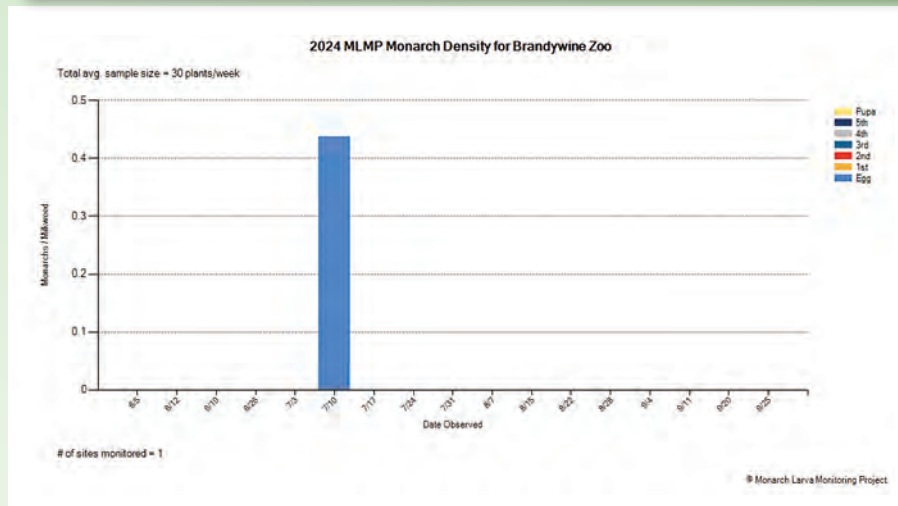
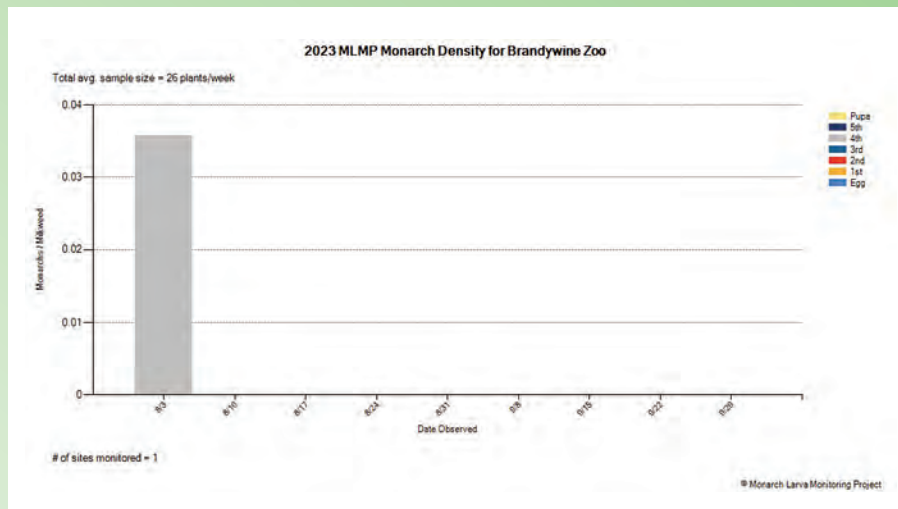
Monarch on beardtongue plant – photo by Ian McVeigh

among others swoop in and out potentially disrupting the lightweight butterfly’s business. Their absence could certainly be a reason we saw more life stages on the milkweed there. But there is one more theory we think explains it all!

To have a successful monarch habitat, milkweed isn’t the only requirement. They also need access to water and nectar (food for the adults). This is accomplished by adding native plants to the habitat, which we started doing 4 years ago. In particular, coneflower, beardtongue, phlox, mint, coral bells, and asters. By now, they are flourishing and THAT will increase the likelihood of adults coming to visit. Afterall, if adults aren’t around, there won’t be eggs or caterpillars. This entire process is a game of patience. There is a saying in the horticultural field- during the first year plants will sleep, in the second they

creep, and the third year they leap! Our efforts have paid off as the plants have established themselves and can grow and flower to their fullest. The bright colors and ultraviolet signal patterns they advertise to pollinators are doing their job! Monarch butterflies are finding them with the females clearly recognizing neighboring milkweed and laying their eggs. The circle has completed and our data swelled in response.

We hope you are inspired by the journey on which this citizen science work has taken us. Monarch butterflies aren’t the only species to benefit from habitats with water, native plants, and milkweed. Our staff has discovered a multitude of insects living there too and with their position at the base of the food chain, we know we are supporting a long list of wildlife. It doesn’t take much, so please find a spot at home, work, school, or your place of worship and transform it into a conservation haven. If you plant it, they will come. They will all come, and we will all be the better for it!



Plastic Free Lunch Day

By Jen Klotz, Community Engagement Specialist

No matter where you eat lunch, how you pack it and what you eat it with does matter. Daily meals away from home have significant potential to generate trash. And plastic trash to boot! School students aren't the only ones taking lunch with them when leaving the house in the morning. Many adults rely on the same concept to get through their own work shifts. Options for boxes, bags, containers, utensils, and drinking vessels have changed greatly over the decades. Unfortunately, those changes leaned heavily toward plastic for a long time. The trend is shifting once again, however, thanks to public awareness of the health and environmental harms stemming from its production, use, and disposal.

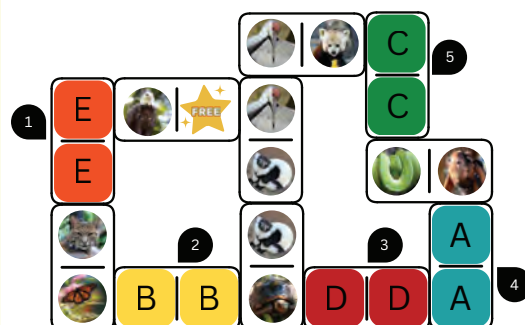
We are thrilled to join the initiative through Plastic Free Delaware called Plastic Free Lunch Day on November 19th and invite you to as well! The concept is simple- use as little plastic as possible with your lunch that day. This can be accomplished by choosing cloth or paper bags to carry it in, reusable bottles, real utensils, beeswax wrap or aluminum foil, and various metal canisters or glass jars. Bento boxes have made avoiding plastics easier by compartmentalizing items in one overall unit. Other methods for achieving the goal include a thermos full of soup or chili and adding whole fruit instead of cut pieces to eliminate the need for a plastic bag or container. Hopefully, removing single-use and other plastics from your lunch on this one day becomes a regular routine!



Giant anteaters live in grasslands, savannahs, and open areas of tropical and dry forests covering most of South America. Their diet consists of termites, ants, soft bodied grubs, and ripe fruit. They walk on their “knuckles” with their claws curled inward to help keep them sharp. They use their nails to tear open termite mounds and dead trees. They use their long nose to help them smell out the bugs in those mounds or trees. Giant anteaters have a smell 40 times greater than humans.



Domino Logic Puzzle Answer Key



Volunteer Spotlight



Event Volunteer Robert Fries

If you've attended any of our events like Sip & Stroll or Boo at the Zoo, you've (hopefully) had a chance to meet Robert. He is a rock star as our resident volunteer bartender, and is incredibly engaging, offering a wealth of knowledge, at our education and activity tables. Thank you, Robert, for volunteering your time and for helping the zoo to host successful events!

How long have you been volunteering at Brandywine Zoo?

I was in the Docent training program in the Spring of 2021 and began interpretation the Summer of that year. The Madagascar exhibit was new at that point, and that's where I was drawn to initially. The diversity of the animals on exhibit gave some great opportunities to point out little "trivia" to our guests - things like "can you find all three Radiated Tortoises?" made interactions with guests much more involved.

Around the same time, I started to photograph the animals for use on social media and marketing efforts. This gave me a much better connection and understanding of the animals and their behaviors, as I

often spend long periods of time outside the enclosures, patiently waiting for a great photo opportunity.

In 2023, I began to volunteer as a server for the Sip & Stroll, Brew at the Zoo, and Spirits at the Zoo events. I have a history of volunteer bartending for different groups in the past, so this was a perfect fit for me when the BZ began to use volunteers for these roles at our events.

What were the reasons you signed up to volunteer at Brandywine Zoo?

When I moved to the city, I considered volunteering with a number of organizations. The BZ stood out for many reasons, but one of the main reasons was the proximity - it's so convenient for anyone in Wilmington! For me, the BZ is just 2 minutes away from my home by car, or I can walk there in 20 minutes. This makes it extremely easy to stop by to get new photos, or to make a Docent shift, or attend one of the larger events.

What's your favorite thing about volunteering at the zoo?

Having such a diverse, exotic collection of animals right in the heart of a busy urban area is such a unique opportunity, it stood out as the right choice when I was looking for a group to volunteer with. And there's different volunteer opportunities - Docent, event volunteer, photography - those options

Other interest/hobbies? Favorite things?

I am also very active with Delaware Odyssey of the Mind program - 2025 marks my 15th year! Delaware Odyssey of the Mind is an annual creative problem solving competition which attracts up to 150 teams of 8 students from around the State. I'm a member of the board, and a Problem Captain for one of the 5 problems presented each year.

Other hobbies include photography - that's my creative outlet to balance the day-to-day stresses of my career as a Director of Technology for a health insurance company.

My favorite thing is Dr Pepper - especially the limited "Blackberry" flavor released this Summer

Do you have a favorite event at the zoo?

I love the Fall vibe, so the Boo at the Zoo and Spirits at the Zoo events are my favorites. Interpreting during the events with the "spookier" topics like bones, snakes, bats really engage the guests. Seeing the kids (and adults!) dressing up and having fun at these themed events brings a great vibe to the season. My grandkids love the events, and anyone I recommend them to is always complimentary of how we pull it all together!

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.

ACCREDITED BY THE
**ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS**

Please let us know when you move; don't miss special invitations and Zoo News. Email to memberships@brandywinezoo.org or call 302-407-4416.

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for Details.

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Upcoming Events & Programs

Keeper Talks Weekends, October & November

Creature Features Weekends, October

Scout Night October 4

Migratory Bird Day October 11

Boo at the Zoo October 17, 18, and 19

Spirits at the Zoo October 24

Santa at the Zoo December 6 and 7

Little Nature Explorers Ongoing



For More Information, visit www.brandywinezoo.org
and follow us on social media for updates @brandywinezoo