HENRY VILAS ZOO®

A Part of You

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

OUR MISSION:
We're dedicated to exceptional animal care and conserving wildlife through local engagement and global partnerships.

OUR VISION:
Locally loved community treasure. Globally recognized conservation leaders. Forever accessible.

2021 was both a rewarding and challenging year for us. Like so many other organizations, we continued to face challenges from the pandemic, but found creative ways to reach new audiences and and inspire guests to learn more about the natural world around them. Our team made safety a priority and we did not have to close a single day of programming due to COVID. The challenges we faced made us more resilient.

Your support in 2021 made so much possible, from providing world class healthcare to our animals residents to raising much needed funds for cold-stunned sea turtles. This community has helped Henry Vilas Zoo thrive. Especially in these trying times, we appreciate the amazing support we received from our County Executive, the Dane County Board, and our incredibly supportive community. Thank you for all that you do for Henry Vilas Zoo!

Ronda Schwetz
Executive Director

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

$670,622
2021 Donations

725,000
2021 Attendance

1,567
Pounds of Cheese Curds Sold

$34,000
Amount raised for our Conservation Partners

110,282
Carousel Tokens & Punch Cards Sold

513 Number of Memberships

354 Number of Volunteers

10,397
Total Volunteer Hours Worked

2 Marriage Proposals at Zoo Lights

Red Panda
Most Popular Stuffed Animal

1,134
Number of Run Wild participants

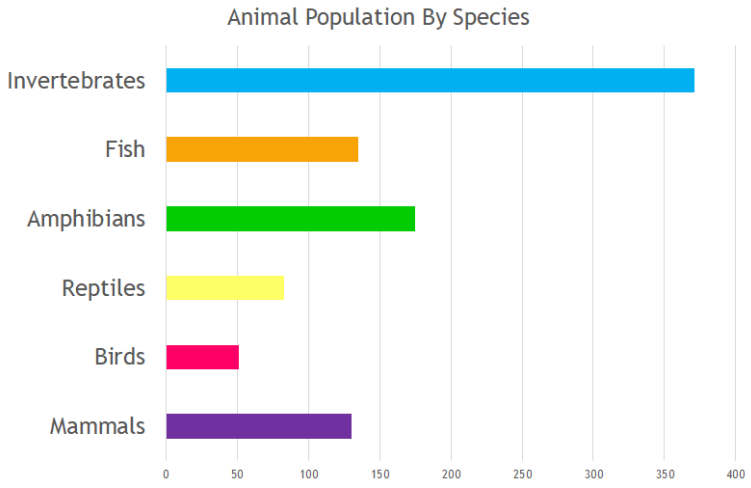
$2,744
Raised for Monarch SAFE from Run Wild

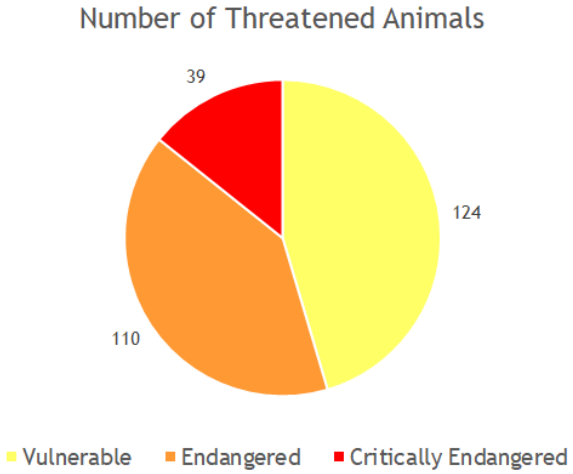
Species Survival Plan

38

Number of SSP's we participate in

Species Survival Plans (SSP) are cooperatively managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and AZA-accredited institutions. Each SSP program manages a specific animal population. SSP Programs are led by expert advisors who cooperatively work together to maximize genetic diversity and appropriately manage the demographic distribution and long-term sustainability of animal programs within AZA member institutions.





EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Conservation Education at Henry Vilas Zoo continued in 2021 with great resiliency, making lasting impacts on both individuals in our community and the field as a whole. Our team was able to introduce new programs in response to feedback from guests, including a popular Stroller Safari program and Trivia Night. We also continued to expand new and existing community connections, including weekly visits by the Bookmobile that welcomed more than 400 mobile library visitors throughout the summer.

This year we received the "Building Organizational Capacity to Foster Empathy for Wildlife" grant through the Woodland Park Zoo. Grant work began for this project in October 2021. The project has two phases, developing an interpretive master plan document and implementing that master plan with new interpretive media. This $250,000 grant will be used to improve our current signage. Having an Interpretive Master Plan will also serve us for many years to come as we update spaces and create new exhibits.

This year our Volunteer Programs were about renewal and recovery. We saw the return of many volunteers who had previously been on break due to the COVID pandemic - either by their own choosing or due to their role being on hold. Our Wildlife Champions (WC) saw substantial growth and development during the last year. We trained in 53 WC's (a 121% increase from 2020) who interacted with thousands of guests throughout the summer and fall. We also hosted 167 Gate Greeter volunteers who contributed almost a quarter of the total volunteer hours for the year.

We are proud of everything we accomplished this year and look forward to 2022, knowing we have the structures in place to succeed again.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In person events continued to be a challenge in 2021, but we were able to expand our social media presence and come up with unique ways to reach new audiences. We held two on-grounds COVID vaccine clinics, which administered over 250 vaccinations. We modified our birthday parties and corporate rentals to ensure we met all COVID safety protocols and held 25 on-ground events during our summer rental period. We are excited to expand our rental options in 2022.

2021 was our busiest year for Behind the Scenes Tours. We ran 146 tours from May to November which generated $28,900. In addition, the program helped contribute almost $2,800 to our conservations partners and over $2,000 to our Browse Program. Our virtual programs continued to be successful, reaching over 2,175 people in 10 different states.

Our annual Run Wild event was able to be held in person after going virtual in 2020. We had a record number of participants who ran or walked and were able to raise over $2,700 for pollinator conservation.

We ended the year with our most successful Zoo Lights event ever, welcoming over 45,000 visitors and generating over $400,000 in revenue. We were able to successfully utilize timed-ticketing for this event, which will give us greater flexibility with on grounds events moving forward.

7,810,965

Facebook page reach

Up 114%

331,267

Instagram reach

Up 18%

HENRY VILAS ZOO

RUN WILD 2021

ANIMAL UPDATES

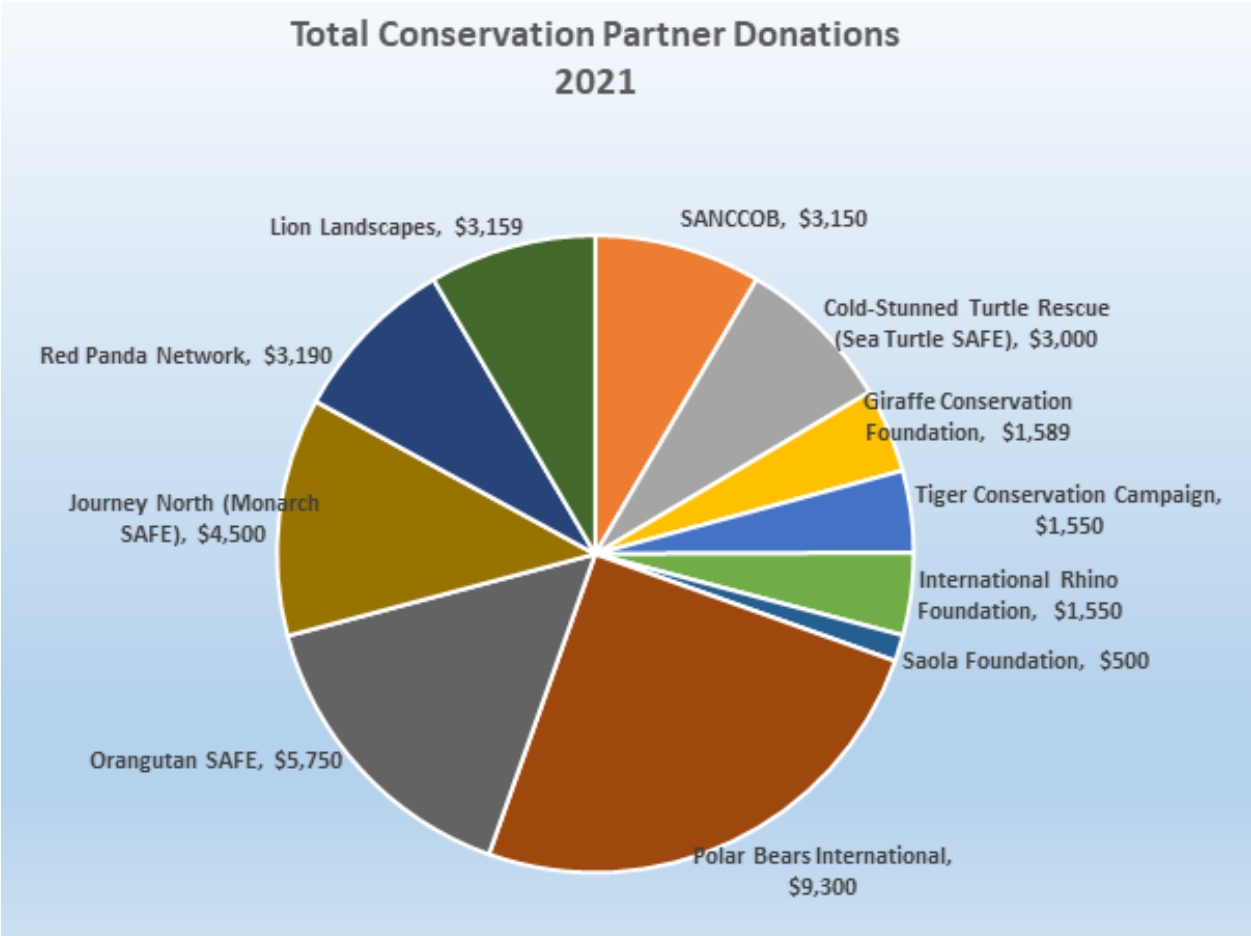
In February, we welcomed three North American river otters. The pups, two males and one female, were born on February 15 to first time parents, Elva and Dragonroll. Named Lily, Montello, and Fisher, the pups were named after rivers in Wisconsin. This breeding was recommended by the North American River Otter SSP and the pups have grown so quickly, they now outweigh their mom! 2022 will likely be a time they move to new facilities to start their own families but they have been great additions to our otter exhibit.

Since the spring of 2019, we have partnered with the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine. This partnership helped us though a challenging year. From COVID vaccines to animal transfers, births, and geriatric animal care plans, our vet program reached new heights in animal welfare.

Our talented and dedicated animal care team took extra precautions to protect our animals and worked with them on training that allowed them to participate in their own healthcare. Through training, our Bactrian camel participated in voluntary x-rays for the first time this year!

We were also able to vaccinate almost all of our COVID-susceptible species like primates, big cats, badgers and skunks. Over half of the vaccines were given through voluntary participation in behavioral husbandry training. We partnered with Zoetis, the world's largest producer of medicine and vaccinations for animals, and received all of our animal COVID vaccines for free.

CONSERVATION



American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) Badger Chapter

The Badger Chapter of AAZK was founded in 2019 and is comprised of keepers from Henry Vilas Zoo, Ochsner Park Zoo, and the Makenzie Wildlife Center. In 2021 they raised $2,663 for wildlife conservation.

CONSERVATION PARTNERS

OPERATIONS

In April we installed a new otter filtration system. The new system will improve water quality for the otter exhibit space in our Aviary. We also continued our partnership with Dane County arborists to bring tree enrichment to the zoo for our big cats, polar bears, bison, North American porcupines, and rhinoceros.

This year we also brought back birthday parties and corporate event rentals for the first time since 2019. Between May and October we hosted 25 rentals on grounds generating over $25,000 and are excited to expand our rental offerings even more in 2022.

Our Deputy Zoo Director, Joseph Darcangelo, became an official AZA-inspector in 2021. Inspectors play a critical role in the accreditation process. AZA Inspectors make recommendations to the Accreditation Commission and provide an institution with a clear outline of items that must be successfully addressed before accreditation can be considered.

In spite of all the challenges we faced in 2021, there were many bright spots throughout the year and we are proud of the work we accomplished. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue our mission to inspire visitors to conserve and protect our natural world and we will continue to strive to provide a safe and accessible place for everyone.