

# JOHN BALL ZOO CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2021

## Escaping Extinction

Working together to save the  
Poweshiek Skipperling  
from extinction

JOHN BALL  
**ZOO**  
Grand Rapids, MI





Giant Day Gecko



## A Commitment to Care

Generations of Kent County families, seniors and children have been inspired by the Zoo. John Ball Zoo is a regional destination and a critical economic driver for Kent County and West Michigan. The Zoo has a \$40 million annual economic impact in our community and is currently the most attended cultural attraction outside of Detroit in the state. John Ball Zoo also gives families and school groups in Kent County free admission to the Zoo, reduced admission for Kent County seniors and provides free parking to help ensure members of our community can enjoy the Zoo and learn about our efforts in wildlife conservation, sustainability and animal care.



**Peter D'Arienzo**  
Chief Executive Officer



Guests feeding  
a Budgie

## A Zoo for All

John Ball Zoo is for everyone, and we've made great progress toward ensuring all our guests enjoy their time with us. Whether it's a comfort station provided for nursing mothers and families or our inclusive playground, we work hard to create a place that inspires interactive play where everyone belongs.

Inclusivity is a core value at John Ball Zoo and we strive to create a space where everyone can participate. For example, we have hosted over 55,000 economically-disadvantaged children and adults in Kent and Ottawa counties, providing free Zoo admission through our JUMP program.

John Ball Zoo is accountable to the communities we serve, and we work hard to ensure the Zoo is a welcoming place for everyone to enjoy, and in turn, inspire our communities to do the same.



**Kelli Smith**  
Chief Development Officer

## Celebrating Our Community

Our goal at John Ball Zoo is to foster a curiosity and interest in nature and wildlife conservation for our guests through their experience at the Zoo. Having this experience is the prerequisite for saving wildlife and wild places.

To help us better understand what our guests think about their Zoo experience, we ask them for a gift each time they visit: feedback! It helps our dedicated staff learn and understand what we can do to make each visit the best day ever.

Based on continuous engagement and feedback with Zoo guests, we changed how we managed our entrance and ticketing process. We also adapted our guest programming to help guests find certain animals at the Zoo and to provide more interactive opportunities.

Engaging our guests also allows the Zoo to learn what our guests appreciate the most about their time at the Zoo. Time and time again, guests have commented about the commitment, friendliness and passion of our team members. We are so lucky to work with many people who are passionate about wildlife conservation and are excited to share this with others. When guests acknowledge a team member in our customer survey, we post it for everyone to see and share in the celebration.



Guests visit  
Snow White at  
Princess Days

**"Today's zoo experience gave us the opportunity to have fun together as a family. We all enjoyed the excitement the animals brought out in us. We learned new things about many animals, too. The staff was enthusiastic and knowledgeable and wanted our experience to be the best it could be."**

*John Ball Zoo Guest*

**"We love John Ball Zoo and its commitment to conservation. This truly sets this zoo apart from other zoos. The signs and the plans (like with the red pandas) all prove the zoo really has conservation on its forefront, and this is really important to me in a zoo. Whenever I talk about John Ball Zoo, conservation comes up. Thank you for all you do!"**

*John Ball Zoo Guest*

## Values in Action

Each year, nearly 600,000 guests visit John Ball Zoo. They're able to experience over 2,000 animals of over 230 species that represent the beautiful wildlife living in our world. Our dedicated staff works tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of every guest and animal within our Zoo. This commitment has helped us become one of the most popular attractions in Michigan and has helped us deliver countless lasting memories for our guests.

We take pride and great responsibility for the role we play in conservation and connecting the hearts and minds of our community to actively protect and save wildlife and wild places. Change is redefining our region and the world and the challenges facing wildlife and wild places are greater than ever. Our focus every day is to inspire our community in wildlife conservation.

In our new strategic plan we defined four key strategic pillars – Embrace Conservation, Deliver Exceptional Experiences, Achieve Operational Excellence and Value People – that are reinforced by each other. At the core of our strategy is saving wildlife from extinction. This central mission is key in how we act on our core values: Community, Celebration, Compassion, Conservation and Education.



**Laura Davis**  
Director of Strategy and  
Organizational Development



Giving away trees  
through our Habitat  
Hero program



**Andy McIntyre**  
Chief Operating Officer





Volunteer Joann with Zoo guests

WATCH US GROW!

In 2014, John Ball Zoo became a nonprofit organization after having been managed by Kent County for decades. Since then, we have realized incredible growth in so many areas, including our team!

- 2017  
280 staff members + 281 volunteers
- 2019  
323 staff members + 602 volunteers
- 2021  
438 staff members + 679 volunteers

Compassion, Planet and People

John Ball Zoo embraces individuality and diversity and works tirelessly to create a place of belonging for our guests as well as our valued team members. When bringing new people onto the team, for both staff and volunteers, we look for those with compassion.

Compassion is contagious and compassionate team members empower others by holding people at a high value. Our leadership respects and encourages our team members to transform their compassion from

aspiration to action, both within John Ball Zoo and the community. For example, our team members are provided with paid volunteer time so they can use their time to make a difference in issues they are passionate about.

Compassion helps create meaningful connections amongst our teams. It is through these connections that we find success in achieving our mission to inspire our community to be actively engaged in the conservation of wildlife and wild places.

Conserving Wildlife Locally & Globally



Eastern Box Turtle Hatchling

Freshwater turtles are one of the most at-risk groups of vertebrates. Scientists estimate that more than 60% of the world's freshwater turtle species are threatened with extinction. John Ball Zoo is proud to partner with other wildlife conservation organizations to help conserve wildlife like freshwater turtles.

In recent years, John Ball Zoo has helped pioneer research on native Michigan turtles, which are crucial to the stability of our environment. As the Great Lakes State, Michigan is an important stronghold for several species of rare turtles. Due to human intervention and disturbances in their environment, predators are forced to move into Michigan turtle habitats. In many cases, adult turtles thrive in the population, but the mortality caused by predation to nests and/or hatchlings is near 100%.

Headstarting has emerged as a conservation strategy to help turtles that are facing this threat. Headstarting turtles involves raising eggs and hatchlings under human care until they are big enough to be less vulnerable, then returning them to the wild.

Considering few studies have measured the success of headstarting, John Ball Zoo has partnered with Hastings-based Pierce Cedar Creek Institute and Grand Valley State University (GVSU) to help a local population of Eastern Box Turtles and study the effectiveness of headstarting. When female box turtles lay eggs in June, a team rescues the eggs from predation. The eggs are incubated and the offspring are reared under human care at John Ball Zoo. Hatchling turtles live and grow at the Zoo for 10 months until they are less susceptible to predation, then released back into the wild. The baby turtles are fitted with small transmitters that don't impose any harm to them so GVSU students and researchers can follow the turtles to learn about their survival and ecology.

In three years of the program, a total of 29 head-started turtles have been released at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. So far, we have observed that survivorship of head-started turtles has been high and predation has been low.

CONSERVATION FAST FACTS

\$184,475  
spent on conservation locally and around the world

We participate in five Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) programs – three in the Great Lakes and two beyond the Great Lakes

- American Turtle SAFE
- Monarch SAFE
- North American Songbird SAFE
- African Lion SAFE
- Chimpanzee SAFE

82%  
of our conservation efforts were focused on Great Lakes projects



Bill Flanagan  
Conservation Manager





Willow the Red Panda



Children at Zoo Camp

# Willow’s Story: Ensuring Exceptional Animal Care

All of the animals that call John Ball Zoo home are ambassadors for their wild counterparts and the wild places they call home. These animals inspire us and our guests every day and that is why it is so important that they receive exceptional care throughout their lives here at the Zoo. While this is important every day, it is extremely critical when something goes wrong.

On February 17, 2021, Willow, one of our three Red Panda cubs came to the animal hospital for weight loss and weakness. It soon became clear that Willow was extremely anemic, meaning that she had too few red blood cells to adequately carry oxygen through her body. This launched a very busy few weeks of both treating Willow's anemia, but also performing critical testing to try to identify the underlying cause. The process involved a small army of amazing people both at the Zoo and across the country working together to help Willow.

In addition to the Zoo's veterinary team, no less than twelve veterinarians from around the country helped evaluate her case. While some lab samples were analyzed right here at JBZ, additional samples were sent to three other laboratories.

To treat her anemia, Willow ended up requiring multiple blood transfusions. The first two transfusions were generously donated by her parents, Wyatt and Wasabi, but when it became clear that additional blood would be needed, both the Detroit Zoo and the Potawatomi Zoo were there to help supply donated blood to help Willow recover. This also meant that Zoo team members needed to drive to pick up these lifesaving donations. Our friends and colleagues at Blue Pearl Veterinary Specialists not only consulted on her case, but also helped us rapidly acquire the supplies we needed to perform multiple blood transfusions and even helped to process the donated blood.



Dr. Ryan Colburn, DVM  
Zoo Veterinarian

Willow ended up making a full recovery and successfully moved with her sisters to Zoo Knoxville in August of 2021. This is the result of a great deal of hard work by members of our animal health and animal care teams, but also our friends at the Keystone Pharmacy who helped custom compound multiple medications to Willow's precise specifications...not only for dose, but for that special grape flavoring.

Willow's successful recovery is also thanks to a newly re-outfitted small animal ICU that had just been completed the year before. This gave our team a state-of-the-art space to ensure Willow received the best care possible.

While every animal's individual story may be different, our team's dedication to their care and welfare is unwavering.

# Zoo Camp Experiences that Inform the Mind and Inspire the Heart

For over 40 years, local children have experienced the wonder of the Zoo through summers at Zoo Camp.

Our camp team finds it extremely rewarding to see children grow up at John Ball Zoo, with many starting with us as three-year-olds and coming back year after year through middle school.

For our youngest campers, Zoo Camp is all about instilling a sense of wonder and curiosity for our natural world: smelling that first whiff of the maned wolf, feeling the soft fur of the sheep and listening to the howler monkeys as they greet everyone on a sunny summer morning on the Wild Way Trail.

Elementary-aged campers begin to incorporate lessons learned at school and apply them in fun and creative ways at the Zoo, including using their engineering skills to build brick houses for tenrecs or create puzzle feeders for primates. Adaptations come to life as campers get front row seats to watch the iguana on a walk outside or a target training session with the otters.

Campers that are getting ready to graduate from Zoo Camp and move onto teen volunteering gain hands-on career exploration. John Ball Zoo's veterinarian, Dr. Ryan Colburn, and our zookeepers help create hands-on activities and experiences highlighting the importance of creating opportunities for animals to show off their natural behaviors that bring back that sense of wonder all over again.



Rhiannon Mulligan  
Education Manager

For many campers, it's a pivotal time to discover if they are willing to enjoy all the smells and other sensory stimulation a job at the Zoo can bring. Other campers move on to explore careers in architecture or engineering, dreaming of designing or building the next big animal habitat in the Zoo's master plan.

John Ball Zoo is incredibly grateful to two donors, The Baldwin Foundation and long-time Zoo Volunteer, Sunny Sjaarda. Because of their generosity, **the Zoo was able to partner with West Michigan Partnerships for Children and offer 20 full camp scholarships in 2021.** We look forward to expanding this scholarship program and continue to inspire hearts and inform minds through John Ball Zoo's Summer Camp.





Child touches  
Bearded Dragon, an  
ambassador animal

# Bringing the Zoo to You

John Ball Zoo’s educational program Zoo Lab has provided meaningful educational experiences to local students since it began in 2011. This week-long immersive program offers students an opportunity to engage in place-based education at John Ball Zoo.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools that participated in Zoo Lab for years suddenly were unable to participate in this important program. Using innovative technology and leveraging community partnerships, John Ball Zoo helped create a virtual version of Zoo Lab.

John Ball Zoo educators partnered with participating teachers and Virtual Tour Guys, two educators who run their own business helping to bring virtual experiences into the classroom, to develop the Virtual Zoo Lab program. Piloted with established

schools in the fall of 2020, it quickly became apparent that the program was impactful for thousands of students in our community. We are grateful that John Ball Zoo was able to expand the program in 2021 and serve six additional schools!

Students interacted with Zoo Educators for at least one lesson each day, utilizing kits that were delivered to the school for the week. Students also spent time each day observing animals through virtual habitat tours created in partnership with Virtual Tour Guys. These immersive habitat tours included video clips of enrichment delivery, training sessions and natural history information on the featured animals – bringing the Zoo to students virtually!

Thanks to our community and partners, Virtual Zoo Lab was a huge success. As schools returned to more normal operations in the fall of 2021, the Zoo welcomed many of the Virtual Zoo Lab students on-site for their first in-person experience.

The Zoo continues to innovate to bring this immersive experience to as many students as possible. The virtual habitat tours created are available for free to any teacher or public guest who is interested and can be found on our website at [www.jbzoo.org/education/resources](http://www.jbzoo.org/education/resources).



Rhiannon Mulligan  
Education Manager

## ZOO LAB FAST FACTS

1,547

total students served  
by the Zoo Lab

## Virtual Zoo Lab Serves

- 11 schools
- 36 classrooms
- 900 students

## In-Person Zoo Lab Serves

- 16 schools
- 29 classrooms
- 647 students

# 2021 Engagement

## GUEST ENGAGEMENT



A guest at the  
ropes course

594,549 guests visited  
John Ball Zoo

9,329 households are  
Zoo members

131,061 audience members on  
social media platforms

1,361,463 total engagement on  
social media platforms

29,925,259 times content was  
displayed to users on  
social media platforms

1<sup>st</sup> Zoo with Zipline  
and Ropes Course  
in Michigan

## FOOD AND BEVERAGE

compostable  
/recycle

materials used  
in Food and  
Beverage

0 single-use

plastic dishes, cups,  
or utensils utilized at  
Food and Beverage  
venues throughout  
the Zoo

## CONSERVATION PRODUCTS

2,500 100% recycled kraft  
paper bags in place  
of plastic bags in  
the gift shops

1,600 reusable bags sold

6,000 plushies made from  
recycled plastic sold



# What We Got Done in 2021

**1<sup>st</sup>** Zoo in the world that is Gold SITES Certified

**967.95** million gallons of water saved

**80%** total waste/compost produced onsite was diverted from landfill or incinerator



## AWARDS

John Ball Zoo has been building to green standards for many years and is working to obtain green building certification for large projects. **In 2021, John Ball Zoo was the first Zoo in the world to be awarded Sustainable SITES Initiative certification for our Meerkat habitat and the first SITES gold certification in the state of Michigan.**

SITES is a national comprehensive rating system for developing sustainable landscapes, similar to LEED. SITES is awarded to landscapes, site infrastructure and spaces that demonstrate a high level of environmental and social sustainability. With SITES gold certification for the Meerkat habitat, John Ball Zoo is the first zoo in the world to receive this certification.



**Allmon Forester**  
Director of Facilities

## PYGMY HIPPO UPDATE

Following the 2020 completion of other Time to Soar capital campaign projects, including Meerkats, front entry pathway and buildings and Playground in the Park, **John Ball Zoo broke ground on the Pygmy Hippo habitat in 2021.** The Pygmy Hippo project will be the best multi-species pygmy hippo exhibit in the country. For this project and the front entry project, John Ball Zoo is pursuing Living Building Challenge Petal certification (LBC), the most rigorous green building certification. **The Pygmy Hippo habitat is slated to open in 2023.**



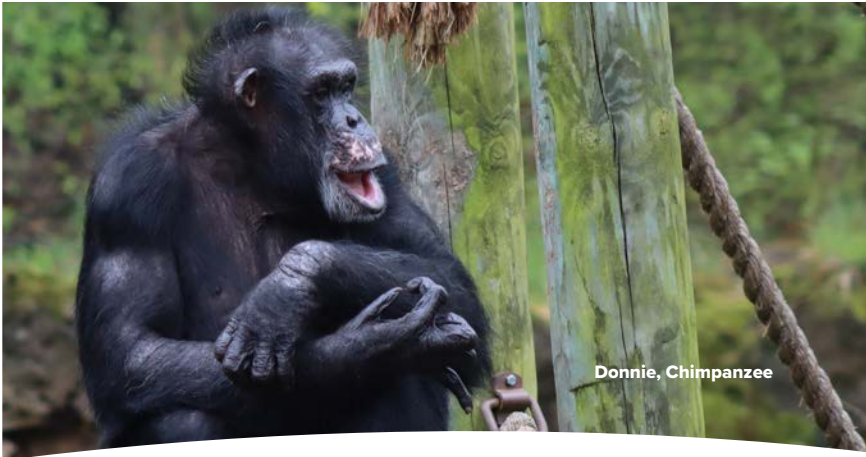
Pygmy Hippo

## NEW OR ENHANCED HABITATS



Khione, Snowy Owl

The Snowy Owl habitat was completed in 2021 in the Forest Realm. This will allow us a great habitat for breeding Snowy Owls.



Donnie, Chimpanzee

Thanks to a matching grant from Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, John Ball Zoo made welfare improvements to our Chimp habitat. We added two activity climbing structures as well as removed the concrete floor and replaced it with a retrofit bio floor in the dayroom. This floor closely mimics their natural habitat while naturally breaking down animal waste.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In an effort to save wild places for wildlife, the Zoo continues to positively impact the environment. In efforts to reduce our carbon footprint in 2021, our Meerkat habitat solar panels produced 648 kWh, a carbon offset of 988 pounds of carbon dioxide, which is the equivalent of 10 trees. Our support to the Red Panda Network planted 8,000 trees, which has a carbon reduction of 955 tons of carbon dioxide.

We also installed a new bike parking and repair station to encourage guests and staff to bike to the Zoo, which not only reduces carbon dioxide production, but also contributes to community wellness.

### Total Utility Carbon Footprint 2021

**natural gas**  
**142,844 = 758**  
CCF Metric Tons of CO<sub>2</sub>

**electric**  
**2,888,422 = 1,436**  
kWh Metric Tons of CO<sub>2</sub>

**water**  
**23.3 = 56**  
million gallons Metric Tons of CO<sub>2</sub>





Head-started Monarch Butterfly, part of the John Ball Zoo conservation efforts

# Conserving Wild Places

## SMALL STEPS LEAD TO BIG IMPACT

When it comes to wildlife conservation, even small victories deserve a giant, sustainable celebration. It takes all of us to reverse decades of climate change. John Ball Zoo incorporates sustainable practices into everything we do, including not having single-use plastic containers at our concessions.

Over the past year, we have had lots to celebrate when it comes to our efforts to protect wild places onsite at John Ball Zoo, as well as in our community. We continue to plant trees onsite. **For every tree that needs to be removed from the Zoo, two are planted in its place. Since 2015, we've utilized this two-for-one system and planted 230 trees at John Ball Zoo.**

Looking forward, we will continue to implement innovative solutions toward our goal of being carbon neutral. An important step toward that goal is replacing older energy recovery ventilator (ERV) models with updated, energy-efficient models. An ERV is designed to be connected to a building's HVAC system to draw clean, fresh air in and push stale air out. Up-to-date units, such as ours, capture contaminants and pollutants in the air. **After it's installed this year, the ERV will save 38.8 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.**

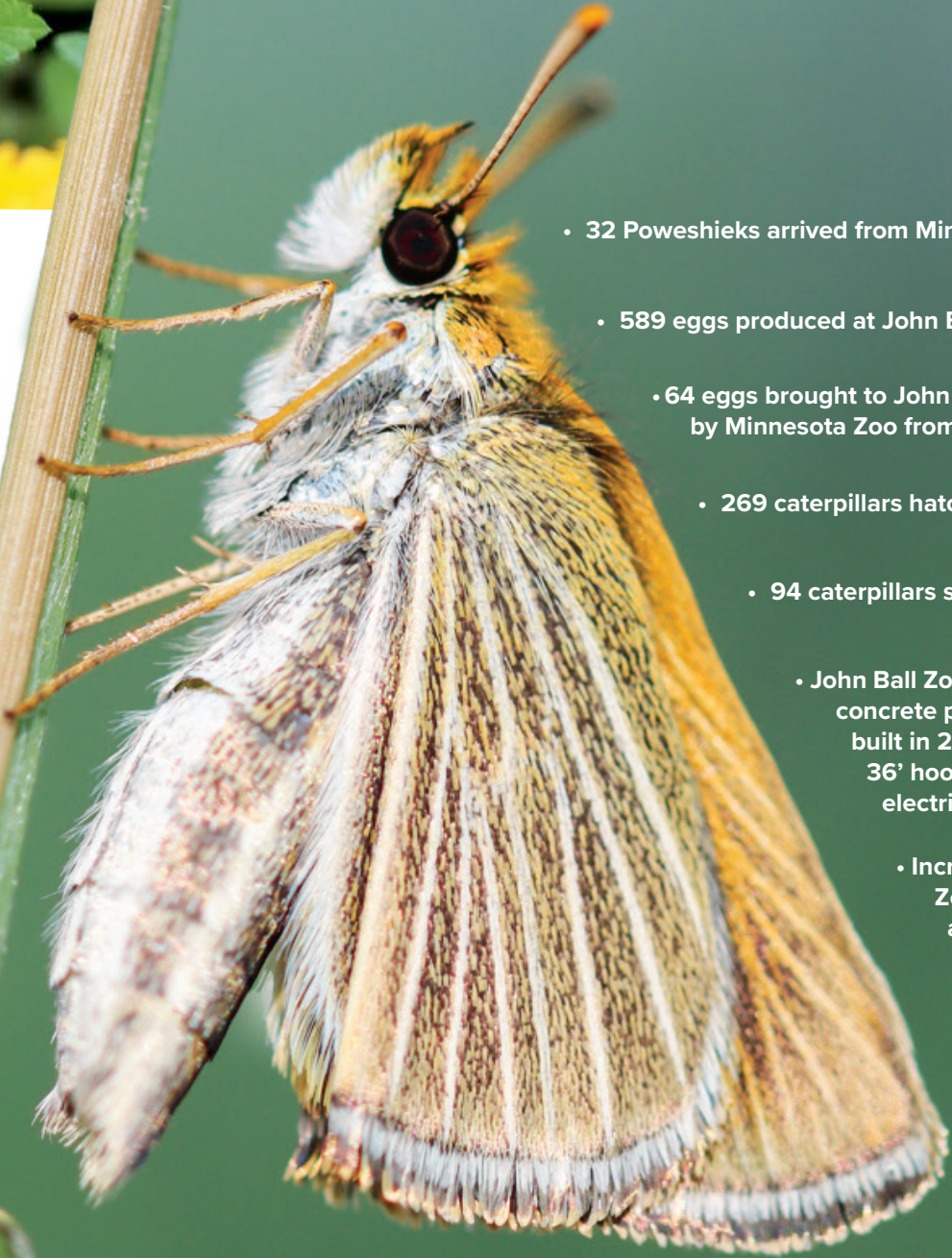
John Ball Zoo is also growing plantings onsite that attract and feed wildlife, like the endangered monarch butterfly. As a pollinating insect, monarchs greatly support the health of our planet. While feeding on nectar, they pollinate many different types of flowers and plants. The monarch butterfly species has plummeted toward extinction for multiple reasons, including a decline in their food source and a safe place to lay their eggs. **By planting flowers that attract butterflies, we provide a safe place to lay eggs and can help sustain and grow the population of butterflies that will impact monarch populations far beyond John Ball Zoo.**

Thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of our supporters, John Ball Zoo is continuing our immense impact on sustainability. Our upcoming, world-changing strategies started with installing a stormwater recycling system in the front entry in 2020 that will continue to make an impact by allowing us to reuse stormwater for non-potable solutions throughout the Zoo, including some functions within our new Pygmy Hippo habitat.



**Trenida Norment**  
Project and Sustainability Manager

# SAVING THE POWESHIEK SKIPPERLING IN 2021



Poweshiek Skipperling

- 32 Poweshieks arrived from Minnesota Zoo
- 589 eggs produced at John Ball Zoo
- 64 eggs brought to John Ball Zoo by Minnesota Zoo from wild females
- 269 caterpillars hatched
- 94 caterpillars survived to diapause
- John Ball Zoo added 1,800 square foot concrete pad to the first hoop house built in 2020 and added a second 36' hoop house and electrical service
- Increased John Ball Zoo's capacity to approximately 4,500 caterpillars



Larvae check, preparing them for diapause



Left to right: Bill Flanagan, John Ball Zoo, and Cale Nordmeyer, Minnesota Zoo, release Poweshiek Skipperlings into the wild



David Pavlik, Haddad Labs at Michigan State University

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can create your very own micro-habitat for wildlife in your backyard. Select native plantings with little to no maintenance, as well as plants that will attract pollinators and feed wildlife.





John Ball Zoo Entrance

# Community: Good Stewards of our Resources

It takes an entire community to save wildlife and wild places. Whether our conservation efforts occur in the Great Lakes region or around the world, it takes financial resources in order to make a difference, which is why we are so grateful for our philanthropic supporters who continue to give to John Ball Zoo and make a difference in the community they serve. We're sharing the stories of just two of our donors, who are part of a mighty family of supporters whose generosity will be felt for generations to come.



Maggie Smitt  
Development Manager

## JON AND JOYCE BOWER

Charitable giving is an important value in our family. We enjoy sharing with our children, and now our grandchildren, the responsibility of supporting organizations that work hard for the benefit of others.

One of our favorite ways to help at John Ball Zoo is to participate in the animal sponsorship program. We also support the Zoo's mission through the year-end appeal where the Zoo typically has secured a match from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council. Knowing that we can multiply our impact, along with our community, is very important to us. These annual funds are critical for the Zoo to be able to address its greatest needs.

John Ball Zoo is working diligently to walk the walk, not just talk. We are very proud to call John Ball Zoo our zoo.

## FIFTH THIRD BANK

For the past three years, John Ball Zoo has partnered with Fifth Third Bank to Round Up for Conservation. Guests visiting the Zoo are given the opportunity to round up their purchases to the nearest dollar, which contributes to conservation efforts at John Ball Zoo and around the world. **With a matching gift from Fifth Third Bank, our community raised nearly \$78,000 during the 2021 season.** Every penny makes a difference toward saving wildlife and wild places. Thank you to Fifth Third Bank for being a vital community partner for conservation of wildlife and our natural environment!

Meerkat Habitat





Togo Toucan

### **Our Mission.**

We inspire our community to be actively engaged in the conservation of wildlife and our natural environment.

### **Our Vision.**

We envision a future of being a world-class zoo, a premier educational facility, a renowned conservation center and a wildly successful national visitor attraction.

### **Our Values.**

Conservation  
Education  
Community  
Celebrate  
Compassion

ACCREDITED BY THE  
**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**



**JOHN BALL ZOO**

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