

NALZS NEWS

Winter 2022

North Alabama Zoological Society
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NALZS.org

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Above: NALZS' tree at the Huntsville Tinsel Trail; Below: NALZS' holiday parade float

NALZS Happenings

Wondering what the North Alabama Zoological Society has been up to recently? Here's a rundown of notable NALZS happenings from late 2021 and early 2022.

Huntsville Tinsel Trail

NALZS took its tree-decorating talents to the Tinsel Trail showcase at Huntsville's Big Spring Park.

Our tree featuring Tasha the hippo and handprint animal paintings went on display from November 2021 to January 2022 for the popular annual event. We're grateful to Collins Aerospace for sponsoring the tree this year.

Christmas Parades

Did you catch NALZS at the 2021 Huntsville and Madison Christmas Parades? Thanks to our hardworking volunteers, we were able to participate in both December events. Our float theme was the Island of Misfit Toys from the "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" TV special.



Festival of the Cranes

NALZS took part in January's Festival of the Cranes in Decatur, offering fun and learning at the Alabama Center for the Arts. Activities included a presentation about FrogWatch USA and Alabama biodiversity trivia.

A Note From the Executive Director

Let me start by wishing everyone well and hoping for a wondrous 2022. As I look back at our year, several great things come to mind. The greatest has been the words of encouragement and excitement from you and the community. Everywhere we go and with everyone we meet, people share with us how much they are looking forward to the day we have a zoo and aquarium “just down the road.” We, North Alabama Zoological Society, and you, our supporters, have made great strides toward that day. It will take several more years, but with every volunteer hour and every donation, we are getting closer.



Some other great accomplishments this last year:

- Announcement of 279 acres south of Tanner along I-65 for the zoo and aquarium site
- Our first set of Summer Nature Camps and the beginning of our Junior Zoological Society High School Clubs
- The creation of pollinator gardens and participation in the [FrogWatch USA](#) program
- Our first Social Fundraising Event
- Establishment of the Claim Your Spot program, which enables patrons to attach their name to a spot on the map of a zoo

Things are really progressing, and we look forward to another great year of moving forward with your help.

Ethan Woodruff
Executive Director

ConZOOvation News

The NALZS Conservation Team presented a program on Alabama’s biodiversity during this year’s Festival of the Cranes, which took place at the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in January. Attendees learned about the diverse flora and fauna that is unique to Alabama and the southeast region through a biodiversity trivia game and by creating a biodiversity food web.

January also marked the launch of our FrogWatch USA chapter. Trained volunteers are helping NALZS document the populations of frogs and toads in North Alabama. FrogWatch is a citizen science program run by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and you can visit the [AZA’s FrogWatch USA page](#) for more information.

In March, the conservation team will start planting the NALZS Pollinator Garden at the Limestone Creek Education, Research, and Conservation Complex (LERC). Volunteers and team members will provide plants, feeders, and water sources to support the pollinators of North Alabama. Stay tuned to our social media for further information.

Research News

The NALZS Research Department has been busy building its research staff and the Research Advisory Committee (RAC). We have three new staff members on board, and the RAC has grown to 20 professors and department chairs across seven Alabama colleges and universities.



In the coming months, the research staff and several RAC professors will work together to bring undergraduate students to the Limestone Creek Education, Research, and Conservation Complex (LERC) for exploratory and applied learning, getting students out of the classroom and into the field for hands-on research and laboratory sessions. We are also working hard to establish several new exciting research projects on the LERC site; check for updates on our website!

EdZOOcation News

The NALZS EdZoocation Department is overjoyed to be talking zoo in classrooms again! We continue to grow our [Junior Zoological Society](#) program within our local high schools and home-school groups, and we are excited to announce two upcoming series, “Animals in Love” and “Pollinators.” Keep an eye on our social media throughout February and March!

In preparation for our 2022 “Be a Little Wild” nature camps, we will be recruiting 15-year-olds – high school sophomores for the 2022/2023 school year – and older to be youth camp leaders. Registration is now available [on our website](#).

If you’re acquainted with any little Van Goghs, know that we’ll be hosting the Alabama Endangered Species Youth Art Contest during April and May; check out our [competitions and contests page](#) for details. Also keep an eye out for information coming soon about a Little Tykes Explore Day on April 23. Children ages 3-5 can sign up with their favorite adult to explore North Alabama biodiversity.

Don’t forget to mark your calendars for our NALZS Kids Festival, too, which will go from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, at Monte Sano State Park. We look forward to seeing you there!

Upcoming Events

- Youth Camp Leadership Registration for “Be a Little Wild” Nature Camps: [Happening now](#)
- Alabama Endangered Species Youth Art Contest: [April 4-May 27](#)
- NALZS Kids Festival: [April 9 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Monte Sano State Park in Huntsville](#)
- Little Tykes Explore Day: April 23
- Junior Zoological Society Conservation Celebration: April 23

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Volunteer Highlight

Hannah Graveman, NALZS Conservation Manager



Why did you choose to become a part of this organization?

I wanted to be able to make a difference in educating the public and in the lives of not only amazing exotic animals, but also in our native species that need help.

When I first moved to Huntsville in 2019, one of the first things that I did was look for local native species rehabbers that I could help. I wasn’t able to find any that weren’t an hour and a half to two hours away from me, so I am so excited to be able to take part in programs like FrogWatch, AZA’s SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction), and our future native species habitats at the zoo.

How did you get involved with the FrogWatch USA program?

I got involved in FrogWatch shortly after I was hired. Kiliaen [Anderson] (NALZS Conservation Director) knew that we needed to be a part of this incredible AZA program, so shortly after she and I started working together, I started figuring out how we could be involved. We had to have one lead coordinator and two co-coor-

dinators, so after our conservation team was formed this past year, we went through training and we were finally given our chapter approval on October 7, 2021.

What is your favorite animal, and why?

My favorite animal, in general, is the sea turtle, but more specifically the leatherback sea turtle. When I was in middle school, one of our family trips was to the Florida Keys. When we were there we went to the sea turtle hospital, and I never wanted to leave. It was at that moment as a middle schooler that I decided to pursue a marine biology degree once in college. I graduated with that degree from Auburn University in May of 2017.

Board Member Highlight

Andy Crocker, Treasurer on the NALZS General Board of Directors

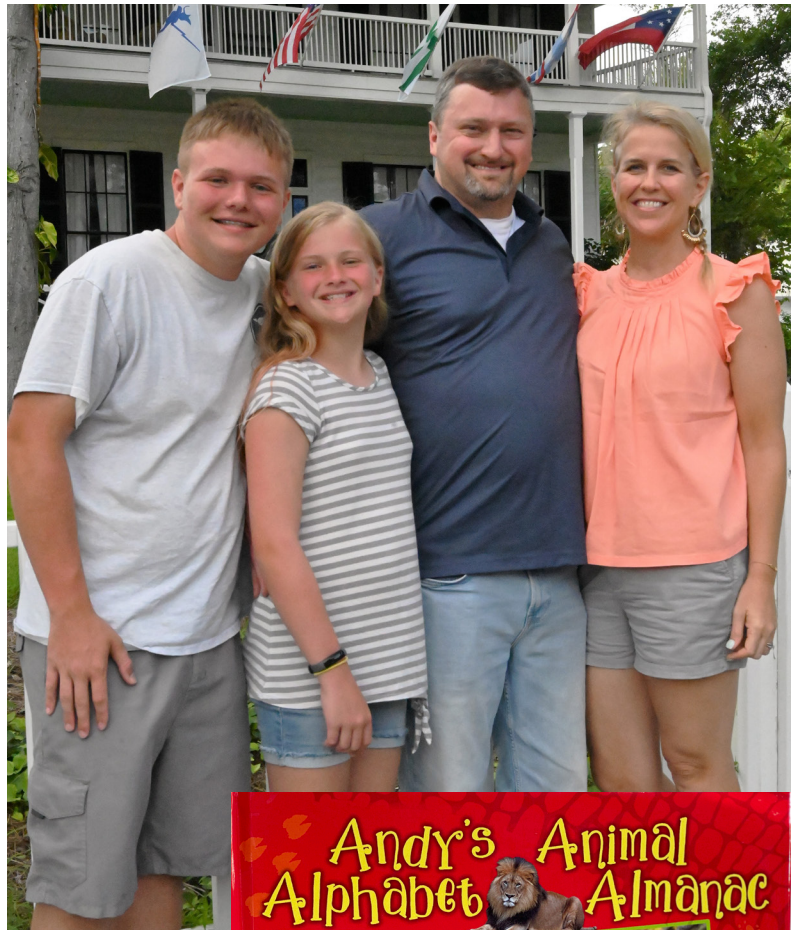
Why did you get involved with this organization?

My wife actually suggested that I look into helping out with NALZS after Ethan [Woodruff] came and talked to her Girl Scout troop about animals and the potential for a local zoo. She suggested it because I'm personally very interested in zoos, and one of my most active hobbies over the last five or so years has been photographing animals, specifically at zoos and aquariums around the country and the world.

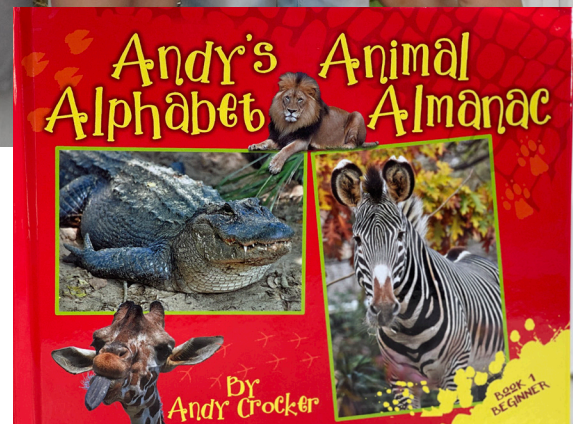
Because I've served on several boards of directors for nonprofit organizations, including [as] chairman for the Sci-Quest Hands-on Science Center several years ago, I decided to look into board membership. I'm thankful to have been invited to join the board in April 2021.

What can you tell us about your book, "Andy's Animal Alphabet Almanac"?

Creating the book allowed me to combine into a single project several of my interests: poetry, photography, and zoos. Although I'm an engineer, I've always been interested in the arts and particularly in poetry. When digital photography entered the mainstream, I started out photographing landscapes and



Above: Andy Crocker and his family; Right: The cover of Andy's book



travel destinations – and I still enjoy them both – but I eventually developed a love of photographing animals. I've visited over 75 zoos and aquariums and wildlife reserves around the world.

I had conceived of the book and had started working on it a couple of years ago, but when I joined NALZS, I decided to actually finish the project and to donate all sales of the book to NALZS – that helped motivate me to get it done.

What is your favorite animal, and why?

My favorite animal changes as I learn more about different animals. I think my favorite right now is the axolotl. ... What makes it my favorite, though, is its healing ability: the axolotl can not only regenerate lost appendages, like its tail or a limb, but it can even regenerate parts of its central nervous system, ... tissues of the eye and heart, and even less-vital parts of its brain.

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