

VIRGINIA



REVIEW

fall 2009



*Juvenile Antilles Pinktoe Tarantula*

They are really blue, but...their color changes as they grow (including pink toes).

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- Spiders and Lizards and Snakes...Oh My!
- Trail of the Tiger Creature Feature: Tiger
- Meet the Lion Cubs!

fall 2009

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### EDITOR

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### PHOTOGRAPHERS

Greg Bockheim  
Marie Butler  
Lori Cummings  
Wyn Hall  
Craig Pelke  
Mark Schwartz  
David Totten  
Angie Vandike

**Address:** 3500 Granby Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23504

**Zoo Hours:** Open Daily 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Closed New Year's Day, Thanksgiving,  
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

**Phone:** (757) 441-2374 • **Fax:** (757) 441-5408

**Website:** www.virginiazoo.org

## WHO AM I?



This is a photo of one of the Zoo's four lion cubs, born May 2. Check out page 5 to meet all four!

Do you have any questions or ideas for the next issue of the Virginia Zoo Review? Contact us. We love your feedback.

## From the Executive Director

Zoo projects are happening everywhere you look – from the installation of the Shade Arbor surrounding the water fountains to the Asia – Trail of the Tiger construction and the brand new Australia exhibit!

The new Shade Arbor will not only give parents and grandparents a cool place to sit while watching the kids splash in the water fountains, but it will also add a new green element to the Entry Plaza. Plants like wisteria, grapes and more will be planted in the fall to provide the much-needed shade.

The new Australia exhibit, which is home to a mob of 11 kangaroos, was made possible by each of you. Train ticket sales will bring new animal exhibits and other enhancements to the grounds. Check out page 10 to meet the kangaroos!

Watch for the unveiling of a new historical exhibit, featuring photos and facts about zoos past and present and of course, introducing Zoo visitors to our newest arrivals - lion cubs born in May. Go to page 5 to meet them!

Thanks for your support - we will see you in the Zoo!



*Greg with new staff member.*

*Greg Bockheim*



**Be on the lookout for this new staff member on Zoo grounds!**

# ANIMAL AMBASSADOR

- Who will eat anything that moves and is small enough to overpower?
- Who has to discard its entire outer covering in order to grow?
- Who was once described as a “spinner of webs, an arch-trickster and a silent and murderous trapper”?
- And who was even accused of helping witches cast evil spells?

Well...if you guessed a spider, you're right! Our fall issue "Animal Ambassador" is the **Chilean Rose-Haired Tarantula**. As a fairly large spider, (but small as far as tarantulas go!) she and others like her do cause many people to shudder. But we can promise you, she's never cast an evil spell in her life!

The Chilean Rose-Haired Tarantula is a reddish-brown color with a slight pink metallic sheen on the cephalothorax, which is the head and first main body section (fused together). She is docile and only becomes "scary" when hungry - and even then only to her prey, which might be a cricket, a small rodent or reptile.

These spiders are pretty much home bodies, almost never straying more than 6 to 9 inches from their burrow and when they go even that far, they lay down silk drag-lines to retrace their steps.



They also spin silk to lie across the opening of their burrow. When the silk vibrates, they know dinner has arrived, and they jump out and surprise the unlucky visitor. Spiders live almost all over the world, with the exception of Antarctica, where it is just too cold for them. Knowing that there are well over 35,000 different species of spiders that have been discovered (and probably many more waiting to be discovered) might give you the jitters, but if there were no spiders, our world would be completely overrun with pests. Most spiders are harmless to humans and try hard to stay out of our way (we're much more dangerous to them than they are to us!).

To find out more about this spider and our other Animal Ambassadors or to book a program, please contact our Education Department at (757) 441-2374, ext. 229.



Chilean Rose-Haired Tarantula



## Horticultural Happenings



If our gardens are looking brighter these days, it's due to our new staff member - Horticulture Educator Peggy Fox. New gardening demonstrations, fresh graphics and updated garden handouts are all Peggy's domain. Her degree in business administration and years of experience as a Newport News Master Gardener bring plant, program, and people skills to expand our horticultural horizons.

**Welcome, Peggy!**



# Zoo News



## Old tires take on new life in the Children's Rain Garden

Giant flower shapes bloom blue, red, and yellow, while three exotic birds perch nearby. Notice the treadmarks? They are all made from old tires!

A special thanks to the Corbin B. White & Evelyn C. White Family Fund, Harborfront Garden Club and the Virginia Cooperative Extension-Norfolk Unit Master Gardener Water Stewards for making the Children's Rain Garden and its fashion accessories possible.

## Virginia Zoo to Become a Smoke-Free Facility

It's important that we provide a quality experience for our visitors and smoking on grounds has recently been our #1 complaint. This new smoke-free policy goes into effect on September 1 and will make smoking prohibited everywhere on Zoo grounds, including all indoor and outdoor facilities.



Zoo staff members at the Lee's Friends Run on the Wild Side 5K Race, held at the Zoo in May 2009. Left to right: Charlene Wright, Annie Vogt, Patti Bernhardt, Leah Rooker, Allyson McNamara.



## New Addition to the Rhino/Zebra Yard

In July, zookeepers introduced a new friend, "Spike," (a rhino made of papier mache) to Alfred the rhino and April the zebra. Their reactions were varied — Alfred went "horn to horn" with him, but then decided he was uninterested. April, on the other hand, definitely took notice and seemed to stay on high alert all afternoon. This enrichment project was designed by Karen Carl, one of our Animal Services interns.



Zoo members and best friends, Elizabeth and Alexis, enjoying the Zoo's tortoise statue, located near the Barnyard. To see your photo in the next newsletter, send your photos to [lori.cummings@norfolk.gov](mailto:lori.cummings@norfolk.gov).

**Dakari**

meaning "happiness"

M



34.8 lbs.

**Ajani**

meaning "he's fighting for possession"

M



38.2 lbs.

**Zarina**

meaning "golden"

F

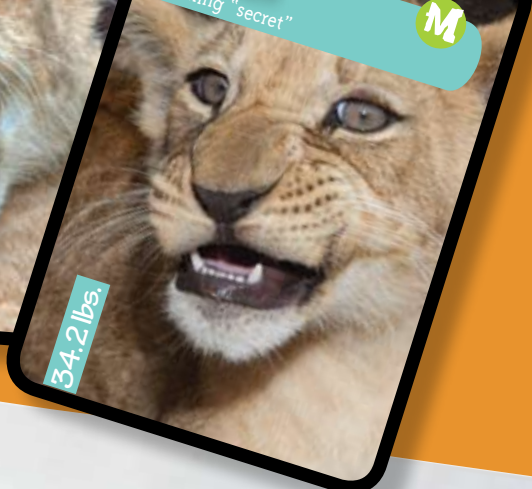


33.6 lbs.

**Razi**

meaning "secret"

M



34.2 lbs.

# Meet the Lion Cubs!



On May 2, Zola and Mramba welcomed their second litter of lion cubs (3 males and a female) into the world. The new family should be on exhibit by late summer.

## Zookeeper Notes

- So far, Ajani and Zarina have the most distinct personalities.
- Ajani, nicknamed "Ajumbo" is the plumpest. His name means "fighting for possession" and he's so big, he wins every time!
- Zarina is the quietest and likes to stick out her tongue. She also had the hardest time learning how to hop up on a ledge in her night house, but she was determined and now it's one of her favorite spots!
- All four can be a little testy - they like to growl, hiss and swat!
- They're gaining 1 to 2 pounds each week.
- The cubs received their first vaccinations the week of July 7 and their second set on the week of August 4.

# Trail of the Tiger

# CREATURE FEATURE

## EXHIBIT FEATURES

- ★ Waterfall
- ★ Cave for visitor viewing

Exhibit construction,  
July 2009

## All Tiger Species are Endangered

Tiger researchers estimate that there are fewer than 2,500 tigers in the world. But there is a lot of work being done to make sure that tigers will survive. In the early 1970s, India and other countries began passing laws protecting tigers. Zoos also help tigers through breeding programs and by educating visitors around the world!



Siberian Tiger

## Six Subspecies of Tigers

### 1 Siberian or Amur Tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*)

The largest of the tiger subspecies are found in the snowy areas of Russia. Males can be as long as a station wagon! These tigers also have the palest orange coat and the fewest stripes. The Virginia Zoo's two female Siberian tigers are off exhibit due to new Asia — Trail of the Tiger construction.

### 2 Bengal or Indian Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*)

This is the most common subspecies of tiger, found primarily in India and Bangladesh.

### 3 Indochinese Tiger (*Panthera tigris corbetti*)

These tigers are about 20 percent smaller and are darker than Bengal tigers and are found in Cambodia, China, Laos, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam.

### 4 Malayan Tiger (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*)

The Malayan tiger is the smallest of the mainland tiger subspecies, and the second smallest living subspecies and are found exclusively in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. Most likely the subspecies who will be in the new Asia — Trail of the Tiger exhibit.

### 5 Chinese Tiger (*Panthera tigris amoyensis*)

These tigers are slightly smaller than the Indochinese subspecies and are found in South China. These tigers are thought to now be extinct in the wild.

### 6 Sumatran Tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*)

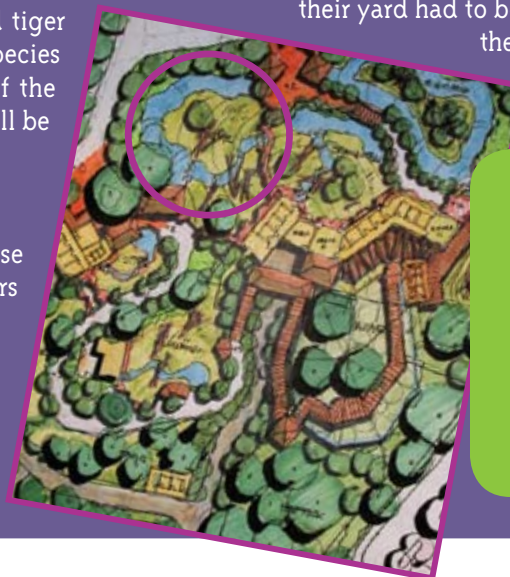
Sumatran is the smallest tiger subspecies and is found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

## Tiger Facts

- Every tiger has its very own stripe pattern!
- Some cats do like water—including tigers! In colder climates, they enjoy the snow.
- A tigress can have a litter of up to seven cubs every two years.
- A tiger's claws can be pulled inside while the tiger walks, which helps keep the claws sharp.

## Shere and Shaka update

The Zoo's two female Siberian tigers, Shere and Shaka Kahn, are doing wonderfully! Their exhibit is not currently visible to visitors due to the Trail of the Tiger — Asia construction. The construction workers talk to them daily and the girls keep busy supervising the progress! A large Deodora Tree in their yard had to be removed recently, which left them with a 9 foot tall "scratching trunk."



## Be a part of the Asian Adventure

adventure and donate now to Trail of the Tiger. We've enclosed an envelope for your convenience. For more information, call our Development Office at (757) 441-2374, ext. 222.





# Meet the Animal Nurse:

## Leah Rooker



### How long have you been at the Virginia Zoo?

I've been at the Zoo since November 2004.

### What is your educational background and training? Did you always know this was what you wanted to do?

I have an A.S. in Veterinary Technology from Harcum College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania and a B.S. in Biology from Virginia Tech. I worked with large animals for 11 years before coming to the Zoo. I always knew I wanted to work in the veterinary field from the age of 5, and working with zoo animals is my dream job.

### What is a typical day like for you at the Zoo?

On days when our vet, Dr. John, is here, I have a list of what animals we have to look at and any procedures scheduled (like annual physicals or vaccinations). Once we've completed the rounds, I enter everything we've done for a particular animal into its medical record. I also will run any lab tests, ship out any samples to various labs and dispense drugs to the keepers for any animals that need to be medicated.

On the other days, I will do paperwork, update animal records, order drugs, look at any animals the keepers have concerns with, vaccinate animals...the list goes on and on — depending on the day, it's always something different.

### What is your favorite part of your job?

Working with the diverse group of animals, from dart frogs up to elephants. It's always something different, and I am ALWAYS learning.

### What's the coolest procedure you've performed on an animal at the Zoo?

I've done a bunch of cool procedures. Two that immediately pop into my head are a lion root canal and doing a blood transfusion on our red river hog female.

### What is your favorite Zoo animal and why?

I always have someone ask me this question, and I can never answer it. I have too many favorites!

### What advice would you give kids who want to grow up to be a zoo vet?

Study hard and make sure to get experience with as many animals as possible.

### If you could no longer work at the Zoo, what job would you take as a substitute?

I'd still stay in the veterinary field. I'd probably go back to working with large animals as a veterinary technician. If I couldn't work as a technician, I'd probably, surprising as it may seem, work with plants in some capacity — I like flowers and floral design.

# Spiders and Lizards and Snakes... Oh My!



Splashback Poison Dart Frog



Angolan Python



Tomato Frog

**M**any guests hear the call of the wild and go straight to Africa upon arrival, but if you turn right from the Entrance Plaza and enter the Reptile House, you will discover a fascinating and diverse world of the creatures that often go bump in the night!

Experience the chills of getting close to a python or a poison dart frog. Whether you are slightly scared of snakes or fascinated by their beauty, a visit to the Reptile House (which also houses amphibians and spiders!) will thrill you like no other Zoo exhibit.

Reptile and Amphibian Curator, Craig Pelke, understands that not everyone loves his favorite creatures, but he wants visitors to know that "these animals are as

wonderful and important ecologically as the lions and the elephants. Visitors will find an incredible abundance of sizes, shapes, colors and patterns . . . something to amaze everyone."

Just in time for Halloween, we're adding to our collection of the spooky and spectacular – from lizards and snakes to frogs and tortoises. We also are proud to report successful hatchings of six Angolan pythons and green and black poison dart frogs. Many of these new arrivals and babies are off-exhibit for a quarantine period, which varies by species. But this fall, many of our newest creepy, crawly and wonderful friends will be on exhibit and waiting to meet you!

## What to look forward to:

### New Arrivals

- Panther Chameleon
- Chinese Crocodile Lizard
- 8 Milky Tree Frogs
- 8 Splashback Poison Dart Frogs
- 8 Green & Black Poison Dart Frogs
- 2 Tomato Frogs
- White's Tree Frog
- African Rock Python
- Kuhl's Flying Gecko
- 2 Aldabra Tortoises (small youth)
- Striped California Kingsnake

### Hatchings

- 6 Angolan Pythons
- Black and Green Poison Dart Frog

### Future Zoo Residents

- 6 Dyeing Poison Dart Frogs
- Aldabra Tortoises (large adults)
- Argentine Tegu
- Antilles Pinktoe Tarantula (pictured on the cover)



# Family Education Programs



## Zoo Snoozes

It's the ultimate sleepover to answer the call of the wild.

Zoo Snoozes are a one-of-a-kind after-hours experience! Bring your sleeping bag, and we'll take care of the rest: behind-the-scenes encounters with Zoo animals, an adventurous nighttime flashlight guided tour of the Zoo, wildlife games and crafts, and even breakfast!

### Family Snooze Dates

- Saturday, September 26 — Where Are the Rainforests?
- Saturday, October 24 — Boo Snooze

For details or to reserve your space, email [judy.totten@norfolk.gov](mailto:judy.totten@norfolk.gov) or call (757) 441-2374, ext. 229.

## Scout Snoozes

Scout snooze dates and registration will be available on our website on Sept 1st, 2009.

Cost: \$30 per person, with a 15 person minimum.

## Zoo Tales

Join us every Tuesday at 11:00 a.m. for story time at the Zoo. Enjoy a great book and possibly meet an animal or two. Locations and stories will vary. Check flyers at the ticket booths on Tuesdays for locations inside the Zoo. Zoo Tales is included with Zoo admission.

Zoo Tales may be cancelled due to factors such as weather. For more information, call (757) 441-2374, ext. 229.



## Going Green

Help us conserve valuable environmental resources by signing up to have Zoo news delivered directly to your inbox. When you supply us with your email address, we will add you to our email distribution list and send you breaking Zoo news, member perks and event notifications. Eventually, we hope to even send electronic versions of this newsletter!

Name

Phone  Membership Number

Email address (es)

### Mail this form to:

Going Green, Virginia Zoo, 3500 Granby Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23504  
or fax or email to (757) 441-5408 or [info@virginiazoo.org](mailto:info@virginiazoo.org)



# Kangaroo Interview



The Zoo opened a new kangaroo exhibit this summer, which is home to 11 males: Apache, Ashe, Astro, Beans, Heckle, Horatio, Irwin, Kipling, Lobo, Marley and Mick.

**G'day mates! Welcome to Virginia. How was your journey from Australia?**

**Astro:** Actually, although kangaroos are native to Australia and Tasmania, 8 of us are from a zoo in Georgia. We came up here in June.

**Mick:** And Beans, Irwin and I have been at the Virginia Zoo since last year. We're really excited to be in the new Australia exhibit built by Zoo staff! The rest of the mob (a group of kangaroos) elected us to be the spokes-kangaroos for this story.

**So do you like your new home?**

**Mick:** We sure do. Gray kangaroos like to live around trees, so we're hanging out in the shade. From here we can see the Zoo's gardens and watch the train go by.

**Astro:** I heard there are lots of other boomers to play with here. I can't wait to meet them.

**What's a boomer?**

**Astro:** It's another name for a male kangaroo!

**Mick:** There aren't other boomers here, you stinker! You overheard a keeper talking about boomer balls.

Those are enrichment toys that other animals play with ... uh, like lions? Do you want to play with a lion? I heard those new cubs are a feisty foursome.

**I don't mean to criticize, but do you think it's nice to call your exhibit mate a "stinker"?**

**Mick:** People sometimes call male western gray kangaroos "stinkers" because of their odor — like a smelly curry.

**Astro:** Hey, if you keep telling people I'm smelly, I'm going to have to box you!

**So it's true that kangaroos box?**

**Astro:** Yes, we are great boxers because we have large and powerful back feet and can balance on our strong tails. But most of the time kangaroos box over the ladies. Since we're all boys in here, we don't have a reason to box each other.

**Mick:** Yeah, we get along great. And Astro is one of the friendliest boomers you'll ever meet. If one of us is coming up to guests at our exhibit, it's probably Astro.

**What else do you like to do?**

**Mick:** We like nibbling on grass and leaves. We also love the special treats of monkey chow, peanuts and grapes that our keepers Aubry and Jill bring us. Yum!

**Astro:** We also like jumping around our exhibit. When we all do laps together, it looks like a kangaroo NASCAR race! With our big feet, we can jump a distance of 25 feet, and we can reach speeds up to 35 mph. We use our tails to help steer and balance.

**Anything else you want to say to our newsletter readers?**

**Astro:** We really love being at the Zoo and looking forward to meeting you.

**Mick:** We also want to thank everyone who's ridden the Zoo train this year. Our exhibit was built with money raised from train ticket sales. Thanks for helping create such a great home for us.



**Be sure to visit Astro, Mick and the rest of the mob during your next visit to the Zoo!**



# Thank you for supporting the Virginia Zoo

*Gifts made between April and June 2009  
Includes general donations and memberships \$250 and above*

## New Asia — Trail of the Tiger Donors

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## NEW ZOO PARENTS

Did you know that animals at the Zoo consume 12,045 carrots, 125,000 crickets and 80 tons of hay in one year? Every animal at the Virginia Zoo is available for adoption at several donation levels, starting at \$20. Call us at (757) 441-2374, ext. 244 for more information!

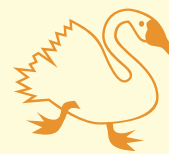
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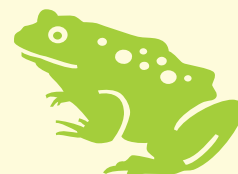
Tiger  
Meerkat  
Squirrel Monkey  
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Tiger  
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*We sincerely apologize if we have inadvertently omitted your name from our donor list.  
Please contact us at (757) 441-2374, ext. 242 if you have any questions.*



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# Upcoming Events



## Horticulture Open House

**Saturday, September 12, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

The Horticulture staff of the Virginia Zoo invites you to join us in celebrating their gardens during the Horticulture Open House. Come sample the tastes, sights, and scents of the "green" side of the Zoo.

All event activities are included with Zoo admission.

## Teddy Bear Clinic

**Saturday, September 12, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Teddy bears with boo-boos and stuffed animals with scrapes are invited to come with their little human friends to a Teddy Bear Clinic presented by the Virginia Zoo and Pediatric Specialists, a Children's Medical Group Practice of CHKD. Kids will learn about medical care in a fun, comforting setting, while doctors and nurses stitch, splint, weigh and care for beloved toys.

All event activities are included with Zoo admission.

## LOOKING AHEAD...

Put us on your calendar so you don't miss these events in 2009:

- Pancakes, Paws & Santa Claws – December 12 & 13

WHO AM I?



See inside cover for answer.



## ZooBoo 2009

Mummies, daddies, ghouls and goblins are invited to the Virginia Zoo's spooktacular event — ZooBoo. Grab your costume and join us as the Virginia Zoo is transformed into an exciting and safe Halloween alternative with treats at every turn.

Virginia Zoo Members ages 2 and up: \$4  
Non-members ages 2 and up: \$8  
Children Under 2: FREE

## Family Fun Days

**Saturday, October 31, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Sunday, November 1, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

Creepy candy stations (Don't forget your trick-or-treat bags!)  
Haunted Hayride \$1 • ZooBoo Choo Choo \$3  
Animal Pumpkin Smashing Costume Contest & More

## Fright Night

**Saturday, October 31, 6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.**

Creepy candy stations (Don't forget your trick-or-treat bags!)  
Haunted Hayride \$1 • Train of Terror \$3 • Photos \$5

The Zoo will be closing at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 31 and will reopen at 6:00 p.m. for Fright Night.