



MINUTES

BOARD OF ZOO COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

TUESDAY, October 15, 2024 – 10:00 AM

Los Angeles Zoo
Grand Room
5333 Zoo Drive
Los Angeles, Ca 90027

“Creating a just and sustainable world where people and wildlife, thrive, together.”

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Karen Bass
Mayor

Nithya Raman
Council Member
4th District

Zoo Commissioners

Karen B. Winnick
President

Bernardo Silva
Vice President

Justin Mikita

Daryl Smith

Elnie Vannatim

Richard Lichtenstein
Ex Officio Member

Denise M. Verret
Chief Executive Officer
& Zoo Director

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Winnick
Bernardo Silva
Daryl Smith
Justin Mikita

VISITORS

None signed in

EX OFFICIO MEMBER PRESENT

Richard Lichtenstein

COMMISSION STAFF

Denise Verret
Cristina Flores

MEDIA

None signed in

ZOO GENERAL COUNSEL

Steve Houchin

AGENDA ITEM 1

CALL TO ORDER

Commission President Winnick called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

AGENDA ITEM 2

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR MEETING OF September 10, 2024

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Smith so moved, Vice President Silva seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

AGENDA ITEM 3

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No Comments

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

No Comments

AGENDA ITEM 4

2025 ANNUAL ZOO COMMISSION MEETING DATES

Commission President Winnick requested a Motion to approve the 2025 Annual Zoo Commission Dates. Vice President Silva so moved, Commissioner Smith seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.



AGENDA ITEM 5

PRESENTATION - MONTGOMERY KEEPER FIELD STUDIES PROGRAM – KIWI PARK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Animal Keeper, Kathryn Vincent gave the following presentation:

- Ms. Vincent discussed her time at Kiwi Park in Queenstown New Zealand working with over 20 endemic species of birds and reptiles.
- Their mission is to protect and restore native species, through managed conservation projects and education.
- Kiwi Park breeds and releases animals and is opened to the public as a wildlife center.
- All of the species kept at Kiwi Park are part of managed conservation programs through the New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC).
- Prior to human arrival in New Zealand, there were no land mammals which became devastating to the native species.
- Tuatara is an ancient lizard like species and one of the animals that was heavily impacted by mammals arrival on the species. DOC works closely with the Maori Iwi tribe when making decisions on conservation plans for the tuatara.
- DOC and the indigenous Maori Iwi tribe are careful in how they work with the tuatara species as they are considered the messengers of the god of death.
- Kea is the worlds only alpine parrot that is carnivorous and lives in snowy environments.
- In 1984 the Kea were granted an official protection; however, their population has dropped 80% since then.
- Kea were also impacted by mammalian predators as well as habitat loss, human conflict and lead poisoning.
- Ms. Vincent shared how she used her experience working with birds at the L.A. Zoo when she was tasked with providing enrichment for the Kea and species at Kiwi Park. The Kea were notoriously intelligent cheaters that amazingly worked together to cheat on the enrichment activity. She was however able to get them to focus on an activity for more than sixty seconds, which is a success for those birds.
- Kiwi Park had 12 kiwi with several breeding pairs. Some kiwi were in a very controlled nocturnal exhibit for the public to see.
- Kiwi have a 5% survival rate in the wild. An organization in New Zealand gathers kiwi eggs, cares for them while they hatch then releases them to help with population.
- Kiwi Park breeds kiwis to release in the wild
- Ms. Vincent helped with kiwi exhibit upkeep, part of which included turning leaves and sifting leaf litter. Kiwi are attracted to metal, so sifting the leaf litter was important to catch any possible metals that could be harmful to the kiwi.
- One of the struggles at Kiwi park were roaming house cats, however Ms. Vincent was able to introduce predator sprinklers which seemed likely to help them with this problem.
- On her visit Ms. Vincent was able to see what it looks like when a government works closely with the indigenous people in conservation efforts allowing her to see a bigger picture of conservation.

AGENDA ITEM 6

PRESENTATION – INTERNATIONAL TAPIR SYMPOSIUM & MOUNTAIN TAPIR SURVIVAL ALLIANCE

Director of Conservation, Dr. Jake Owens gave the following presentation:

- Dr. Owens discussed tapirs and there are four species ranging from the tropical Americas as well as Southeast Asia. Lowland, Malayan, Mountain and Bairds Tapirs.
- All species are threatened with extinction. Lowland tapirs are vulnerable with the largest population and the others are endangered with 2,500 or fewer individuals in the wild.
- L.A. Zoo is one of a few zoos that belongs to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) the organization where a lot of the conservation decisions are made, which has a tapir specialist group that Dr. Owens is a part of.
- The IUCN tapir specialist group (TSG) held the Tapir Symposium in Campo Grande, Brazil, where Dr. Owens and Dr. Powell attended and presented.
- Only four AZA Zoo's participated this symposium, National Zoo, Roger Williams Park, Smithsonian Zoo and the L.A. Zoo.
- Dr. Powell gave a talk at the symposium about Mountain Tapir health and work in the wild and in zoos in relation to the work she's been doing in Ecuador.
- The main goal of the TSG meeting was to generate the next species action plan for the Mountain tapirs. TSG was able to develop a 2024 – 27 Strategic Plan.
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- Dr. Owens discussed development of the Mountain Tapir Survival Alliance that was formed to have a group that is focused on Mountain Tapirs. This group will focus on developing a short-term high priority project in a specific location in Colombia that will demonstrate a potential success of this new Mountain Tapir Survival Alliance.
- Mountain Tapirs have three historic threats that decrease their population: habitat loss, mining and poaching.
- The L.A. Zoo has a long history with the International Tapir Symposium which started in former L.A. Zoo General Curator Mike Dee's name to get continued education and training in Mountain Tapir conservation after the Zoo was a co-sponsor in 2008. Dr. Powell has also worked with them in Ecuador with Smithsonian to track, anesthetize, collar and take samples through the TSG. Additionally, the L.A. Zoo is one of five Zoo's who have Tapirs.
- There are two main threats to the Mountain Tapirs in Colombia: one threat is domestic dogs going after tapirs in the protected areas that go out and injure the Tapirs. The second are screwworms and these worms get into an open wound, screw into the tissue developing infection which leads to sepsis.
- The TSG has developed the following goals to help with these threats:
 - Capture and relocate the dogs, which includes permits and finding a new location;
 - Develop resources and information for the treatment of tapirs because the government doesn't allow for them to be captive;
 - Community engagement and education about the threat of dogs in this extremely remote environment; and
 - Assess the current mutual threat of screwworms.
- Dr. Owens continues to get one to two reports of injuries by the domestic dogs, which include mothers with small children, motivating the efforts to address the dog crisis.

AGENDA ITEM 7
GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

a. Animal Updates

Beth Schaefer, Director of Animal Programs provided updates which included the following:

Sales/Loans

- Breeding pair of Jaguars coming from two different places. Male from Waco, Texas coming soon.
- Tamandua 1.0 going to the Dallas Zoo
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- Male Southern Cassowary is going back to its owner as it was not a good breeding pair
- New Mexico ridge nose rattle snake one of six was already gravid will be part of the reintroduction program.
- Cape thick knee chick is going to Zoo Atlanta
- 4 new Axolotl will be going into the new exhibit soon
- New invertebrate joining the LAIR exhibit, Sonoran giant centipede, Desert blond tarantula, Desert hair scorpion

b. GLAZA Updates

Dawn Petersen-Amend, GLAZA Interim President gave the following updates:

- Restricted Gifts raised in August came in at just under \$151,000
 - Nearly \$145,000 of which was for Conservation Grant program
 - The remainder raised was for the Duttonhaver field Conservation Program and the Conservation Strategic Plan
- Advancement team has raised 87.5% of the Zoo Directors' annual goal.
- Over \$27,000 has been raised for the Zoo Teen Council Youth Symposium.
- Membership revenue for the month of August came in at 99% of the budgeted amount
 - Member household count 37,646
- Fall acquisition has begun and continues through December 31st.
 - August was Member Appreciation Month offering a discount with an online discount code that generated 532 new memberships, generating over \$65,000 in revenue.
- Attendance for July was at 117% of budget and August was at 111%
- Admissions revenue came in at 110% of budget
- GLAZA revenue for August was at 85% of budget.
- Ms. Petersen-Amend also announced that the last two weeks of the month of October the Zoo will have Boo at Zoo Event.

c. Zoo Director Updates

- Third Cohort for the Zoo Teen Council for Conservation began on October 3rd
- Learning and Engagement team participated in the following events where they engaged nearly 2,000 members of the community.

- Central Ave Jazz Festival
- Jane Goodall Day Festival
- Los Angeles Public Library's Los Libros Event at Central Library
- Betty White Zoo Pals scholarship program kicked off the school year with visits to elementary schools for Kindergarten – 5th grade classrooms at Title 1 schools. The program includes classroom visit from a Zoo instructor, live streams, animal art and encouraging students to think like a scientist.
- The iconic L.A. Zoo sign was lit up in participation with the Los Angeles Civil Rights Department's award winning "L.A. for All" Campaign as part of the anti-hate campaign.
- The third annual Beloved Pets Ofrenda in partnership with Plaza de la Raza has launched and will run from October 5th through November 3rd.
- On September 30th City Council President Emeritus Paul Kerkorian, visited the Zoo to honor Docent Muriel Horacek, recognizing her 33 years of service. At 99 years young Muriel received a special recognition from the City of Los Angeles and a special Challenge coin from Councilmember Kerkorian.
- Mrs. Verret discussed attending the AZA conference where she was sworn in as the 100th Chair of the AZA Board where she hopes to advance inclusion among the profession as well as implementing the AZA strategic plan.
 - The Beloved Pets Ofrenda program was the recipient of the AZA 2024 Education Award for Innovation.
- Zoo Projects
 - Cape Vulture and Swan Lake are both waiting for permits from Building and Safety (BOE)
 - Repair design plans are expected to be received in about a week for Tree Tops. BOE has advised that it will be safe to open the Carousel safely and it is expected to be open in time for Zoo Lights.
- Mrs. Verret discussed the Request for Proposals (RFP) Process, noting that the current agreement with GLAZA expires June 30, 2025. The Zoo has released six RFP's to begin on July 1, 2025.

**AGENDA ITEM 8
OLD BUSINESS**

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no more business to come before the Commission, President Winnick requested a motion to adjourn the meeting; Commission Vice President Silva so moved and Commissioner Smith seconded; the motion passed by unanimous vote and the meeting was adjourned at 11:11 AM.

ATTEST:



PRESIDENT



SECRETARY