OUR

ZOO

CHESTER ZOO

Exclusive member news, videos, games and behind the scenes from our global conservation work.

START EXPLORING >

Highlights

Step into autumn with us here **at the zoo** as we give you the **latest insider look** at the preparations were making ahead of the **grand opening** of one of our biggest ever developments **Heart of Africa.** Plus, we take you behind the scenes to meet the tiny, treasured species that we're **bringing back from the brink of extinction.**

WELCOME

As we step into autumn we've got even more news to share about Heart of Africa.

CONTINUE READING

A TALL ORDER

How we'll be moving the giraffe herd to their new home in Heart of Africa.

CONTINUE READING

FUN & GAMES

PLAY GAME

TURNING HEADS

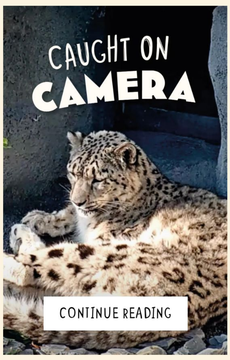
Meet the spectacular hornbill birds on your next visit to the zoo!

CONTINUE READING

REWILDING

Reintroducing the world's rarest animals to their native homes

CONTINUE READING



CAUGHT ON CAMERA

CONTINUE READING

BACK from the BRINK

Hatching a new generation of the rare Siamese crocodile

CONTINUE READING

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

CONTINUE READING

CHESTER ZOO

PRESENTS

ZOO TALES

PODCAST

LISTEN TO EPISODE 6 NOW

CONTINUE READING

We're rebranding!

Take a peek at our new look for Chester Zoo.

CONTINUE READING

CHESTER ZOO

As we STEP into AUTUMN here AT THE ZOO, we've got even more NEWS to share on the EXCITING SPECIES that are MAKING THE MOVE to join our BIGGEST ever development, HEART OF AFRICA.

FOREFRONT of GLOBAL CONSERVATION

We're also shining a spotlight on some of the smaller creatures we care for as a global conservation charity, from breeding some of the last remaining Desertas Island land snails, found off the Portuguese island of Madeira, to saving **the last surviving Bermuda skinks on the planet.**

Our teams have a huge amount of knowledge and show incredible dedication working with 'Cinderella' species – a term being used more and more in conservation to define beautiful but often overlooked and unheralded species. Much of this work goes on behind-the-scenes and we're delighted to be able to provide you with an insider insight in this issue.

As a conservation charity, Chester Zoo has a vital role to play in protecting species and all of this incredible work relies on the support of you, our valued members and wider visitors. The creation of new habitats and our 'always building' approach means you're never far away from a new experience at the zoo. With only around six months to go until we unveil our biggest-ever development, **Heart of Africa**, excitement is building behind the scenes!

Inside this issue, you can discover the plan to relocate our giraffes from the iconic Giraffe House to their new home in Heart of Africa, and the logistics that go into moving such a large species and settling the **herd into their new surroundings.**

EXCLUSIVE STORIES

As always, we have so much animal news to share with you, from our work out in the field boosting numbers of **Siamese crocodiles** to a feature on our **incredible resident hornbills** and their unique nesting rituals.

It may be getting chillier outside, but the zoo really comes into its own during the cooler months as we prepare for our **annual Halloween treats** and the build-up begins for our **Lanterns and Light spectacular with tickets on sale** ready to get you in the festive spirit.

We look forward to welcoming you for a new season of discovery and conservation!

"The creation of new habitats and our 'always building' approach means you're never far away from a new experience at the zoo."

Jamie Christon DL, CEO

START EXPLORING ›

CHESTER ZOO

A TALL ORDER

How we'll be moving the giraffe herd to their new home in Heart of Africa.

How do you move a herd of towering giraffes across a zoo? This is one of the most common questions we get asked about Heart of Africa. With the tallest among them standing at nearly 20-feet tall, moving eight Rothschild's giraffes across the zoo requires a lot of forward planning to make sure they all arrive happily and safely.

MOVING THE HERD

With the opening of Heart of Africa fast approaching, our herd of giraffes will soon be moving into their new home, and getting them from A to B is something we've been planning for months in advance. With so many hazards and tasty snacks to stop for around the zoo, moving the herd on foot simply isn't an option, so we'll be hiring a specialist trailer which is only available from one of only two companies in the whole of Europe that are up to this gigantic task.

MOVING DAY

1. On the day of the move, the **specialist trailer team** will join us at the zoo to ensure **everything runs smoothly.** Like all tricky journeys, we'll start with doing a practice run to find the **shortest route possible** and ensure we have the **best access to both giraffe houses.**

2. The plan is for the giraffes to be **moved two at a time** before **reuniting at Heart of Africa.** Edie may be moved with her mum, Orla, so the **feds safe and calm.** We plan to move our bull giraffe, Meru, on his own.

3. The order in which the giraffes will be moved is a decision that has been carefully thought out. Meru has a **low personality and spirited** so is sure that moving one of the more confident giraffes first will **help to calm and encourage** some of the less confident to follow suit. A couple of confident characters will also go last and stay with the others while they wait for their turn in the trailer.

Once the **GIRAFFES** arrive AT THEIR NEW HOME, they will be greeted with their FAMILIAR BRUNCH (lamps and branches) to feed on. Then **FOOD** is HUNG FROM THE ROOF so it sits around the head height of a giraffe, ready for them to **ENJOY!**

MEETING THE ZEBRAS

The giraffes will have some time to get used to their new home and settle in before the Grevy's zebras, one of Africa's most endangered large mammals, join them in Heart of Africa's new mixed paddock in 2025.

In recent years, the giraffes have not lived alongside other species, as our animal teams will be closely observing and monitoring how they are getting along as they share the space.

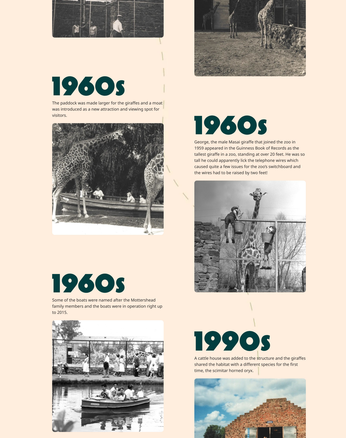
However, for a few of our giraffes, Meru, Dogmar, and Orla, this will not be their first experience living with other species, having mixed with other animals in their previous zoos. We anticipate that this may help them feel at home more quickly.

Everything will be done as gradually as possible, starting off with seeing and smelling their new neighbours through fences before fully mixing.

SHARING SKILLS

The close bond and trust that has been built with their keepers will be a constant for the giraffes throughout the moving process. Two of our assistant team managers have been across Europe to hone their skills and learn from other zoos on how we can best meet the needs of the giraffes in their new mixed environment.

The team has also travelled further afield to Uganda over the years, working in Kidepo National Park, researching and observing the magnificent species in their native home. The knowledge they gained, as well as the skills developed by other animals, has been an inspiration and source of knowledge for the creation of Heart of Africa's mixed savannah and providing the best care possible for the animals.



CELEBRATING the GIRAFFE HOUSE HISTORY

Since its historic **opening in 1952**, the giraffe house has seen a **total of 67 residents** and **celebrated 37 births,** including both giraffes and other animals such as camels who have called this **iconic building home.**

1951

The giraffe house was built in a rather unique way. The roof structure was built first and was then lifted by car jacks gradually as the walls could be built up underneath it.

1952

The grand opening to the public came a year later, with the giraffes settled into their new home and ready to meet visitors.

1960s

The paddock was made larger for the giraffes and a moat was introduced as a new attraction and viewing spot for visitors.

1960s

George, the male Masai giraffe that joined the zoo in 1963, was known for his long neck and tongue. He also tasted giraffe in a zoo, standing at over 20 feet. He was so tall he could apparently lick the telephone wires which caused quite a few issues for the zoo's switchboard and the wires had to be raised by two feet!

1960s

Some of the boats were named after the Mottershead family members and the boats were in operation right up to 2015.

1990s

A cattle house was added to the structure and the giraffes shared the habitat with a different species for the first time, the scimitar horned oryx.

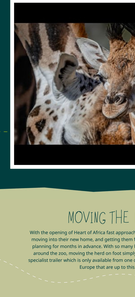
THE GIRAFFES' JOURNEY CONTINUES IN 2024...

The giraffes are moving **this autumn,** and Members will get **EXCLUSIVE EARLY ACCESS** to the **NEW giraffe habitat** in **Heart of Africa** next year! Keep an eye on your emails for further updates, more details to come!

A special thank you to our volunteer David Lomas for his dedicated help and contributions to this article, and to our volunteer archive team for their support.

NEW EXCITING SPECIES coming to HEART OF AFRICA in 2025!

MOZAMBIQUE GIRDLED LIZARD



On the other end of the size spectrum, another new resident to Heart of Africa will be the Mozambique girdled lizard, who will also be living in a new mixed habitat, joining the pancake tortoise and other animals, this little lizard's scientific name is *Smaug massamibicus*. The name *Smaug* comes from the dragon in the J.R.R Tolkien book 'The Hobbit' and although much smaller, their armour plated and spiny scales do look very dragon-like!

The reptile team has spent the last few years getting to know the species and learning from counterparts at Drayton Manor Zoo to help successfully take care of and breed the lizards.

Creating a rich and varied environment using rocks, branches and plants has been a key part of preparing the new habitat. There will also be plenty of different species of live food available for the lizards, each presenting different challenges, such as how to catch a cockroach or a waxy worm for their next meal.

PORCUPETTE TRIO

Back in June we also welcomed a trio of crested porcupettes (baby porcupines) that will be moving into Heart of Africa, alongside a range of other amazing rodent species. The two boys and a girl were born after we welcomed three adult porcupines to the zoo from London Zoo and Sigean, France. It wasn't long before keepers found the three babies during their morning check and they are currently being looked after behind the scenes before they are introduced to their new Heart of Africa habitat.

PORCUPETTES are **BORN PRECOCIAL** which means their EYES ARE **OPEN** and they are fully mobile. Their SIGNATURE QUILLS are ACTUALLY SOFT at **BIRTH** but quickly harden.

CELEBRATE the GIRAFFES MOVING to an INCREDIBLE **NEW** home with a GIRAFFE **ADOPTION.**

ADOPT NOW >

With the **much-anticipated** opening of **Heart of Africa set for 2025,** look out for more exciting news and updates on how our preparations are coming together in your next issue!

CHESTER ZOO

TURNING HEADS

Meet the spectacular hornbill birds on your next visit to the zoo!

Famed for their striking beaks and intriguing nesting habits, hornbills are a fascinating member of the bird family. At the zoo, there are four distinct species to look out for!

We have **FOUR** incredible striking **hornbill species** here at the zoo with a host of unique features that set them apart from one another!

- RHINOCEROS HORNBILL
- WRINKLED HORNBILL
- VISAYAN HORNBILL
- GREAT HORNBILL

NESTING TIME

Having wrinkled hornbills here at the zoo means we've been able to watch their fascinating nesting behaviours up close. During breeding season, the adults make a nest in the hollow of a large, old tree trunk. The female seals herself inside the nest as she raises the chicks, while the dad remains outside, finding and delivering food through a small hole for the whole family. Mum and her chicks completely rely on him to bring home food until they have developed their flight feathers and are ready to leave the nest several months later.

We have been keeping an eye on the current nest and, sadly, the female hasn't successfully laid eggs this time around. This can happen, but there are hopes she will return to nesting and lay eggs successfully in a few months.

The **FEMALE** will moult all of her flight feathers (WING AND TAIL) at once while INCUBATING HER EGGS.

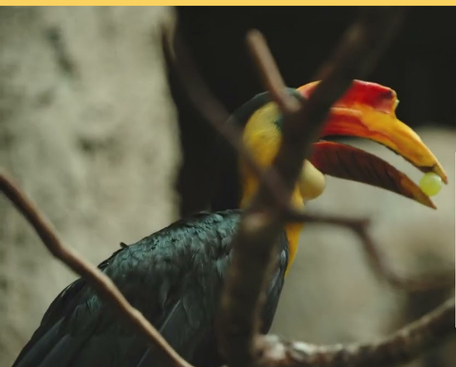
Under threat in much of their native tropical habitats across Africa and Asia, the trees and habitats that hornbills rely on for food and nesting are shrinking rapidly due to logging activity and the palm oil industry. Hunting is also a major threat, particularly for the helmeted hornbill, whose unique headgear is a solid, ivory-like block that can be carved into ornaments and jewellery.

The **MALE** can be very PROTECTIVE OF THE NEST and his partner which means our keepers wear AMERICAN FOOTBALL STYLE HELMETS for protection when coming close to the **NEST!**

IN THE FIELD...

Out in the degraded forests alongside the Kinabatangan River, Borneo, our teams have been working with several partner organisations for over a decade to help provide artificial nest boxes to support new generations of hornbills. Heavy timber logging and land clearance for agriculture between the 1950s and 1980s destroyed much of this 150-million-year-old forest, including many large trees with cavities perfect for hornbill nesting. Although the forest is growing back now, the trees are not yet large enough for hornbill nests.

Since 2013, our team has been helping to build artificial nests using plastic barrels and a range of other materials, in a trial-and-error process to see which environments the hornbills would find best to nest in. It was three years before one was first used, by a pair of rhinoceros hornbills.



Early Access Bird Photography Tour

Capture the wonder of Chester Zoo through a camera lens! Our Early Access Bird Experience allows you to take picture-perfect photographs, without the usual crowds. You'll have early, uninterrupted access to bird habitats across the zoo from 8:30am.

Includes zoo admission.
Maximum of 8 people.
Suitable for ages 12+
£70 per adult, £60 per child.

FIND OUT MORE ›

CHESTER ZOO

ZOO TALES

Discover the science and the stories behind the scenes and meet the conservationists working to save species from extinction, conservation and wildlife stories in a nutshell.

EPISODE 6

REVIVING RAINFORESTS IN BORNEO

WITH CAT BARTON & SIMON DOWELL

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 6

In our latest podcast, we turn our attention East, as we discover more about the rich rainforests of Borneo with our Science and Policy Director, Simon Dowell, and our Policy Lead, Cat Barton.

We'll be tackling questions like what makes Borneo's rainforests so special, why they're so good at 'nat for wildlife? What is Chester Zoo doing to help?

Let's dive in.

OUR HOSTS

ASH

Ashleigh Marshall is our Assistant Team Manager for Visitor Engagement, managing the Zoo Ranger team and ensuring there is a range of talks, activities and games for our visitors to get involved in. Ashleigh was previously a Zoo Ranger herself and has worked in conservation education in different UK zoos since 2014. She is passionate about science conservation and loves sharing the zoos amazing science stories with the world.

FRASER

Fraser Montgomerie is a Zoo Ranger at Chester Zoo, spending his days talking to visitors about all things animals and plants! From delivering animal talks and touch-table sessions, and running the bat and lemur walkthroughs, to running educational clubs for toddlers to teenagers. He has an immense love for dinosaurs, and in his spare time he enjoys walking his dog, watching films/TV, and playing video games.

EPISODE 5

STORIES FROM THE HEART OF AFRICA

WITH MIKE JORDAN

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 5

Our Director of Animals and Plants, Mike Jordan, joins us for the fifth episode of our Zoo Tales podcast.

Mike started as a zoologist at the University of London and around 1990 became involved in zoos through work with the EAZA, BIAZA and EAZA. He has worked in zoo management, education and conservation management & planning, specialising in small mammals and invertebrates.

From 2009 – 2015 he worked as senior conservation advisor to the South African government in zoos and game reserves, before returning to Chester Zoo in 2015 as the Director of Collections.

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EMMA

Emma Myers is one of our Zoo Rangers, engaging our visitors with the zoo's animal and plant collection through a range of talks and activities. Emma graduated from the University of Northampton and Roseshaeh College and also worked in Blackpool Zoo's education department before this. She has recently completed her MSc in Conservation Biology, and particularly enjoys talking to visitors about Chester Zoo's science and conservation work around the world.

EPISODE 4

PROTECTING LIVING DINOSAURS

WITH JONATHAN BELBY

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 4

Our Assistant Team Manager on the Bird Team, Jonathan Belby, joins us for the fourth episode of our Zoo Tales podcast.

It's been his days working with the array of feathered friends at Chester Zoo, but Jon is key to maintain naturalistic environments for these amazing animals and achieve breeding success... I have been fortunate to work for the zoo out in the field, but I'm also lucky to be a part of the conservation we are doing first hand for some of the most threatened birds on the planet".

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EPISODE 3

RESTORING OUR NATIVE SPECIES

WITH HELEN BRADSHAW

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 3

Our Job Task Programme Manager, Helen Bradshaw, joins us for the third episode of our Zoo Tales podcast. Helen oversees our zoo estate biodiversity delivery as well as our native species breeding and reintroduction work.

Combining her experience as a small authority planning ecologist and conservation volunteering work with bats and badgers Helen has been working in the Cheshire region for 20 years. She's also been a Chester Zoo volunteer for a year showing how maximising data informs habitat management.

Read more about HELEN >

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JANE

Jane is a Community Engagement Officer for our Networks for Nature project, which aims to help people and wildlife thrive together and make our outdoor spaces better for both. Prior to this role, Jane was a zoo ranger delivering informal education in the zoo. Jane has a MSc Animal Behaviour degree and a BSc Psychology degree, so working in zoo education suits all of Jane's interests - chatting to people about animals!

EPISODE 2

SECRET SOUNDSCAPES OF BIOACOUSTICS

WITH LEAH WILLIAMS

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 2

Lead Conservation Scientist, Dr Leah Williams, joins us for the second episode of our Zoo Tales podcast. We dive behind the scenes at the zoo as we discover all about the fascinating world of **[population biology](#)** and the secret soundscapes of **[bioacoustics](#)**.

Leah shares just how closely linked the work of zoos is to wild populations around the world, which we are working to protect for the future. So grab a brew and brush up your knowledge before your next trip to the zoo!

Read more about LEAH >

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EPISODE 1

Latin American ADVENTURE

WITH PAUL BAMFORD

ZOO TALES

EPISODE 1

Regional Field Programme Manager, Paul Bamford, will be taking us across the world to Latin America to discover more about the incredible wildlife that calls this region home for our first episode! In just seven years Lilli, Paul's family relocated to Chile and his fascination with wildlife and their impact we have on the natural world was sparked.

Out in the field, our conservation work is a huge part of the work we do and Paul shares with us some of the incredible projects we've been working on to protect the Andean bears and Chilean flamingos, and the amazing local organisations that help to make it all happen on the ground.

Read more about PAUL >

OUR HOSTS

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CHRIS

Chris Deputy, our previous Internal Communications Manager, here at Chester Zoo is a science communicator, was a lecturer at the University of Liverpool, a stand-up comedian, an events co-ordinator and PR officer at the BBC, and is the author of the book Preventing Extinction. He's also the host and is the biggest supporter of Chester Zoo's mission of preventing extinction.

CHESTER ZOO

BACK from the BRINK

Hatching a new generation of the rare Siamese crocodile

Watching a nest of eggs begin to hatch and a new generation of chirping Siamese crocodiles enter the world is an incredible sight, marking a new lease of life for this critically endangered species. Since joining the Siamese crocodile conservation partnership in 2022, we've been helping to successfully breed and release a new wild generation back into Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains.

The chirps you can hear in our egg hatching video might remind you of the birds in your own back garden. Baby crocodiles (hatchlings) use high pitched chirps, just like baby birds, to communicate with their mother and siblings from birth.

Going back half a million years, the rare Siamese crocodile would have been found in freshwater habitats across Southeast Asia. However, in the modern day, as few as 400 remain in a stronghold in Cambodia following decades of hunting for their prized skin and habitat loss from the expansion of farmland.

SACRED AND SECRETIVE SPECIES

Much hope was lost for these crocodiles as they had been eradicated from 99% of their native range, but conservation charity Fauna & Flora rediscovered the species back in 2000 and immediately set out a plan to safeguard the remaining population in Cambodia.

Working alongside The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, as well as the Ministry of Environment and other local partners, Fauna & Flora have established an ambitious conservation breeding programme to strengthen wild populations. The crocodiles are bred under human care and their offspring are released into remote sites around the Cardamom Mountains where they are protected by local communities.

SINCE **2012**, the programme has SUCCESSFULLY released **196 SIAMESE** crocodiles into safe areas in the CARDAMOM MOUNTAINS.

Siamese crocodiles aren't a threat to humans and mainly enjoy a diet of small animals including snakes, frogs and fish.

Secret behaviours – adults construct burrows but what these are used for remains a mystery to scientists!

The Indigenous population of Chorng people consider the Siamese crocodile to be sacred and have protected them for generations.

HATCHING SUCCESS

Since 2022, experts from Chester Zoo have been working in collaboration with the Siamese crocodile conservation partnership, and there have been some huge leaps in breeding success rates, with the survival rate of hatchlings boosted by over 500%!

Looking to the future, we hope to increase the size of the wild population in Cambodia by at least 150 by 2025, and ensure that protected sites are available to help the species to flourish.

Using our expertise in monitoring and scientific research, we will also be supporting the care and management of the crocodiles to better understand how they're behaving in the wild and to assess any trends that could impact further work to boost numbers in the region.

"This is **INCREDIBLE NEWS** for this CRITICALLY ENDANGERED CROCODILIAN and its recovery in the wild. It truly showcases FAUNA & FLORA'S long-term dedication to this species and the broader conservation project in collaboration with local partners. Everyone involved can take pride in knowing that our efforts are a CRUCIAL PART of a larger strategy to save this UNIQUE SPECIES from extinction in the **WILD**."

Iri Gill, Ectotherms General Manager, Chester Zoo

A NEW **HOPE**

Hope of a resurgence gathered momentum in May 2024, when a group of people living locally to the Cardamom Mountains discovered three nests in an area where crocodiles bred under human care have never been released before. This gives us great optimism that this is a key natural habitat for the species and that long-term protection efforts are allowing wild populations to start bouncing back.

SIXTY SIAMESE crocodiles, from FIVE SEPARATE NESTS, have now **SUCCESSFULLY** hatched in Cambodia's CARDAMOM NATIONAL PARK – the **LARGEST** record of this species breeding IN THE WILD THIS CENTURY!

Slow and steady wins the race when it comes to reintroducing a species like the Siamese crocodile, but as Iri says: "They're very resilient animals. If you give them the right protection, they will bounce back."

With the largest ever release of 50 Siamese crocodiles into the Cardamom Mountains this spring, the next decade will be a crucial time for us to understand how likely the wild population is to boost biodiversity and keep the wild world of the Siamese crocodile alive and thriving!

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Discover all the ways you can do your bit to help prevent extinction >

CHESTER ZOO

If you enjoyed the quizzes and games in our previous issues, we're sure you'll love the new ones we've created for the kids among you and the big kids too!

Start by enjoying our classic puzzle game along with previous games and then download one of the wallpapers for your desktop or mobile.

PLAY MORE GAMES

PLAY GAME ›

PLAY GAME ›

PLAY GAME ›

Download Wallpapers
for desktop & mobile

SIAMESE CROCODILES

DESKTOP
MOBILE

GREAT HORNBILL

DESKTOP
MOBILE

GREAT HORNBILL

DESKTOP
MOBILE

TUATARA

DESKTOP
MOBILE

GIRAFFES

DESKTOP
MOBILE

SIAMESE CROCODILE

DESKTOP
MOBILE

ZEBRA

DESKTOP
MOBILE

GIRAFFE

DESKTOP
MOBILE

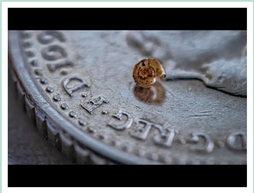
REWILDING

Reintroducing the world's rarest animals to their native homes

From tiny snails to large African antelope, our dedicated team are world-renowned for saving some of the planet's rarest and most endangered species through expert breeding and release projects.

With many wild animals on the brink of extinction and natural habitats being increasingly converted to farmland and for human development, the relationship between zoos and the wild world beyond is more important than ever when it comes to reintroducing threatened species to their native homes.

We've led the way on one of the biggest wildlife re-introductions ever recorded. The greater Bermuda land snail was thought to be extinct in the wild for 15 years. However, after 100,000 were carefully bred at the zoo and reintroduced back to their native homes across the Atlantic Ocean, they're now thriving. Discover more about how we've brought this miniature marvel back from of extinction.



FROM HUNDREDS TO THOUSANDS...

After the success of the greater Bermuda snail re-introduction, we've turned our attention and expert skills to two species of Desertas Island land snails. Thought to be extinct for over a century, this species was rediscovered by experts at the Instituto das Florestas e Conservação da Natureza (IFCN), on an isolated island in the Madeira Archipelago in the North Atlantic Ocean. With fewer than 300 snails found – believed to be the very last of their kind on the planet – work began on collecting enough individuals to start a breeding programme.

Bringing together our own snail experts and working in collaboration with Bristol Zoological Society and Zoo Parc de Beauval, the snails are now part of a unique conservation recovery plan supported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) through Rewild. Both species of snail (Discula lyelliana and Geomitra grabhami) are also now listed as critically endangered by the IUCN.

Starting with the creation of special breeding centres which closely replicate the perfect conditions for the snails to reproduce and thrive, we have already made significant breakthroughs, successfully breeding both species of snail for the first time ever in human care.

We NOW have more than 1,200 TINY SNAILS under our expert TEAM'S WATCH!

"Starting with just 20 of the last known individuals on the planet from each group, there was a lot of pressure to find answers quickly, but with the technical knowledge, scientific underpinning and the skills developed here at the zoo with other highly endangered invertebrates, our team was able to develop the ideal breeding conditions."

Dr Gerardo Garcia, Head of Ectotherms, Chester Zoo

The Desertas Islands are now protected nature reserves under Portuguese and European law, with recognition of their key role in supporting rare invertebrates, birds and reptiles. The snails' main threats in their native habitat are invasive mice and goat species which were introduced by human settlers that sadly destroy habitats that the snails need to survive.

With work to restore and protect their habitat underway, the snails will be reintroduced to new locations in the region – some of the surrounding islands have been left untouched and are free from predators, making a perfect sanctuary for the new inhabitants!

SKINKS

Another small but vital species that our reptile team is working with, here and in the wild, is the Bermudian skink, an extremely rare species of lizard. Often known as rock lizards back in their native home, they are a much-loved cultural icon and play a key part in the ecosystem.

For more than 20 years they have been listed as critically endangered by the IUCN. After living on the Oceanic islands of Bermuda for more than 400,000 years, the species had nearly been wiped out over the last 50 years due to deforestation and the introduction of predatory cats, rats and herons.

Some of the skinks were brought to the UK back in 2013, where we have spent over a decade learning all about the elusive reptiles and how we could breed them at the zoo for the first time ever outside Bermuda.

Once we had learned about their behaviour, environment and life cycles, we were excitingly able to "supercharge" breeding efforts, successfully hatching a new generation of skinks to make their way back to the wild. The release of the skinks in Bermuda is part of important trial releases which help the team learn how the skinks disperse and use their wild habitat. The team can then apply learnings from the trial releases for eventual reintroductions to Bermuda.

"The team here at **CHESTER** has not only PREVENTED THE SPECIES from vanishing altogether, but has also added VALUABLE SCIENTIFIC INSIGHT into the lives of **SKINKS** that were previously unknown, which will now be used to **CONSERVE** many other similar SPECIES AROUND THE WORLD"

Mike Jordan, Director of Animals and Plants, Chester Zoo

These successful projects wouldn't have been possible without working with local partners. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources of Bermuda played a vital role in our work with Bermuda skinks and greater Bermuda snails. Likewise, the trial releases on Trunk Island were greatly supported by the Bermuda Zoological Society.

FUTURE PLANS

It's not just reptiles and invertebrates that we are working hard to reintroduce to their native habitat. As biodiversity continues to be lost at a rapid pace out in the wild, the role of zoos like ours, and the research and expertise we can bring to help save some on the world's most threatened species, plays a vital role in preventing extinction in the future.

We're currently working up plans to reintroduce the critically endangered eastern bongo to Kenya. The collaborative project, which includes utilising the latest AI technology for research, will see mountain bongos born through the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) in zoos across Europe, carefully translocated to Mount Kenya Wildlife Conservancy, in Kenya. During the last year, we have already seen some Bongos from the conservancy move to the nearby Mawingu sanctuary, which is part of the rewilding process to prepare them for survival in the wild.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Introducing a collection of exciting zoo stories you may have missed over the last few months!

Get up to date on the latest zoo news and impress all your friends with your new found zoo expertise!

CHESTER ZOO

200-MILLION-YEAR-OLD 'THREE-EYED' REPTILES MOVE INTO NEW HABITAT

The tuatara is believed to have lived on Earth before the dinosaurs, making it one of the world's oldest surviving species. These ancient reptiles have recently moved into an immersive new habitat at the zoo, the only place in the UK where they can be found.

Tuataras once lived across most of the world's continents including Europe, Asia, North and South America, in parts of Africa and New Zealand. Fossils suggest their descendants died out everywhere around 70 million years ago – except for the tuatara that survived on a number of small, isolated offshore islands in New Zealand, where around 50,000 of them can still be found today.

In 2016, experts here at the zoo became the first to ever breed the tuatara outside of their native home – with the impressive feat taking several decades to achieve. Now, some of those that were bred here have moved into our newly created habitat - home to a group of six tuataras in total. It's been designed to closely recreate the natural conditions and seasonal environments of their native habitat, offering a sanctuary where these ancient reptiles can thrive as part of a conservation breeding programme.

One of the most fascinating body parts of the tuatara is a 'third eye' on the top of its head. The 'eye' has a retina, cornea, a lens and nerve endings, but it is not used for sight. Instead, it helps to sense the intensity of sunlight and thermoregulate body temperature, circadian rhythm, navigation and hormone regulation.

SPOT THE NEW TOAD IN MONSOON FOREST

We are excited to welcome a new species of toad to the zoo, with a particularly eye-catching collection of yellow spots! Rentapia toads are an elusive species of toad with some key differences between the sexes. Females have a larger body and yellow spots, while males weigh in about half the size with a darker, more uniformed colour.

They are also considered to be one of the few truly arboreal (living mostly in trees) toad species in the world, with hands similar to tree frogs. The only trips down to the small pools and streams of their native home in Malaysia are to breed.

Rarely found in zoos, and little known about breeding the species in human care, the toads made their way to Chester from Vienna Zoo in Austria which is the first time a zoo has bred the species in many years. The arrival of the toads is a great opportunity to learn more about the species and can give us even more knowledge that can also potentially help other more threatened species in the future.

BABY TENTACLED SNAKES BORN

We're really pleased to welcome a new generation of tentacled snakes to the zoo for the second year in a row. As the only zoo caring for this species in the UK, it's been a great achievement to see seven more snakes born safely so far this breeding season.

Originally found in the wetlands, rivers and rice paddies of Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, these snakes are the only species to have a pair of "tentacles" on their heads, helping them detect movement in the water and for hunting in low light conditions.

The snakelets (baby snakes) develop ovoviviparously, which means they start life as eggs that are kept inside the mother snake, before being birthed live underwater.

You can find two of our male tentacled snakes in Monsoon Forest, while the mothers and snakelets are being looked after behind the scenes for close monitoring!

WELCOMING OZZY, THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED PIGLET

The Visayan warty pig is a critically endangered species from the Philippines so every birth in zoos is a key part of creating a safety net for the wild population. Ozzy was born back in May to mum, Chrissie, and first-time dad, Johnny.

We've been breeding piglets since 2008 after being the first zoo in the UK to welcome the species from Rotterdam Zoo back in 2005. In the wild, the pigs can be found in small numbers across several natural parks. The main threats to their survival are hunting and breeding with other species of wild pigs, so to see a successful birth as part of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) is another positive step forward.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Take a sneak peek at animals from across the zoo, spotted by our camera traps. From a sleepy snow leopard to a Komodo dragon chase, we've got plenty of special moments caught on camera thanks to our trusty traps.

SUN BEAR SLUMBER

Here's some adorable footage from our archives that we just had to share! It shows sun bear cub Kyra – the first of her kind to ever be born in the UK – snuggled up mum Milli in their den in the months following her birth in 2018. These adorable bears are known for their gentle nature and are named after their distinct crescent-shaped chest patch, which resembles a rising sun. They're classified as vulnerable due to habitat loss, illegal wildlife trade and poaching, which is why having a safety net population under human care is so important. This magical family moment is more than just endearing, it's a powerful reminder of why we work tirelessly to protect them.

PECKISH CASSOWARY!

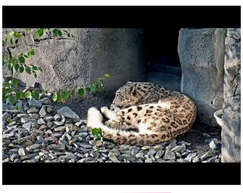
Look who decided to give our camera trap a closer inspection — a curious cassowary! Native to the forests of New Guinea and Northern Australia, this unique bird is famous for its dinosaur-like appearance and vibrant blue and black plumage. But they're more than just living dinosaurs, cassowaries play a vital role in their forest homes, dispersing seeds that are key to the health of their ecosystems.

PRECIOUS PUDU FAMILY

Is this the cutest little family at the zoo? It just might be! Southern pudus are the world's smallest deer, with this family's new arrival, Sofia, weighing less than a bag of sugar (900g) at birth. In the wild, they're only found in the rainforests of Chile and Argentina, where they face huge threats from deforestation and habitat loss. New births like this offer much hope for protecting them from extinction.

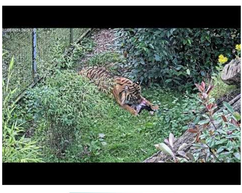
KOMODO DRAGONS ON THE CHASE

Caught on camera - two Komodo dragons having a playful chase! These incredible reptiles, native to Indonesia, are the largest lizards in the world. Our conservationists are supporting their conservation on many different levels, working together with the Indonesian government, a local NGO (Komodo Survival Program), communities, and other zoos to help keep them safe in the wild, ensuring that future generations can continue to witness real dragons.



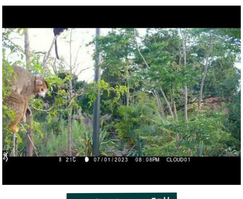
SLEEPY SNOW LEOPARD

A sneak peek behind the scenes at our sleepy snow leopard Nubra! These rare animals take more than quick cat naps, typically sleeping for up to 18 hours each day! Known as the "ghosts of the mountains," snow leopards are considered vulnerable in the wild, with fewer than 7,000 remaining. Our conservation efforts in the remote regions of Central Asia aim to protect the remaining populations while supporting local communities living alongside them.



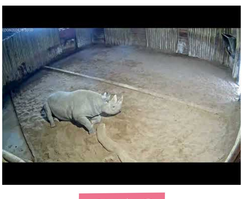
SUMATRAN TIGER'S FEAST

It's a real feast for one of our Sumatran tigers! There are fewer than 300 of these critically endangered tigers left in the wild. Sumatran tigers are at risk of extinction due to habitat loss and conflicts with people over livestock. We're helping to protect their forest homes by advocating for sustainable palm oil, and you can too! Download our Palm Oil Scan app and help ensure these magnificent cats have a future in the island of Sumatra.



LUNCH WITH THE LEMURS

Our hidden cameras caught this crowned lemur snacking away while perched high in a tree! These lemurs are omnivores, but mainly like to eat leaves, fruit and flowers. Like all species of lemur, crowned lemurs are only found on the unique island of Madagascar, where less than 10,000 are left. We're working with our conservation friends in Madagascar to support the communities living near these animals and to protect lemurs and their forest homes for generations to come.



RHINO RELAXATION

Our camera traps recently caught a black rhino enjoying a well-deserved rest! But out in the wild, these gentle giants have to stay on their toes. Black rhinos are now sadly critically endangered and face huge threats from poaching for their horns and habitat loss. However, our scientists are working with partners in Kenya to help to protect them, including through groundbreaking reintroduction efforts.

ANTEATER THROWBACK

Although now more grown up, this adorable footage shows just how small our baby anteater was — with the pup caught trying to find the perfect snoozing spot on mum's back! Baby giant anteaters usually ride on mums back and stay close to them for 6–9 months, after which they start to become more independent. One of the biggest threats to this species comes as they try to cross roads, where sadly many are lost to traffic collisions. But our conservationists are working closely with an organisation in Brazil to help stop this and protect both anteaters and drivers.

Camera trap fact

Despite the name, there's no trapping involved! The cameras are simply left in a secret spot and sense when there's some movement or animal action in the surrounding area, helping us capture magic little moments like these.

What's NEW at THE ZOO

DATE AND TIME
Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 September
11.30 - 4.30

LOCATION
Nature Reserve, Chester Zoo

FREE

FREE

WILDLIFE CONNECTIONS FESTIVAL

Get closer to nature than ever before at our free annual Wildlife Connections Festival!

We have two jam-packed days filled with wild activities, enthralling performances and amazing speakers that will have you you captivated by the wildlife found right on our doorstep, all set in our stunning Nature Reserve.

All our exciting performances, activities and workshops are **FREE!**

MEMBERS' DAYS

Each date will have its own theme coinciding with wildlife awareness days, and there will be some extra surprises waiting for you and your guests!

FREE FOR MEMBERS and bring up to **FOUR NON MEMBERS** for 50% off

Keep an eye on your inbox for a sign up link soon.

RHINO THEME

SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER

ANTEATER THEME

SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER

Conservation Tots

Join us on Wednesday mornings for sessions designed to encourage the development of your child and encourage the bond between you and your little one.

TINY TOTS (up to 1 year old) >

TODDLER TOTS (1-5 years old) >

CHESTER ZOO MEMORY CAFÉ

The Chester Zoo Memory Café is a place for people with dementia, their families, friends and carers to come together and enjoy a cuppa in the unique setting of the zoo.

Where: Bembe Coffee Shop at our main entrance
When: Second and fourth Monday of each month, 10:30am – 12pm

CHESTER ZOO

ANNOUNCING THE NEW CHESTER ZOO BRAND

Some of our eagle-eyed members might have already noticed things popping up around the zoo that look slightly different from what you're used to, including some of the signage for our brand-new Himalayan habitat. We're excited to announce that this is the start of our journey to **rebranding Chester Zoo**, with our new brand fully launching later this year.

We're giving you a sneak peek of our new brand on this page, where you'll see our new font and some of our new brand colours. Starting with the winter issue in December 2024, you'll see a completely new look for Our Zoo.

Our new brand will help to get across the message that we're more than just a fun family day out (although that's still very important!) – **we're a hub for global conservation which helps connect every visitor with the natural world**. We are so much more than just a visitor attraction; we're a huge team of passionate experts all working together with one goal in mind – **creating a future where nature can survive and thrive**.

This change doesn't just mean a new logo and font. Our brand encompasses everything our conservation zoo represents, from how we talk about our work to the way we interact with zoo visitors.

We caught up with **Katharine Mainprize, Director of Marketing at the zoo**, to find out more about the rebrand and what you can expect to see.

Q: Will it still be called Chester Zoo?

A: Yes of course - we're proud to be Chester Zoo! Our zoo is the **hub of our conservation work**, which we've worked hard to establish as a site of excellence in animal care, innovation, scientific breakthroughs, learning, empowerment, and visitor experience.

Q: How long has the zoo had its current brand for?

A: Our current brand was launched in 2011, which means it's now 13 years old! That's a long time in the world of marketing, so it's a testament to the work that went into developing the existing Chester Zoo brand that it's lasted as long as it has. It's seen us grow to two million visitors every year and cement our status as the top zoo in the UK.

Q: Why is the zoo's brand changing now?

A: Our current brand, while effective, has reached its full potential. Surveys show that **97% of people in the North-West** have heard of Chester Zoo. It has done a brilliant job of attracting visitors, in particular families, to come and spend time at the zoo. Where there is room for it to grow is in helping us cement our reputation as a **leading international conservation charity**. There is more work to do in terms of telling everyone about the amazing conservation work we do both here at the zoo and around the world. There is also more we can achieve as a charity – with only around **40% of people knowing we're actually a conservation charity**, our new brand will hopefully help us in this area.

We are in the midst of an **ongoing global biodiversity crisis**, and our mission is to help prevent extinction both here in the UK and around the world. To do this, we need to inspire and empower everyone who interacts with our zoo to protect the natural world around them.

Under our current branding the zoo's conservation, science and charitable work all have separate identities. The new approach will unify all of that under one consistent brand, helping to inspire real change and educate more people about the work we do.

Q: Who has worked on the rebrand?

A: Work on the rebrand has been a collaborative effort between various teams at the zoo, in partnership with award-winning design agency How&How. We conducted an extensive search to find the right agency to work with, as it was so important that we worked with someone who **fully understood and embraced our conservation mission**. How&How's branding work across renewable energy, conservation foundations and low-carbon technologies made them the perfect fit.

Force for nature

Our brand is so much more than our logo – it's our personality and will come through in everything we do and say. Sometimes to help understand a brand, it can be useful to think of it as a person with human characteristics. Here's three words we'd use to describe the personality of the new Chester Zoo brand:

CREATIVE

We're constantly curious about the world around us and we never stop working to find new solutions to conservation.

PASSIONATE

Nature is our everything. It's our reason for being. It's why our work to save it continues far beyond the zoo gates.

PROGRESSIVE

Everything we do is about making moves forward. That means not just talking about the future, but how we're going to get there too.

Q: Who have you consulted on the new brand?

A: We're firm believers in the power of **conservation through collaboration**, so it was vital we gathered the feedback of as many different people as possible when developing our new brand. This has included staff interviews, visitor surveys, consultation with our board of trustees, and discussions with our conservation partners around the world.

Q: When will we get to see the new brand?

A: Our big brand launch is happening in November 2024, which will include a brand new website and the reveal of our new logo. After that, we'll gradually be rolling out the new branding across the zoo. This is a huge undertaking, so please bear with us as we roll everything out.

Q: How will the new brand impact us as members?

A: Don't worry, our new brand won't bring about any changes to your membership. You'll still be able to enjoy the same great experience when you visit the zoo as much as you want throughout the year, along with all the extra perks you get as members. Your support is such a vital part of our mission to prevent extinction, and we hope that our increased focus on highlighting our conservation and science work will show you even more of the **positive change that you're empowering.**

CHESTER ZOO

SUPER-NATURAL

HALLOWEEN IS ABOUT TO GET WILD

28 SEP - 3 NOV

PLUS NEW DIGITAL BEASTS EXPERIENCE

SUPER-NATURAL

Discover a Halloween like no other at CHESTER ZOO this autumn! Marvel at our GIANT PUMPKIN sculptures, complete our trail challenge and collect your sweet treat!

Plus, BRAND NEW BEASTS legendary digital experience.
28 September 2024 – 3 November 2024.

BEFORE THERE WERE PEOPLE, THERE WERE BEASTS....

Adventurers! Prepare to encounter untamed mythical creatures in this immersive 360-degree journey. From Jess French, author of Beastlands, discover an extraordinary quest through unexplored lands.

MEMBERS GO FREE... IF YOU DARE!

DISCOVER THE MAGIC ON OUR LONGEST EVER LIGHT TRAIL

PRODUCED BY SONY MUSIC

Lanterns and Light

CHESTER ZOO

15 NOV 2024 - 1 JAN 2025

BOOK NOW >

HEATING HABITATS SUSTAINABLY

We've partnered with Mitsubishi Electric to decarbonise heating across the zoo as part of our drive to reach net zero.

Experts from Mitsubishi Electric and the zoo's facilities and animal teams have worked together to provide the best possible environment for our critically endangered eastern black rhinos.

Through a devastating combination of poaching, habitat loss and the illegal wildlife trade, 95% of Africa's rhinos have been wiped out. With fewer than 600 individuals left in the wild across Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda, the eastern black rhino has been one of the most severely affected. This makes safety net populations in conservation zoos like ours vitally important.

SUPPORTING breeding SUCCESS

Our team of experts heads up the EEP (EAZA Ex-situ Programme) for eastern black rhinos, ensuring a healthy and genetically diverse population through careful breeding coordination.

We've developed a wealth of knowledge on the successful breeding of eastern black rhinos, which has enabled us to spearhead gradual increases in populations both in zoos and in the wild over the last 20 years. This has been achieved through extensive lab research, collaborating with partners, and of course the expertise of our rhino team here at the zoo.

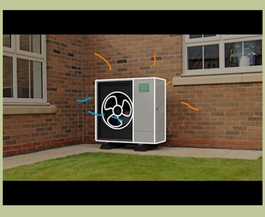
But the first step to any successful breeding programme is providing the right environment that matches the natural habitat for each species, allowing animals to thrive. We need to keep our indoor rhino habitat temperatures between 18 and 24 degrees Celsius, but their home has big open doors, allowing the animals free movement to their outdoor habitat, which can lead to significant heat loss.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS for ANIMAL CARE

As part of our commitment to sustainability, we're partnering with Mitsubishi Electric to use air source heat pumps to help reduce carbon emissions, while keeping the eastern black rhino's habitat warm all year round, ensuring temperatures in the building are provided sustainably for years to come.

Our teams worked with Mitsubishi Electric to identify air source heat pumps as the most sustainable solution for heating the rhino habitat, contributing to our target to become carbon net zero in our scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030. It also shows the potential for heat pumps to be successful in challenging and unique environments.

Watch this short video from Mitsubishi Electric to find out more about how air source heat pumps provide sustainable heating, and how the same technology used to keep some of our animals warm could be used to effectively heat your home.



"We're facing a global biodiversity and climate crisis. The time for action is now. That's why it's vitally important that, as a conservation charity that's working to prevent the extinction of species worldwide, we lift our focus on sustainability to new heights."

"We know we can't be part of the problem that we're trying to solve and that's where partnerships on sustainability are so important; collaborating to showcase best practice and inspiring others to act."

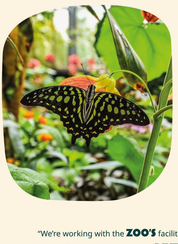
Jennifer Kelly, Head of Sustainability at Chester Zoo

Find out more about the sustainable solutions available from Mitsubishi Electric by **visiting their website**.

2024 RUN FOR NATURE AT CHESTER ZOO

Join us on World Rhino Day, 22 September 2024, and do your part to save this amazing species! Fundraising from this year's Run For Nature helps support our vital work with rhinos at the zoo and around the world. With a 10k and Kids Mile, the whole family can get involved!

ENTER NOW ›



Our rhino habitat isn't the only area of the zoo that will be sustainably temperature controlled by **Mistubishi Electric technology**. We've already worked with the Mitsubishi Electric team on projects across site, including to install air source heat pumps, air conditioning and ventilation in our new conference and events venue, **The Square**, as well as air source heat pumps in our **Butterfly Journey building**.

Through the partnership they will be helping us make **even more spaces across the zoo more sustainable and efficient**.

"We're working with the **ZOO'S** facilities teams to REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS and deliver energy efficient comfort across a **DIVERSE** range of buildings with internal climates from AFRICAN SAVANNAHS TO SOUTH AMERICAN RAINFORESTS, which shows beyond doubt that there is a RENEWABLE SOLUTION that can help all of us get to **NET ZERO.**"

Chris Newman, Net Zero Design Manager at Mitsubishi Electric.

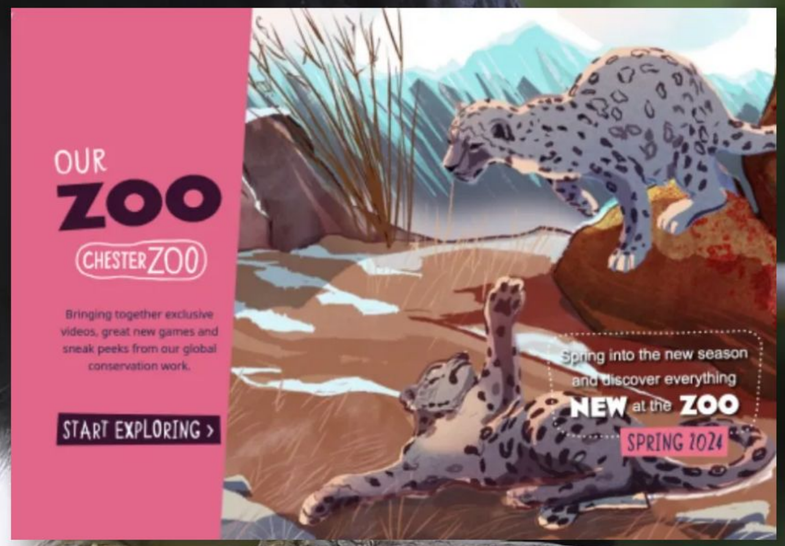
Thank you to all our corporate and philanthropic partners, including

ASDA · Chester Bluecoat Charity · Chester Racecourse · co-op · darwin escapes · ESCAPISM Escape · Ferrero · M&S Bank · mbna · Morelli Gelati · Heritage Fund · Mitsubishi Electric · proximo · Saputo Dairy UK · SYKES Holiday Cottages · Toyota Manufacturing UK · Trenco · Westminster Foundation

Only by working together as one big community can we make positive changes, and we're excited to see what the future brings as we work to prevent extinction all over the world.

CHESTER ZOO

PREVIOUS ISSUES



THANKS TO YOU

It’s thanks to your support that we’re able to work ALL over the world to protect endangered wildlife and we’re delighted to share more of the great work we do through Our Zoo. We’re always looking for ways to improve how we deliver you exciting behind the scenes content and stories. If there is anything you would like to see featured in Our Zoo or for general membership and adoption enquiries we’d love to hear from you.

GET IN TOUCH

Photo credit: Mirrorpix

FEEDING
PROHIBITED
HERON

Giraffe
House

JUNE

RHINOCEROS HORNBILL

Find them in Monsoon Forest and Tropical Realm.

One of the largest birds to be found in the rainforests of Southeast Asia, the rhinoceros hornbill has a spectacular casque (a horn on the top of its head) which is prized by poachers. When taking flight, their large wing span can create a loud 'whoosh' noise and makes for an impressive display, along with their striking beak and piercing eyes.

Our rhinoceros hornbills are part of a European endangered species breeding programme, designed to safeguard threatened or vulnerable species.

If the pair here at Chester Zoo successfully mate this will be a European first for second generation rhinoceros hornbills which will be a great boost for the species!

VISAYAN HORNBILL

Find them in Tropical Realm

Male and female Visayan hornbills are sexually dimorphic, with males sporting a creamy white head and neck and females covered in black plumage. Hailing from the rainforests on the islands of the Western Visayas region in the Philippines, their hollow bill helps them to make their calls louder and travel further through the rainforest.

Classed as endangered, this species is at a very high risk of becoming extinct in the wild due to deforestation and hunting.

GREAT HORNBILL

Find them in Tropical Realm

Living in the forests of Southeast Asia, these magnificent black and white birds are a key part of the forest's ability to regenerate as they disperse fruit seeds across the long distances they fly – this is why they're often called the farmers of the forest!

Their long, strong bill acts like a forceps to help them pick up and control the diverse range of fruits and small mammals, reptiles and insects they eat as part of their omnivorous diet.

Great hornbill chicks have no trace of the distinctive yellow head casque characteristics of the adults. This only starts to form in their second year and takes five years to fully develop and can be used for visual signalling.

WRINKLED HORNBILL

Find them in Tropical Realm

Now classed as endangered in their native homelands of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malayasia and Thailand, their wrinkled name comes from their colourful wrinkle casque (horn) that they use for visual signalling to communicate with others.

The male here at Chester Zoo had waited six years for a mating match to arrive and join him all the way from San Diego!

With enviable long eyelashes to protect their eyes from the sun and strong claws to help them grip tree branches as they travel through the forest canopy, the wrinkled hornbill is another eye-catching species of hornbill to be found in Tropical Realm!

LOADING: 100%