

TURTLE TALK

NEWSLETTER

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY, INC. • VOL. 33 NO. 1, FALL 2007



ZOO KEYS ARE BACK!



One of TBZ's original Zoo Keys, a cherished keepsake for many

Many visitors to Essex County Turtle Back Zoo are parents who are bringing their children to the zoo to experience the same sense of excitement they had as children when their parents brought them. Talking to some of them about their favorite memories brings out stories about the train, entering the turnstile to the sheep-and-goat exhibit and being greeted by a small herd of hungry animals running down the hill, the odd-looking yak—and the Story Boxes and Zoo Keys. Many people still have these keys tucked away with other prized souvenirs.

Good news! The Zoo Keys and the Story Boxes are back! Unlike the old Story Boxes, which at times sounded like old radios, the new Story Boxes contain wireless technology, and each provides two different messages depending on how the key is inserted. One side plays a jingle about the animal, and the other side contains a brief description of the animal and some key conservation facts.

The first fourteen Story Boxes are installed in front of some of the most popular animal exhibits, including the alligator, penguins, bears, bison, wolves, red panda, toucan, llamas, zoo farm, kangaroos, otter, bobcat, and cougar. Because the system is wireless, additional boxes can be added at a later date.

Zoo Keys are available from the cashiers as well as from Jim “the TBZ Bag Man” Garahan, who can usually be found sitting just inside the entrance to the zoo. Stop by his table—not only can you purchase a Zoo Key, TBZ magnet, and one of Jim’s famous \$2 surprise bags, but Jim would be happy to tell you some tales about the “good ole days” at the zoo.

The Zoo Keys cost \$3.00 each and are operational for one year. However, all keys bought in 2007 will be operative through December 31, 2008.



TBZ's new Zoo Key unlocks the ultimate TBZ experience!

PHOTOS BY JEREMY GOODMAN

Commerce Bank Sponsors TBZ Story Boxes

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo would like to thank Commerce Bank for its sponsorship of the Story Boxes program. As part of a multi-year deal, Commerce Bank will contribute a total of \$45,000 to support the Story Boxes. In addition, the bank will help promote Turtle Back Zoo in its Essex County branches. Commenting on the bank's sponsorship, Commerce Bank Central New Jersey Market Manager D. Nick Miceli said, “Commerce is committed to providing those we serve with the tools and resources to help communities and people thrive. We are proud to partner with the zoo to access the technology that will help children learn and grow.”

A staunch commitment to active involvement in the local community is a vital element of the Commerce philosophy. Commerce Bank's overall Corporate Giving Program has contributed more than \$56 million to nonprofit organizations, helping improve the quality of life of the people living in the communities served by the bank. Commerce Bank provides financial and other support to educational, community, human service, arts, and health-related programs, many of which focus on improving the welfare of children and families.



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PUBLICATION STAFF

Andrea Curley • Bernadette Farley
Dr. Jeremy Goodman • Patricia Murphy
Editorial Staff

Carole Michales, XCR Design, Caldwell
Graphic Design

Harmar Associates, Upper Saddle River
Printing

Tracey Baylin • Andrea Curley
Bernadette Farley • Dr. Jeremy Goodman
Patricia Murphy • Evelyn Neunteufel
Contributors

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The Zoological Society of New Jersey, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation, organized under the laws of the State of New Jersey. Its purpose is to promote the general welfare of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, a facility of the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs; to stimulate the public's interest in the growth, improvement, and development of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo through education and research with an emphasis on natural conservation of all species of animals; to support and sponsor fund-raising events to help in the financing of new facilities, purchase of equipment, and acquisition of animals; to encourage membership in the Society by persons interested in the promotion of the physical and aesthetic qualities of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo; and to stimulate the public interest in the development and enjoyment of Essex County Turtle Back Zoo and of animals everywhere. Membership, which includes a subscription to Turtle Talk Newsletter, is open to all interested persons for a yearly fee. For information, call (973) 731-5800 ext. 241 or write to the Zoological Society of New Jersey, 560 Northfield Ave., West Orange, NJ 07052.

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Jason examines the skull of a large catfish eaten by a crocodile.

Turtle Back Zoo Takes Its Show on the Road . . .

And this time the destination was not a local classroom; it was Botswana, Africa. As part of the zoo's commitment to conservation and research, Jason Fantuzzi, one of the zoo's reptile keepers, spent two weeks in the field helping researchers study the Nile crocodiles of the Okavango delta region. The expedition, which was fully funded by a grant from the Goldring Foundation, is part of a continuing study supported by the Earthwatch Institute.

Preparation for the trip began months in advance in order to secure a passport, receive vaccinations for diseases common in Africa, obtain anti-malarial medication, and arrange for flights and hotel stays. After a grueling 18.5-hour flight into Johannesburg, South Africa, Jason had less than 24 hours to catch his breath and hop another flight to Botswana. This flight was quite different from the previous one, which occurred in a jumbo jetliner. This time the 1.5-hour flight was in a small prop plane that sat six people and landed on a small runway in Botswana.

After settling in at the base camp, Jason and the others on the expedition were given an orientation by chief researcher Kevin Wallace. As a seasoned veteran keeper and skilled herpetologist who is accustomed to hard work and field conditions, Jason immediately seized the opportunity to contribute to the team with skills and knowledge that he had acquired at Turtle Back Zoo. With no fear of and a healthy respect for these magnificent Nile crocodiles, which can reach a length of 20 feet and a weight of up to 1 ton, Jason assisted with restraint, sample collections, and other invaluable data collection. The information gathered during this expedition will be used to further understand these amazing reptiles and to help provide the needed facts for conservation of these animals.

In the small amount of free time that was allotted to the team, Jason explored the region's other wildlife, observing the native snakes and lizards, as well as the other animals for which the area is known, including elephants, ostriches, zebras, and hippos.

Looking back on his experience, Jason says that he feels a sense of satisfaction that in two weeks he and his teammates were able to make a difference.

Most of the quarter million people who visit Essex County Turtle Back Zoo each year will never get the chance to take a trip like this one. By instilling a sense of awe and wonder in zoo guests, the animals at Turtle Back Zoo are truly goodwill ambassadors for their wild cousins and are playing a critical role in educating people about the plight that many animals are facing in the wild.



A juvenile Nile crocodile is restrained for data collection.

The Zoological Society and everyone at Turtle Back Zoo would like to thank the Goldring Foundation for its continued generous support of the zoo and of conservation projects around the globe.

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Membership in the Zoological Society entitles you to unlimited free admission to TBZ for one year from the month stamped on the membership card; free admission to all Night Moves; free admission to a number of participating zoos across the country; and a copy of the Society's newsletter, Turtle Talk. Memberships can be purchased at any time during the year, and there is a wide range from which to choose. Note that you must present your Zoological Society Membership Card **and an ID** to the cashier when visiting the zoo in order to be guaranteed free admittance. Membership cards are not transferrable, and there is a \$5 fee for replacing lost cards.



Meet TBZ's Red Panda

It's "panda"monium at the zoo with the arrival of Pemba, a rare red panda and the zoo's newest resident. Pemba comes to Turtle Back Zoo thanks to a recommendation from the red panda Species Survival Plan, or SSP. SSPs are managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and are designed to maintain a healthy sustainable population of some of the rarest animals on Earth. Pemba, a 7-year-old male, was born at the Knoxville Zoo in Tennessee and

Why not be among the first to adopt Pemba, TBZ's red panda?

came to Turtle Back Zoo from Zoo New England in Boston, Massachusetts, on a loan. Pemba can be seen daily in the new red panda habitat, which is the cornerstone of the zoo's developing Asian exhibits. Pandas like the cooler weather, so on hot days Pemba might be taking a nap in his air-conditioned panda palace or hiding in a cool log in his exhibit.

As is the case with all of the zoo's animals, you can "adopt" Pemba and help defray some of the costs of caring for him and the other animals at TBZ.

What Is a Red Panda?

by Evelyn Neunteufel

Scientists still haven't figured that out. This small, reddish-colored mammal has also been called a "firefox," "bear cat," "wha," and "lesser panda." Like its namesake, the giant panda, it lives in the Himalaya Mountains and eats bamboo. Is it related to the large black-and-white giant panda (making it the only other member of its family)?

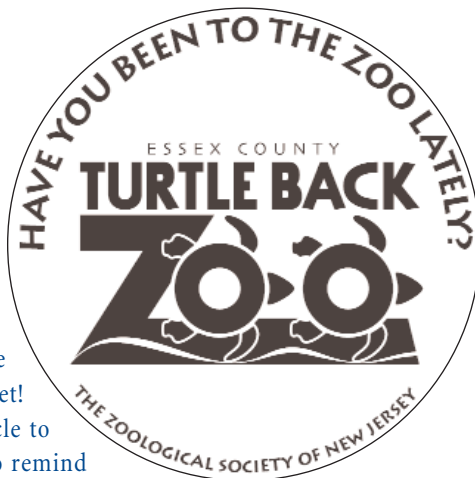
Or are both pandas, with their adorable round faces, close relatives of bears? Some scientists believe that the two pandas are not related at all. This excellent tree climber with the long and bushy ringed tail has even been placed in the raccoon family. Lately, many scientists believe the red panda should have its own family: *Ailuridae*. You'll want to see this new member of TBZ's animal family . . . and decide for yourself what this "wha" is. Besides, he's really cute!

Red Panda Fun Facts

- The red panda's entire body, even the soles of its feet, is covered with soft, dense, red and white fur. Its coloration helps the red panda blend in with the red moss and white lichens on trees in which it lives.
- Red pandas have scent glands on their feet and retractable claws; and some have "masks" like raccoons. They use their long, bushy tails to balance as they move through the trees.
- A red panda's preferred food is bamboo (but it will eat other plants and birds' eggs). However, it is very selective; it prefers the tender young leaves and shoots and must chew thoroughly to increase digestive efficiency.
- A small bony projection on each of its wrists helps a red panda grasp bamboo stalks. It has broad teeth and strong jaws since bamboo is difficult to eat.
- When not foraging for food, a red panda spends most of its time in trees—descending headfirst!
- The female panda will use a tree hollow, branch fork, tree root, or rock crevice for a maternal den, lining it with branches, leaves, and moss. Red pandas reproduce in the late spring and summer—when more new bamboo leaves are available—and average just two cubs. Females give birth after 135 days, which is a very long gestation period for animals of their small size. The young reach adult size in about 12 months.
- Red pandas are endangered because of habitat destruction and poaching. Today there are fewer than 2,500 mature animals in the wild.

Did You Get Your Zoo Magnet Yet?

What better way to show your support and help promote TBZ than to buy—and display—the Turtle Back Zoo magnet! Place it on your vehicle to show you care, and to remind members of your community about TBZ. The TBZ magnet costs just \$5.00, and all proceeds benefit Turtle Back Zoo. Get yours during your next visit to the zoo and help support—and promote—the zoo! They are on sale at the Zoological Society's window and from TBZ's "bag man," Jim Garahan.



Adopt a Bench

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo is a wonderful place for people of all ages to stroll through. Walking the hills of the zoo's 20 acres of landscaped habitats can sometimes be a bit tiring, however. This is why the Zoological Society has purchased new benches that have been placed throughout the zoo. What better way to honor a loved one or promote your business than with an engraved plaque mounted on one of these beautiful benches. Sponsorship of a 6-foot bench is only \$500, and a limited number of 10-foot benches are available for \$1,000. All sponsorships are tax-deductible and help further the improvement and development of Turtle Back Zoo. Please contact the Zoological Society office at 973 731-5800, ext. 241, for sponsorship opportunities.

The Zoological Society of N.J., Inc., is a corporation of the State of New Jersey Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue code. Information filed with the Attorney General concerning this charitable organization may be obtained from the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. **When making a donation or contribution, make checks payable to the Zoological Society of N.J., Inc., 560 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, NJ 07052.**

WALL OF TILES COMMEMORATIVE TILES—PHASE IV

Your support for Essex County Turtle Back Zoo should be set in stone. Purchase a terra-cotta tile in the Zoological Society's Wall of Tiles and your support of TBZ will be on public display for years to come.

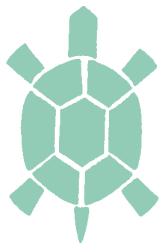
To participate, simply fill out this form and mail it along with your much-appreciated payment.

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT TURTLE BACK ZOO AND THE WALL OF TILES.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Telephone _____ Amount \$ _____

I would like to order:
 _____ 6x6" tile, 13 characters per line, 2 or 3 lines\$150.
 _____ 6x12" tile, 13 characters per line, 2 or 3 lines\$250.
 _____ 12x12" tile, 13 characters per line, 2 or 3 lines\$500.

Maximum of 13 characters per line *Spaces are considered a character.
 Make checks payable to: ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF N.J., INC.



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