

Rhode Island Zoological Society

Conservation Overview

A Local Connection

Roger Williams Park Zoo is committed to providing the highest quality of care for the animals in its collection and seeks to serve the local and regional community as a responsible environmental steward. In this vein, the Zoo participates in fieldwork in several sites throughout New England as part of five important conservation projects aimed at saving endemic endangered species: New England cottontail rabbit, timber rattlesnake, Eastern box turtle, Eastern spadefoot toads, and American burying beetle. The Zoo also continuously develops and teaches environmental education programs that reach a variety of different audiences with a message of conservation to inspire action and involvement..

Conservation Partnerships

In 2006, Roger Williams Park Zoo and seven other New England conservation organizations formed the New England Zoos and Aquariums Conservation Collaborative (NEZACC), the first such conservation-orientated collaboration group in New England. The group continually works together to explore how to make a greater impact on the region's environment by forming new partnerships for ongoing conservation efforts.

A Global Reach

Conservation Research Funding: On the national and global level, Roger Williams Park Zoo has consistently been a participant in and supporter of large-scale partnerships, collaborations and organizations that work to promote wildlife and habitat conservation. In addition to our own conservation and research initiatives, Roger Williams Park Zoo also supports fieldwork in conservation and environmental education by annual donations and others through the Sophie Danforth Conservation Biology Fund (SDCBF). The Fund awards annual grants to conservation projects around the world. Since 1989, the SDCBF has awarded over \$300,000 to worthwhile projects, many of which have continued to grow and succeed.





EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Our Method

- Our programs are inquiry-based & experiential, encouraging discovery, deep knowledge gains, and emotional resonance
- We understand the power of a 'profound experience' and the importance of helping our participants make memories that last a lifetime
- Lessons are grounded in science, but multi-disciplinary, cutting across curricular lines
- Our focus is on authentic content, utilizing our unique resources including our collection, zoo campus, and field conservation initiatives
- We provide participants with do-able conservation actions that have real impact on our world, empowering our community to see themselves as part of the solution, and weaving them into the mission of Roger Williams Park Zoo
- We draw on several proven pedagogical approaches including Reggio Emilia and Constructivism
- We encourage and foster a growth mindset; it is okay to fail, and often our best lessons come from failure paired with continuing to try, thus growing our understanding
- We emphasize social learning (whether in a classroom setting or in a family visit)
- Ambassador Animals are always presented respectfully, encouraging understanding, empathy, and awe
- We believe in the power of play, and foster a fun atmosphere that supports this important aspect of learning



Understanding our Audiences

- We scaffold our lessons based on age appropriate content and approaches; building empathy and understanding with our youngest learners; emphasizing exploration, discovery, and global context with our elementary-aged students; delving into stewardship and responsibility with our older participants
- Our programs strive to understand participants' expectations and needs, while encouraging them to find meaning relevant to their personal experience
- Our staffing structure allows us to specialize in specific audience sector needs and priorities, with area managers for school programs, family programs, general visitor programs, and early learner play-based programs
- We prioritize inclusive program design, taking into account a diversity of learning styles and needs, and respecting diverse cultural experiences that inform participants' learning

Quality

- Our efforts are always evolving and are informed by current best practices from disciplines including conservation psychology, play study, visitor studies, and pedagogical research
- Our programs are developed and assessed using specified outcomes determined by our mission and audience needs. We use the findings of these assessments to constantly improve our efforts
- Programming is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards, and we work closely with the Rhode Island Department of Education, colleagues in higher education, districts, and classroom teachers to ensure we meet the most pressing needs of schools and students