

# ZOO & YOU



Summer 2020 | Member Magazine  
Reid Park Zoological Society





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For more information, contact Gail Brown at [gail@reidparkzoo.org](mailto:gail@reidparkzoo.org) or (520) 881-4753.

**Reid Park Zoological Society**

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**ZOO HOURS:**

Zoo is currently closed. Check the website for dates, hours and re-opening information.

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER**



Reid Park Zoo is in its fourth month of closure – closed for the safety of our guests, our staff, and our animals. We appreciate all the support our members and our community have given to the Zoo during this time. We have had emails, letters, and social media messages about how much you love the Zoo and have appreciated seeing our updates. Thank you! Those notes have meant so much to us all during these challenging days.

Here are some of the questions we are seeing the most:

**Do the animals miss the people?**

*Like people, animals are individuals who all react differently. Some, like our cockatoo, clearly miss interacting with our guests. Others, like our lion-tailed macaques, seem to hardly notice!*

**How are you doing financially?**

*While we have definitely had to tighten our belt, thanks to the generosity of our donors, our board of directors for setting up an emergency reserve, and the voters who funded the Future of Your Zoo ballot measure in 2017 we have*

*been able to continue to provide the highest level of animal care, maintain the grounds and continue implementation of the master plan.*

**What changes will you keep?**

*There are a lot of great changes that have come about, especially with being able to reach people who can never come to the Zoo. We would love to continue to offer our virtual camp, events and school group visits and will continue to invest in our webcams. These are the silver linings of this unfortunate event.*

Thank you again for your incredible support during the Zoo's closure. We are looking forward to the day we can welcome you back to the Zoo.

*Nancy J. Kluge*



# HERBIE'S BIG MOVE: ALDABRA TORTOISE MIGRATION

The Aldabra tortoises at Reid Park Zoo have lived near the giraffe and lion-tailed macaques since the late '70s. While that habitat worked for the animals, it did have some challenges. Every year during breeding season, Herbie, the 530-pound male tortoise would follow and follow and follow his two female companions around endlessly. At some point, the girls would have to migrate to their behind the scenes vacation destination to have a break from Herbie. An ideal habitat would have space to separate Herbie from the girls at different times of the year without having to move them away.

**So this May, Herbie and the two girls, Dulce and Georgina, were relocated to the front of the Zoo!**

The tortoises now reside next to the black and white ruffed lemurs, where the African crowned cranes used to live. The cranes, in turn, have migrated to cohabit with the rhinos where they now have more room to stretch their long legs.

All animals received full physicals as part of their move. Relocating the female tortoises was relatively easy, as they are under 150 pounds. The girls were lifted by keepers onto a vehicle, driven over to the new



habitat, and then carried in by several strong keepers. Herbie was a little different. While we have an incredibly robust staff, they could not manage 530 pounds, wiggling tortoise legs and a potentially interested, snapping mouth. So instead, Herbie had a sling or straps fashioned underneath his shell. This sling was lifted by our forklift, and you can say he floated down the road to his new home. He was distracted by bright orange carrots, one of his favorite foods. Lots of staff were present to watch and to help with the move to make sure Herbie made the big migration safely.

All three tortoises have settled into their new home well. Their new habitat has a giant willow that keepsers sometimes flood and it almost becomes a pool. Tortoises have grass, trees for shade, and a removable fence for when the girls need a break. Like in their old home, they also have a climate controlled behind the scenes area to stay warm in winter and offer a little cool off in the summer. Keepers shower them daily — so guests will still have a chance to see them enjoy the rain!



# Playful and Spirited Additions



## Reid Park Zoo has six new (and very cute!) residents.

After a 22-month gestation, Penzi the African elephant calf was born on April 6, 2020. Her mother, Semba, is the matriarch of the herd, and she quickly introduced Penzi to the rest of the family, including big sister Nandi. Within a few hours she was walking around, a little wobbly for sure, but she was able to follow mom and meet the herd.

After a much shorter wait, on April 10 the meerkat pups were born after just a two and a half month gestation. The five pups have the same dad, Digby and two different moms, Prya and Leslie. In their first days of life the pups had eyes closed, very little hair on their bodies and were unable to do much but wriggle and nurse.

Over the last few months, the babies have grown and developed so much!

Penzi has gained over a hundred pounds, has the ability to run and keep up with the herd, but still falls, trips, and slips on a regular basis - usually because she is going too fast or has added in a spinning twirl that was not under her control. She is nursing up to two hours a day and just barely playing with hay and grass, but not really eating much solid food just yet. She enjoys a shallow mud puddle to play in and cool herself off, but has not learned how to use her trunk to spray mud on her body. She relies on flopping from side to side to coat herself in mud. While she can care for her skin on her own, nearly all other care is still provided by mom and the herd. In the event of danger, the herd would surround



# tions to the Mob and Herd



her to protect the young calf. She can vocalize and bring mom and others to her defense.

Recently, Penzi has been busy with her family, practicing all the skills she will need later in life: keeping up with the herd, splashing in the mud, and using her trunk to pick up hay and grass. She is trying but has not mastered dusting herself. When it is hot outside, Penzi likes to use her ears to fan herself. She has started placing water and mud behind her ears to create an extra cooling effect.

Penzi has started to learn the natural elephant skill of charging objects that could be a perceived threat. She will charge at pigeons or ducks when she encounters them but before she gets remotely close will then turn and run top speed back to mom. Rubber tubs on the other hand are less threatening and if she encounters one of these will charge it and trample it as playfully as possible, sometimes throwing her body on top of the tub to smash it thoroughly. It is incredibly fun.

In the mob, the meerkat pups have opened their eyes, grown all their hair, grown to nearly half adult size, and are well on their way to mastering burrowing. They have just about stopped nursing and are eating solid foods like insects, small mice and plant material. They have learned social skills and the value of assisting with sentry duties, watching out for danger. As a sentry, it's important to stand tall and watch, which at this age can still result in tumbling over! They know how to vocalize to express themselves and warn others to get into the safe burrow. They have become important members in the mob, with many more eyes watching for dangers.

The pups' father, Digby, has been highly attentive from day one. His role recently has shifted into teaching: he can be seen digging alongside the pups, showing them how to be sentry for the mob, and always being tolerant of their playful and mouthy antics.

Looking ahead, Penzi will spend years as a calf dependent on her mom. She can nurse up to about four years old and will continue to learn how to use her body, learn about herd dynamics, and grow big. She will reach breeding age in her teens. The little meerkat pups will be independent in another month or two. They will have mastered meerkat skills they need to become strong members of the mob, less dependent on parental care and instead contributing members of the mob.

Whatever their path, watching young animals grow and develop in their social groupings is a delight. Whether the wait was a few months or a few years, the young animals are a treasure for their herd, mob and the entire Zoo!

# BIGGER SPACES. SMILING FACES.

## FUTURE OF YOUR ZOO IS IN FULL SWING

While the Zoo has been closed, there have been exciting changes with maintenance and construction projects both on the public side and behind-the-scenes at the Zoo!

Behind-the-scenes, the backroads have been paved which makes for smoother cart trips for the animal care staff as well as for walking, we have also resurfaced the grizzly pool and added shade for the giraffes.

Work on Phase I of the Zoo's Master Plan has begun with demolition and preparing the area for the new flamingo habitat and upgrade of the Welcome Plaza. With the construction, when the Zoo reopens, entry will be through the current exit area of the Zoo.

**If you would like more information on the plans for flamingo, front entry, World of Play and Asia, please contact Gail at 881-4753 or [gail@reidparkzoo.org](mailto:gail@reidparkzoo.org).**

Keeping a zoo facility well maintained is no small feat! Most properties have a facility crew that takes care of



plumbing, irrigation, heating, cooling and more. But it's not typical to have your door broken by a grizzly bear, the irrigation dug up by a lion, the pool skimmer jammed by a playful otter, or the cinder block fence crumbled by an elephant!

So we want to give a shout out to our awesome Grounds and Maintenance Team! For all the jobs they start, and then have to stop because one of the animals did not like the sound of the

machines, we thank them! For all the plants that get joyfully destroyed by an animal, we appreciate their efforts! For all the water testing and modifying to be sure our pools are safe, we are grateful! And for all the urgent items that get thrown their way: thank you!

And, thanks to our donors and generous community of voters who are making the Future of Your Zoo possible!



## BRICK BY BRICK

We are improving the Zoo and you can too!

Purchase a brick and leave your mark while helping the Zoo! Bricks start at \$250 and will be displayed at the new Entry Plaza opening late 2020!

For more information contact Gail Brown at **520-881-4753** or [gail@reidparkzoo.org](mailto:gail@reidparkzoo.org) or visit [ReidParkZoo.org](http://ReidParkZoo.org)



## PROTECTING NATIVE SPECIES WITH NEW PROJECTS

There are two new projects coming to Reid Park Zoo that will focus on native Arizona species! Thanks to a partnership with Tucson Audubon Society and support from Freeport-McMoran, work has already begun to create a pollinator garden and install nesting boxes on Zoo grounds.

The up-and-coming pollinator garden will be located at the back of the Zoo in what was the Aldabra tortoise habitat (read about this recent change on page 3!). We hope to see a new array of species drawn to the native plants grown in this area. Developing a habitat specifically for native pollinators provides the Zoo with an opportunity to be an active partner in AZA's Monarch SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction) program. Monarch butterflies travel through Tucson during their migration from Canada to central Mexico. Along their journey, they face many challenges to their survival such as habitat loss and extreme weather conditions that may cause them to freeze. Habitat loss is a very significant threat as monarchs require one specific plant, milkweed, in order to lay their eggs and feed their young. However, milkweed is thought of as just that, a "weed", resulting in many plants being sprayed with pesticides, decreasing the monarch's chance of



reproducing. The pollinator garden at the Zoo will be filled with several species of milkweed, along with other flowering plants specifically selected with help from the Tucson Audubon Society and approved by our Zoo veterinarian to encourage visits from other native pollinators as well as monarchs.

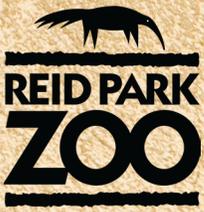
Additionally, with assistance from the Tucson Audubon Society, Reid Park Zoo will be installing several nest boxes specifically for two species of North American songbirds: Lucy's warbler and brown flycatchers! Both species are frequent guests at the Zoo. Last Fall, a study found that North America's songbird populations

are declining as a result of habitat loss but also from pesticide use, insect declines, climate change, and deaths as a result of predation by outdoor domestic cats and collisions with windows. Installing these nest boxes will provide vital nesting habitat for these species. This provides the Zoo an opportunity to participate in the North American Songbird SAFE program to protect these species throughout the continent. We will be monitoring our nest boxes and reporting our findings to the Audubon Society to help with their research and conservation efforts.



### HOW YOU CAN HELP NATIVE SPECIES

- 1** Keep your cat indoors! They are excellent predators and a major threat to native wildlife.
- 2** Get your yard certified as a home for native species through Tucson Audubon Society's Habitat at Home program.
- 3** Go pesticide-free in your yard and support companies that do the same.



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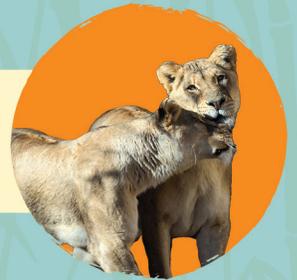
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Looking for something to pass the time at home?  
Here are three things you can do from our website!

- 1.** Check in on the elephants, grizzly bears, lions, lemurs, and giraffes on our live Zoo cams!



- 2.** Sign up for one of our virtual events and let us Bring the Zoo to You!

- 3.** Keep up with the latests news, cutest videos, and daily features on our blog!



All this and more at **ReidParkZoo.org**