



A Message from the Saint Louis Zoo

We're America's Top Free Attraction!

2016 was an extraordinary year by any measure. But for the Saint Louis Zoo, 2016 will be remembered as the year the Zoo was voted as America's Top Free Attraction by *USA Today's* 10Best Readers' Choice Awards Program. Our Zoo was the only zoo selected for consideration when *USA Today* asked visitors to its website to help pick the 10 best free attractions from a list of 20 sites travel experts selected. The Zoo was selected over Central Park in New York City, Balboa Park in San Diego and Millennium Park in Chicago. Votes for the Zoo were greater than those for the Alamo, the Golden Gate Bridge and the National Mall in Washington, D.C.



Polar bear Kali continues to draw crowds.

We believe this honor was a win for our donors and members and for residents and civic leaders of the entire St. Louis region who have long supported and appreciated St. Louis' world-class FREE zoo. Admission has been free at the Saint Louis Zoo since its founding in 1910 thanks to strong community support and since 1970, from the taxpayers of St. Louis City and St. Louis County. Our 2016 survey of residents showed that 75 percent of all survey respondents support keeping the Zoo admission free for all visitors.

75%

**75% of St. Louis area
residents support a free Zoo***

*2016 Community Study

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Media Bash Zoos

The year 2016 was also the year of Harambe—the gorilla shot at the Cincinnati Zoo after a child fell into his enclosure. The death of Harambe prompted pundits to pile on by second-guessing the zoo's decision to kill the gorilla to save the child. That led to yet another spate of criticism of zoos and their mission. No fewer than a dozen mainstream media outlets published stories questioning whether zoos should exist at all. It was as if the writers of these articles (none of them scientists or conservationists) were in a time warp that took them back decades when the focus of zoos was purely entertainment, rather than education.

Nowhere in the coverage was there any suggestion on how to stop what many have dubbed the 6th extinction—the massive loss of species across the globe. About 41 percent of all amphibian species and 26 percent of all mammals are now threatened with extinction. At least half of the world's primates—our closest relatives—teeter on the edge of existence. We face the loss of one in eight of all bird species. Overall, the extinction rate has increased a hundred-fold over the last century, and today we estimate that over 18,000 species face oblivion. The Saint Louis Zoo with its many conservation partners, is doing its part through the WildCare Institute.

Devils Today, Grizzlies Tomorrow



Tasmanian devil

In 2016, the Tasmanian Devil Den opened in the Emerson Children's Zoo, welcoming two female devils, Yindi and Jannali, both age 2. With their species almost wiped out by a rare cancer called devil facial tumor disease, these young ambassadors came to St. Louis all the way from



Visitors learn about Tasmanian devils in the Emerson Children's Zoo.

Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo, Australia.

The survival of Tasmanian devils is a wonderful conservation story that began with the Australian government stepping in to protect the species and breed a healthy assurance population, including the ambassador animals sent to six U.S. zoos.

Speaking of new exhibits, in September, ZooMontana became the temporary home to two wild orphaned grizzly bear sibling cubs. The wild grizzly bear cubs that are slated to come to the Zoo in 2017 now have names! Huckleberry (Huck) is the male bear choice while the female bear is named Finley. ZooMontana is caring for the cubs until our new Grizzly Ridge habitat opens in September 2017.

The opening of Grizzly Ridge will mark the complete reconstruction of the Zoo's historic 1920s-era bear grottos. When Grizzly Ridge opens, visitors will be able to watch the bears up close through gigantic glass viewing windows.



These sibling wild grizzly cubs will come to St. Louis this fall.

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CLOCKWISE: leaf turtle, gecko, mountain nyala, tawny frogmouth chick, addax, hellbender, tawny frogmouth juvenile, king penguin, red-legged seriema, red mountain racer, horned guan, Edwards's pheasant and addra gazelle.

Chicks, Calves, a Joey and More!

In addition to anticipating grizzly bears and welcoming Tasmanian devils, we celebrated more than 1,200 animal births in 2016. One female and one male red kangaroo joey emerged from the pouch in October. A male black and white colobus monkey was born at the Zoo's Primate House in January.

Red Rocks remained baby boom central with the births of 22 animals from eight different species—all recommended by the Species Survival Plans that manage these species. They included Speke's gazelle, Grevy's zebra, lowland nyala, addax and addra gazelle. The Zoo's Bird Department again had a feather-filled

year. A king penguin and king vulture chick hatched as did a horned guan and chicks from multiple other species.

From Tahiti to Missouri

2016 marked some successes in our efforts to save wild things and wild places. For the second consecutive year, our Zoo played a role in a program that is succeeding not only in saving the Partula snail but also in returning the species to its native French Polynesia. In 2016, through an international coalition of zoos and conservation organizations, the Partula snail was reintroduced for the second consecutive year in Tahiti—of the 870 Partulas returned to the wild, 630 were from St. Louis.

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The scimitar-horned oryx has now returned to Chad thanks to a coalition of conservation organizations and government agencies.

We're also especially proud of the role our Zoo played in reintroducing two dozen scimitar-horned oryx. Long extinct in the wild, a captive-bred herd of scimitar-horned oryx are back roaming the grasslands of Chad, Central Africa. This reintroduction happened thanks to a project of the Chadian Government and Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi. The Sahara Conservation Fund, which the Saint Louis Zoo helped create and strongly supports, played a key role. So far, 23 of the rare species of antelope have been released, with releases of a minimum of 50 more planned for 2017.



Reintroduction of American burying beetles yielded an eight-fold increase.

We are returning animals to the wild much closer to home. For the sixth year, the Zoo successfully reproduced Ozark hellbenders. The Zoo, in partnership with others, has participated in three releases, bringing the total to 3,383 juvenile Ozark hellbenders reared (or head-started) at our

Zoo and released to augment remaining populations in four different river systems.

An eight-fold increase in American burying beetles was found in traps placed by the Zoo during a recent census of beetles in Southwest Missouri. The Zoo and its partners have reintroduced the beetles for the past five years through the WildCare Institute Center dedicated to the species. The American burying beetle is the first endangered species to be re-introduced to the state of Missouri, where by the 1970s it had disappeared. We moved from finding only a few beetles in the early years to finding 110 in 2015 and 850 in 2016!

People Matter

After all this talk of animal and habitat conservation, you may be wondering about the folks behind the scenes, educating thousands, doing critical research, providing medical care to animals and keeping everything running smoothly. Here's a brief rundown of their 2016 numbers:

- 4,800 Education Department programs for more than 800,000 people generated nearly \$1.8 million in earned and contributed revenue. The Zoo

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The flora at the Zoo make watching the fauna even more appealing.



Veterinary staff examine a hellbender.

welcomed 1,500 school trips, educating more than 100,000 children and their teachers.

- 2,200 Zoo volunteers helped coordinate events and handle a number of other tasks, contributing over 100,000 hours for a value of more than \$2.3 million. In addition, docents, offering interpretation and connecting with visitors, contributed nearly 26,000 hours valued at \$600,000.
- Revenue from visitor spending (food, beverages, purchases at our retail operations, parking and attractions) was up 2.25 percent over 2015 while attendance was down by 2 percent over 2015 numbers.
- We hosted special events on 120 days, including A Zoo Ado presented by Wells Fargo Advisors, which brought in over \$564,000. The 2016 U.S. Bank Wild Lights attracted 53,000 guests. Attendance and revenues for Boo at the Zoo presented by SSM Health Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital set records: \$617,000 in revenue and 44,000 guests.

Then there were the folks who took good care of the animals or who made everything look good.

- Facilities Management completed more than 6,200 work orders, and the Grounds staff continued to get top marks from our visitors for keeping the flora healthy and beautiful.

- The Zoo's veterinary staff recorded more than 8,500 medical cases, and Zoo vets offered their expertise at presentations around the nation and world.

Thanks to our amazingly generous donors, the Zoo reported a great year for contributions in 2016:

- Gifts and commitments of approximately \$11 million were secured through the Marlin Perkins Society, Partnership Marketing sponsorships and major and planned gifts.



Conservationists Mrs. Patricia G. Hecker and her late husband Harvard K. Hecker visited Africa more than 10 times.

- The Zoo's endowment continued to grow with assets totaling \$56.1 million by year-end, including a \$750,000 commitment to create the Harvard K. Hecker African Wildlife Conservation Fund.

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Marlin Perkins.

- We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Marlin Perkins Society, formed in honor of one of our Zoo's great former directors as a way to recognize those who generously support the Zoo with an annual gift of \$1,000 or more. The Society began with 48 members. Today, we have 1,127 members. Since 1991, the Marlin Perkins Society has generated nearly \$24 million for Zoo operations. The Silver Anniversary Challenge to mark the Society's anniversary was met with great generosity.
- We had nearly 48,000 Zoo members by year-end, up 6 percent over the five-year average.

Phase 1 Completed

There have been many accounts in the press about potential plans for the 13.5-acre site that housed the former Forest Park Hospital. This site was purchased by the Zoo Association in 2012. It was a bargain and a unique opportunity that certainly offered options otherwise not available for expansion of our campus.

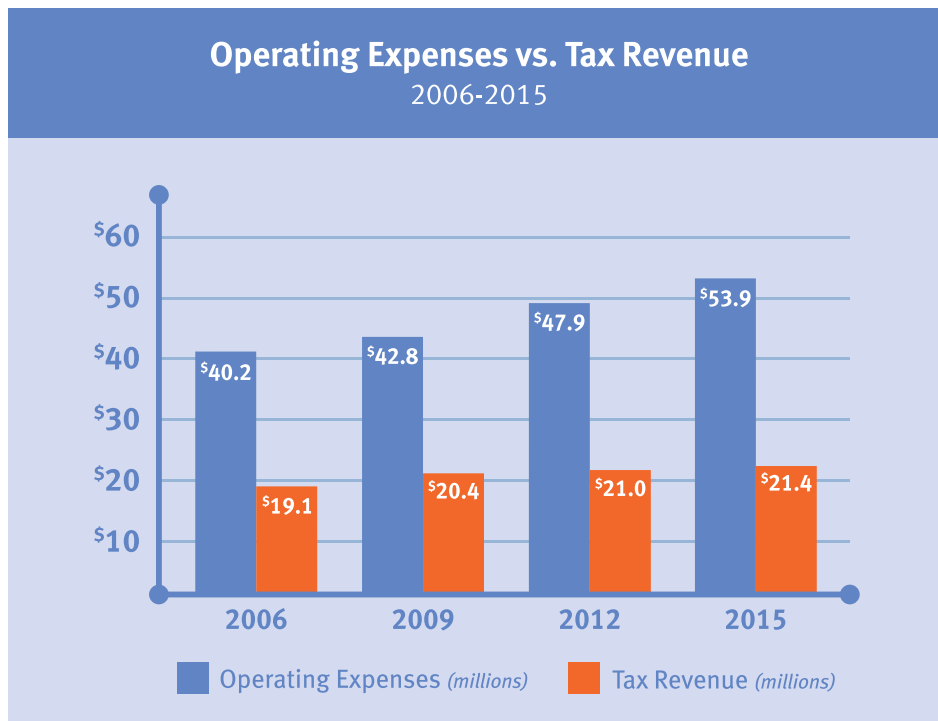
The former hospital building was demolished in 2014. The area was turned into green space; the parking garage and surface parking lots were upgraded. Responsible leadership required us to investigate a number of long-range planning options—options that will not become reality for many years. Which plans are ultimately realized will depend on the Zoo's strategic needs, funding and public discussion.

Any significant development of the former hospital site may be years away. In the meantime, we have completed Phase I of the site's development, creating additional parking and preserving and maintaining the area as green space for the use of its residents in the Dogtown neighborhood and the wider community. This fall, we began planting an additional 50 trees as well as enhanced landscaping.



Artist rendering of expansion site with 50 trees added.

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Big Challenges Call For Smart Solutions

Since 2006, our expenses have risen 35 percent, while tax revenues have remained flat. We realize you can't continue to have a world-class, 21st century zoo with an early 20th century infrastructure. We have continued to discuss our needs with the region's community leaders.

After a century of serving visitors and animals, our Zoo is showing its age. Nearly \$8.5 million in infrastructure improvements are needed in 2017, yet only \$2 million can be accommodated in the budget. We know \$8.5 million is only a fraction of what we need to upgrade our campus and have launched a detailed study that will prioritize and document our infrastructure needs. Despite the fact that our donors are extraordinarily

generous in supporting capital projects and Zoo operations, our infrastructure and conservation breeding needs are so great that we need to explore all funding options. For that reason, the Zoo is seeking increased public support from the entire region, and research shows that voters across multiple Missouri counties would back that.

The Zoo's infrastructure replacement needs range from crumbling rockwork to rusty pipes.



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The Zoo provides a vital connection to the world of wildlife and the environment for people of all ages.

A Local Treasure, A National Favorite

All of this is only possible because of the support of our wonderful philanthropic community; the taxpayers of St. Louis City and St. Louis County; our visitors; public officials and community leaders from across the region and state; our Subdistrict Chairman Jerry Kent; our Association Board President Matt Geekie; and board members, commissioners, volunteers, staff and each of you.

Clearly, St. Louis area residents love their Zoo—often called “A Local Treasure.” In 2016, we discovered that love extends well beyond St. Louis—we have become “A National Favorite”—known across the nation as America’s Top Free Attraction.

In 2017, we will continue our discussions with community leaders in the St. Louis region to create a sustainable plan for responsible long-term maintenance of the Zoo. With this support, the Zoo can continue to provide the same world-class experience for the next 100 years—and remain America’s Top Free Attraction. Thank you for all you do to make to our Zoo a great place and for keeping it accessible and forever free.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JPB".

Jeffrey P. Bonner, Ph.D.
Dana Brown President & CEO