



# Saint Louis Zoo Education Overview



## Building Upon A Legacy Of Excellence

**WHO WE ARE:** The Saint Louis Zoo has one of the nation's largest Zoo-based Education Departments. It was established more than 50 years ago to link visitors of every age and background to the Zoo's conservation work, not only by providing excellent materials and presentations, but also by creating meaningful experiences.

The Department connects the Zoo's conservation efforts in the field to the work we do on our 90-acre campus in protecting and providing quality care for our 19,000 animals. The Zoo is home to 655 species, many of them rare and endangered. It is one of the few free zoos in the nation and, with three million annual visitors, among the most popular: The Saint Louis Zoo was rated the #1 Zoo by Zagat's Survey's U.S. Family Travel Guide in association with *Parenting* magazine.

At the Zoo, we know that discovering the wonder of nature leads us on the path to stewardship of our planet. Rich with real-world phenomena, the Zoo offers a place where people can

pursue and develop their interest in science, engage in science inquiry and reflect on their experience through discussion with a range of people—from docents to zookeepers to scientific experts.

As educators, our commitment is not only to recognize and adapt to the various ways people learn, but also to create a new paradigm of conservation education that connects people of all ages and backgrounds to nature. That's a tall order, but ours is a highly qualified staff, offering 317 years of experience in teaching, research and work with animals. This averages out to about 15 years' experience for each Education Department employee; all of the 23 full-time and part-time, year-round employees in the department hold university degrees. Over half have earned post-graduate degrees, including one employee who has a Ph.D. from an Ivy League University.

**WHAT WE DO:** To help visitors feel more connected to nature and motivate everyone to take action to preserve the natural world, we offer hundreds of programs and typically reach more than 1.7 million visitors each year. We touch them through on-site programs, tours, outreach, distance learning and a range of events, experiences and contacts with our volunteer and paid staff.

**WHAT'S NEW:** Funded through a \$2 million gift from The Monsanto Company, the Monsanto Education Gallery opened in the summer of 2013 in the Lower Level of the Zoo's The Living World.

The Education Gallery provides a flexible multi-purpose area for hands-on, environmental and conservation education programs, with a focus on families with children age birth to nine. However, all ages are welcome.



### Monsanto Education Gallery

The Monsanto Education Gallery Wild Wonder Outpost provides child-directed exploration, investigation and play around age appropriate animal and environmental themes for children 0-8 and their caregivers. The multiple programs in the Gallery include a discovery room, Wild Wonder Outpost, and early childhood summer day camp, Camp Joey.

This setting offers unique opportunities for children and their caregivers to explore the wonders of the natural world together and to discover ways to extend their care for animals and love of the outdoors into their everyday lives. By offering multiple programs in the Gallery, we can appeal to wide range of interests, while making the exhibit self-sustaining.

**WHAT WE OFFER:**

**Programs for Everyone:** The Education Department offers programs designed to help individuals and families of all ages and abilities learn through experience, involvement and discovery that focus on conservation.

For young children, there are crafts, live animal contact, songs, stories and role-play—all designed for parents and their children to explore the animal world together. We also offer interactive programs customized for special needs children and their caregivers. For older children, we provide loads of exciting classes and a summer camp.



**Youth Groups:** We offer a range of opportunities for scouts and other organized youth groups to enjoy the Zoo and learn about nature. Scouts can learn about animals and sleep under the stars while working toward fulfilling their badge requirements at the Snooze at the Zoo programs. Scout overnight programs are for Girl Scout Brownies, Girl Scout Juniors, Cub Scouts and Webelos.

There are additional opportunities to join the Zoo's team of amazing keepers by participating in a day with the Stingrays. This and many other programs are supported by our Theatrical Interpreter Program, which has grown over the last decade from one full-time interpreter to more than two dozen seasonal interpreters who are all certified by the National Association of Interpretation. This fun group can be seen on Zoo grounds seven days a week, either working in the Stingrays at Caribbean Cove exhibit or standing before an animal habitat talking to visitors. Interpreters also support special evening events, provide multiple programs that include breakfast, snack and dinner tours, as well as their Daily Safari Tours and the popular Day With the Rays kid's program.

**Programs for Schools:** Tens of thousands of school children attend classroom presentations, Zoo tours, overnights and outreach programs every year. These programs are aligned with Missouri state government-established science standards.

**Teachers:** The Zoo also serves as a resource for teachers, who can borrow materials that include hands-on kits, curriculum guides, videos and activity books. These help educators integrate conservation education into their classroom curricula. At the Zoo, teachers can attend workshops that provide training in science and conservation education and in a variety of zoological topics; in these sessions, educators can also learn how to use the Zoo as an educational resource.



**Outreach:** Through our outreach initiatives, we provide programming for everyone – from age 2 to 102. We visit schools, libraries, senior groups, scout groups and a range of community organizations. Live animals can be part of these programs, depending upon weather conditions.

**Distance Learning:** Schools, universities and organizations from across the globe routinely take students to the Zoo without leaving their classrooms, offices or conference areas. The Zoo brings live, engaging video conferenced programs directly to your location through the magic of technology.



**Adult Programs and Lectures:** Adult programs include breakfast and evening tours, dinners and presentations. In partnership with the Academy of Science-St. Louis and other organizations, the Zoo offers lectures delivered by a range of experts from nationally and internationally known academic, conservation and scientific organizations. These discussions cover timely topics ranging from the challenges scientists face to the plight of endangered animals and initiatives to preserve those animals and their habitats.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Our 230 volunteer docents are highly trained and dedicated to teaching school children and the general public about wildlife, ecosystems and conservation. In sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm about our Zoo, they help increase our visitors' caring attitude toward nature.

Teens who like animals and kids and are passionate about wildlife and conservation can also volunteer through Zoo ALIVE—the Zoo's volunteer educator program for high school age students. Zoo ALIVE Teen Volunteers help deliver weekend education programs, lead visitor educational activities and assist with birthday parties, summer camps and outreach. They also participate in hikes and camping trips and help with the Zoo's conservation programs.

**Citizen Scientists:** Citizens are also needed to help save species. For example, the Zoo supports FrogWatch USA™ —a long-term citizen science monitoring program for frogs and toads. As a volunteer-based monitoring program, FrogWatch USA™ gives citizens across the nation an opportunity to be directly involved in gathering information that can ultimately lead to practical and workable ways to stop the loss of amphibian species. General information about FrogWatch can be found on the Association of Zoos and Aquariums website.

**Conservation Education Research:** To maintain our status as one of the leading wildlife educational institutions in the world, we are constantly engaged in research and development. Our research efforts are intended to integrate the state of knowledge in such areas as pedagogy, ecology, zoology, sociology and anthropology to improve the quality of our programs. Current efforts include research on the topic of affective transformation, a concept coined by Jeffrey Bonner Ph.D., Dana Brown president and CEO at the Saint Louis Zoo, to express a connection that goes beyond understanding of nature and connects humans in a deeper level with nature. Achieving this deeper connection is fundamental in transforming interest and knowledge about nature into a lifelong commitment





to conservation. This commitment to research and development makes our program an important reference source for other zoo, aquarium and museum education programs in the U.S. and the world, and allows the Saint Louis Zoo to point the way forward in conservation education.

Center, University of Missouri-St. Louis, St. Louis Community College and University City School District. CISTL focused on improving science teaching and learning, through teacher professional development, mentoring/coaching and research.



## MILESTONES

- The Zoo's greatly expanded educational programs and experiences now touch over 1.7 million of our guests annually and thousands more in schools, homes, community centers, libraries and care facilities throughout the St. Louis region and beyond.
- The Saint Louis Zoo was visited by approximately 1,500 school groups (nearly 100,000 students) who came for field trips. Of these groups, 17 percent included special needs children, and 8 percent included English language learners. The ethnic makeup of school group visitors is substantially more diverse than Zoo visitors or the overall regional population, with 32 percent of school group visitors identifying themselves as being non-Caucasian, compared to 14 percent of Zoo visitors.
- In 2002, a National Science Foundation funded project, Center for Teaching and Learning (CISTL) began. It was a partnership with Washington University, the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis Science

- More than a decade ago, we established an interpreter program, with National Association of Interpreters-certified educators working to connect with the public in a meaningful way to share conservation animal care messages.
- In 2012, we presented 567 outreach programs to 24,485 participants. We implemented distance learning using state-of-the-art equipment. Between 2006 and year-end 2012, the Zoo has provided 541 programs to 19,403 students and teachers in 35 states and five nations. Sixty video conferences have been presented to 1,876 participants. Actual mileage traveled in 2012 was 8,761, round-trip, but the staff traveled 107,156 "virtual" miles via video conference to 15 states as well as Canada.



## OUR PARTNERS

Our staff provides educational value to the greater conservation community through more than 180 worldwide partnerships with universities, governmental agencies and conservation organizations. These partnerships result in presentations at conferences and meetings, articles in academic and scientific journals, reports and publications.



The Zoo has received financial support to provide scholarship assistance to tens of thousands of students, allowing them to enhance their science education through our unique classroom, outreach or summer camp

experiences. That support came from companies, foundations and individuals.

We have also received grants for scholarships or certain programs from national and regional institutions.

## DONORS

The Saint Louis Zoo would like to thank the generous donors in 2013 who helped make our education programs possible:

- Monsanto Company
- National Science Foundation
- The Boeing Company
- Mercy
- U.S. Bank
- John R. Goodall Trust
- Thomas Lawrence
- F. G. Russell
- Engelhardt Family Foundation
- Furniture Brands
- Schlafly Fund for Underserved Students
- E. Desmond Lee Family Education Programs
- Walter and Nancy Galvin Education Scholarship Fund
- C.C. Johnson and Edith Spink Gallery and Exhibition Fund
- The Bellwether Foundation Fund for Education
- Guerrero Family Zoo Education Resource Fund
- Kwame Foundation Education Fund
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- Claire M. Fitzgerald Teen Leadership Fund
- Knisely Family Foundation

The Saint Louis Zoo  
Education Department Mission

To nurture respect for animals and their habitats and to promote conservation action by providing educational opportunities and experiences.

Education Leadership Team

Louise Bradshaw    Laura Seger  
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*Youth Programs Coordinator    Zoo Librarian/Archivist*

Our Mission

The mission of the Saint Louis Zoo is to conserve animals and their habitats through animal management, research, recreation, and educational programs that encourage the support and enrich the experience of the public.



**Saint Louis Zoo**  
**Animals Always®**

For more information,  
visit [www.stlzoo.org/education](http://www.stlzoo.org/education)