

## ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY REPORT

DECEMBER 2013

This year was another remarkable one at Racine County's favorite destination for a number of reasons. For one, we welcomed several new faces, some, we hope, for the long haul while others only took up temporary residency. As an example of the former group, your Zoo is now home to a variety of domestic animals from around the world, the majority of which took up residence in our new immersive contact area, popularly known as "Barnyard Safari." Among the newcomers were some Ancona ducks, half a dozen Nigerian dwarf goats, three Tunis sheep, three Barbados black belly sheep, and Orson, Elmer and Norton, popularly known around town--thanks to a widely publicized public naming contest--as "THE three little pigs." The sheep and goats, thanks to their cold-hardiness, will be on display all year round next year while the pigs will be spending the slow season as part of our crew of educational animal ambassadors.

The formerly vacant Ankole-Watusi cattle exhibit in the Charles & Jennifer Johnson Land of the Giants is now home to a pair of Arabian camels. Unlike their cold-sensitive roommates (the rhinos and giraffes) the camels will be on exhibit virtually every day of the year.

Among those boarders who both came and went during the course of the year were those reptiles, being kept illegally in Kenosha, that were seized by police in May. Thanks to the expertise of our own Dr. Greg Mayer, former board chair of the Society, and Curator Theresa Donarski, all of the animals were transferred to the Zoo for temporary safekeeping. The collection included half a dozen venomous snakes and lizards along with a pair of alligators, a crocodile, and a giant snapping turtle, for good measure.

Still in residence, but not for too much longer, is the first wallaroo born at the Zoo in over 15 years. Zoo guests from far and wide thrilled in watching as he developed from a pouch-bound infant to the miniature version of his father that he is today. We fully expect that he will be a father himself one day at some yet-to-be identified accredited zoological park.

In other conservation and animal care news, Consulting Veterinarian Kevin Nelson brought international recognition to the Zoo when he surgically removed the pouch and mammary gland of our red kangaroo, Suli, who had developed breast cancer. This successful surgery represented this first of its kind anywhere in the world.

The Conservation Education Department had another successful year in 2013, offering a variety of new programs, in addition to perennial favorites, like Summer Camps, Parents & Polliwogs story time, and Slumber Safaris. So far this year the department was able to present more than 420 live animal programs, classes and events, which reached over 25,600 people. This represents a 54% increase in the number of programs delivered compared to last year.

New in 2013, the live animal educational presentations at the Helen Ireland Wildlife Theater proved to be a pleasant pause for patrons. These presentations allowed guests the opportunity

to meet some of our animal ambassadors, which are not normally on exhibit. The education department conducted 179 of these programs throughout the summer months.

Other new programs offered in 2013 included a citizen science frog monitoring partnership with Association of Zoos and Aquariums called FrogWatch USA, a Racine Zoo Book Club, and Critter Corner, which is a “mini zoo camp” for children ages 5-7. This program has already helped boost membership sales.

Due to generous support from the Shaw Foundation, the Norbell Foundation, and the Racine Rotary Foundation, funding was obtained for the Wildlife Explorers program through the 2013-2014 academic year. This program reaches every third-grader in the Racine Unified School District and reinforces their understanding of core science standards by providing them with a hands-on experience with wildlife.

Summer camps were again an exciting and engaging educational opportunity for children in the greater Racine community. A total of 194 campers, ranging in age from three through 12, attended 14 different full-day and half-day camps. Thanks to donations from area families and Zoo field trip visitors, “Camperships” were awarded to 16 children, allowing them to attend a Zoo Camp that would have otherwise been cost-prohibitive.

And finally, the year’s special events lineup was largely blessed by good weather and robust attendance. Zoo Debut, which definitely “turned a corner” last year was back again for the second year in a row of higher attendance and increased revenue. The Animal Crackers Concert Series, too, showed good results and was the subject of much positive audience feedback this summer.

At the beginning of the year we welcomed Gianna O’Keefe as our new marketing and resource development manager. I credit her with the spike in traditional media appearances as well as an overwhelming increase in our social media presence. Look for more good things from her in 2014.

On behalf of the entire Zoo staff, thank you for your continued support of our important work here and for all you did to make 2013 such a remarkable year.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay R. Christie  
President and CEO