

# NALZS NEWS

Winter 2023

North Alabama Zoological Society  
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[NALZS.org](http://NALZS.org)

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*Above: The NALZS booth during STEAMfest 2022; Below: Huntsville and Athens holiday trees*

## NALZS Happenings

Wondering what the North Alabama Zoological Society has been up to lately? Here's a rundown of notable NALZS happenings from the past few months.

### STEAMfest 2022

We loved interacting with thousands of you during October's [STEAMfest 2022](http://STEAMfest2022) event at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville. During this celebration of science and technology, NALZS booth visitors played games, made hagfish slime, met our tortoise mascot Twickenham, interacted with animals like coatis and snakes, and learned about the NALZS mission. We're grateful to everyone who stopped by!



### Holiday Trees in Huntsville and Athens

NALZS decided on a double dose of holiday cheer in 2022 by participating in both the Huntsville Tinsel Trail and Athens North Pole Stroll. We decorated trees for the two events, which took place from November-January and in December, respectively. The NALZS General Board of Directors took care of the Tinsel Trail tree, and we're grateful to Pennington Animal Hospital for sponsoring it. Our volunteer coordinator Beth Hudson and her daughter Alexa made our Athens tree happen. If you attended either event this past holiday season, we hope you had a great time!

# A Note From the Executive Director



Did you know that a visit to the zoo could be just what the doctor ordered? While studies on the topic are not always readily available to the public due to being published in scientific conference proceedings, a few have been published to the public and document the [positive effects of zoo visits](#) on people's health.

NALZS recently put together its own analysis on the impact of zoos in regard to quality of life, and we're excited to share the highlights with you. Since we're working to create a modern zoo and aquarium, we looked at the quality of life benefits one would offer to individuals and the community. And there are plenty! Here are a few we found to have the greatest impact:

- Opportunities for imaginative, cultural, historical, and physical exploration
- Blending of plants, animals, and other biodiversity to offer everyone daily interaction and connection with the natural world
- Stewardship of our natural resources; preservation of Earth's flora and fauna; and prevention and removal of pollution

In this edition of NALZS News, we have an article that delves deeper into the valuable information from this analysis, and I encourage you to check it out.

I also want to thank everyone for their continued support. We're excited about the NALZS programs and events coming up in 2023, and will continue to work toward "A Zoo For You, North Alabama."

Ethan Woodruff  
Executive Director



## Let's ROAR!

Contact your county legislative delegation office today, and tell them to say yes to local legislation that will help create and fund a zoo in North Alabama. Learn how to reach out the easy way at [NALZS.org/help](https://www.nalzs.org/help)

## Upcoming Events

Visit [NALZS.org](https://www.nalzs.org) and our social media pages to see the latest event info

- **Spring Little Tykes Day Camp:** March 18 from 9 am-12 pm at the Madison Public Library
- **Boyd Family Farm Easter Egg Hunt:** April 1 from 9 am-2 pm in Ardmore
- **2nd Annual NALZS Kids Festival:** April 15 from 10 am-4 pm at Monte Santo State Park





# What Does a Zoo Do for You?

If you're reading this newsletter, we're guessing you're a fan of visiting zoos and aquariums. But have you ever stopped to think, "What does a zoo do for you?" Well, we have some answers!

Since NALZS is striving to create a zoo and aquarium, but doesn't have one, we chose to look at what a Modern Zoo and Aquarium (Z&A) would offer in terms of quality-of-life benefits for individuals. And we're excited to share the highlights of this analysis with you. Keep reading to learn about all the benefits Z&As bring to individuals and families, on up to the world at large.

## What Is 'Quality of Life?'

Before we get to the benefits, let's talk about what quality of life is anyway. While the definitions vary, one of the most accepted ones comes from the [World Health Organization](#). It defines quality of life as "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns." What's important to remember from this definition is that quality of life is a subjective measure of one's well-being.

## The 7 Quality of Life Domains and How Zoos Measure Up

We chose seven quality-of-life categories for our analysis, and we cover each of them in their own section below. Within each category we list three quality-of-life benefits, plus we measure each in terms of a Z&A's Impact (indicated with an "I") and Influence and Reach

(Indicated with an "R"). Impact measurements range from 1 star (negligible) to 5 stars (stratospheric). Influence and Reach, on the other hand, start at individuals and go all the way up to the world itself. (You can see the full list of measurements in the pull-out box at right.)

In each section, you'll also see an asterisk (\*) next to one of the benefits. In the paragraph below it, you can read about that benefit and how a Z&A contributes to fulfilling it.

### Basics

**Shelter:** I = 1.5 stars; R = Area

**Employment and Earnings:** I = 3 stars; R = World\*

**Food and Clothing:** I = 1.5 stars; R = Area

It's important for people to have access and the means to earn a fair living so they can meet the needs of themselves and loved ones. As it turns out, a significant cause of human-animal conflicts relates to the ability to provide a living via jobs such as farming, logging, and mining. Modern Z&As work to help minimize the effects causing human-animal conflicts related to these necessary jobs, as well as to find alternatives. And as members of their communities, they work to be responsible employers providing livable wages and benefits.

### Health

**Physical and Mental Health and Wellness:** I = 4.5 stars; R = Area\*

**Recreation and Social Interactions:** I = 4.5 stars; R = Area

**Life Satisfaction and Purpose:** I = 3 stars; R = Area

Along with the exercise visitors

## Quality of Life Measurements We Used

### Impact

Negligible = 1 star

Low = 2 stars

Moderate = 3 stars

High = 4 stars

Stratospheric = 5 stars

### Influence and Reach

1. Individual

2. Family

3. Neighborhood

4. City

5. Area

6. State

7. Region

8. National

9. World Region

10. World

get there, Z&As can have other impacts on the health of the people who visit. Many studies, some of which include zoological facility settings, have concluded that interactions with animals improve anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental and emotional conditions. Other studies have shown that they also have the same effect on many animal residents of the Z&A.

### Wonder

**Education and Learning:**

I = 4.5 stars; R = Region

**Arts, Culture, Museums, and Libraries:** I = 5 stars;

R = Region\*

**Uniqueness:** I = 4 stars;

R = Region

Modern Z&As are often identified as being "living museums." Museums expose people to new things, which open our minds up to exploring more possibilities.  
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(Continued from Page 3)

ities and being more creative with the solutions to life’s challenges. They also ground us with respect and admiration for the accomplishments of the past.

**Movement**

**Walking and Cycling:**

I = 2 stars; R = Neighborhood

**Public Transportation:**

I = 2 stars; R = Neighborhood

**Personal Vehicle Transportation:**

I = 2 stars; R = Area\*

The Modern Z&A has great appreciation for personal vehicle transportation as beneficiaries, and implements it on a small scale within the Z&A. Z&As work with public officials and governments to improve roads and routes around the Z&A for the benefits of travelers, the community, and the environment.



**Nature**

**Open Spaces:** I = 4.5 stars; R = World

**Connection and Interaction:**

I = 5 stars; R = World\*

**Sustaining the Environment:**

I = 5 stars; R = World

Most Modern Z&As’ stated core purpose is to facilitate that connection between people and the animals under their care. This also includes the natural habitats those species come from. The interaction with nature in the Z&A is what stimulates all the quality-of-life benefits for both visitor and resident.

**Control**

**Safety:** I = 2 stars; R = Area

**Economic Opportunities:**

I = 4 stars; R = Area\*

**Civic Engagement:** I = 2 stars;

R = World

Modern Z&As have a tremendous economic impact on their surrounding communities. They generate jobs and support local communities by attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The universal appeal Z&As have as a regional attraction means the effects reach farther than just the local host city, too.

**Belonging**

**Diversity:**

I = 3 stars;

R = Area

**Community:**

I = 4 stars;

R = Area\*

**Interest and Hobbies:**

I = 3.5 stars;

R = National

Research suggests that individuals who feel a sense of security, belonging, and trust in their community have better health. Some of the ways this is achieved is through community groups, activities, and events, which Modern Z&As love to host. Other ways Z&As contribute to the sense of community is through their volunteer programs and the overall social aspect of seeing neighbors out doing a similar activity.

As you can see, Z&As positively impact people’s quality of life in many ways, and NALZS is working hard so North Alabama can have one of its own. You can check out more of our reports and publications at [NALZS.org/reports-and-studies](http://NALZS.org/reports-and-studies).

**ConZOOvation News**

The NALZS Conservation Team hosted a booth at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge’s Festival of the Cranes in January. Attendees learned about the goals of the zoo and had the opportunity to play the “Where Do I Live?” animal and habitat matching game.

As spring approaches, the conservation team is gearing up for a busy season. We were present at an Eagle Awareness Weekend in Guntersville in February and will be helping with the Little Tykes Day Camp at the Madison Public Library in March.

In April, the NALZS Conservation Team will be presenting activities at the 2nd Annual NALZS Kids Festival held at Monte Sano State Park. Be sure to come by the conservation booth to get your passport stamp and learn about the latest efforts in conservation in the North Alabama area.

Finally, conservation team members will join the education and outreach teams in April to celebrate the Junior Zoological Society chapters and their students during their year-end convention.



# EdZOOcation News

The NALZS EdZooation Department is excited to begin 2023! We have so many fun things planned for this year. Keep reading to learn more about them.

## Junior Zoological Society

We continue to grow our [Junior Zoological Society](#) program within our local high schools and home-school groups, and we're excited to announce the winners of our JZS PSA Endangered Animal Mini Competition:

- **1st Place:** River Bridge Chapter (Black Warrior waterdog), Decatur/Morgan County
- **2nd Place:** Huntsville Honey Badgers Chapter (gray bat), Huntsville/Madison County
- **3rd Place:** Hazel Green High School Chapter (Black Warrior waterdog), Huntsville/Madison County

We're looking forward to our annual JZS Conservation Celebration on April 28.

## 2023 'Be a Little Wild' Camps

In preparation for our 2023 "Be a Little Wild" Nature Camps in June, we'll be recruiting



*Above and right: Children take part in the October 2022 NALZS Little Tykes Day Camp at the Athens-Limestone County Public Library*



those who are 15 years old (high school sophomores for the 2023-2024 school year) and older to be youth camp counselors. Applicants must be comfortable working outdoors, be able to hike 3 miles a day, and have experience working with children and a love for nature. Applications are available at [NALZS.org/yltraining](https://www.nalzs.org/yltraining).

NALZS is also excited to hold our Spring Little Tykes Day Camp on March 18. Little Tykes Day Camp is an introduction to the exploration of nature for 3-5-year-olds. The explorers and their favorite adult will go on an adventure hosted by the Madison Public Library. Educational lessons, outside exploration, crafts, animal encounters, and snacks will add to a fun experience. Registration is now closed, but more information is available at [NALZS.org/littletykesdaycamp](https://www.nalzs.org/littletykesdaycamp).

We'll soon be announcing the dates for our Summer 2023 "Be a Little Wild" Nature Camps happening in June; ages, dates, and times will vary. We're excited to offer a Nature Art camp this summer, as well. Watch for details at [NALZS.org/education](https://www.nalzs.org/education).

## NALZS Kids Festival

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our 2nd Annual NALZS Kids Festival, taking place on Saturday, April 15, at Monte Sano State Park. We look forward to seeing you there! If you'd like to join us as a vendor at this community festival, please go to [NALZS.org/kids-festival2023](https://www.nalzs.org/kids-festival2023).

"A Zoo For You, North Alabama"



MEMBER

**Can You Please Lend a Paw?**

Learn about all the ways you can help us out at [NALZS.org/support](https://www.nalzs.org/support)



## Board Member Highlight

### Gary Henderson, Member of the NALZS General Board of Directors

**Why did you get involved with this organization?**

My family are huge proponents of bringing a zoo to North Alabama. We are also ingrained in the community surrounding the zoo, so we wanted to be involved from the start but joined a little after it began. My wife and I own and operate We Are Huntsville as well as Think Enterprise Solutions Inc., both of which are focused on highlighting the region's value and growth. We both realize what our organization is bringing to the region and want to be as supportive as possible.



possible. I enjoy trying to spend what time I have left on the golf course, spending more money than I need losing golf balls and enjoying nature. Additionally, I look for nonprofits like Bearded Warriors and Merrimack Hall to plug into for support when the time arises.

**What is your favorite animal, and why?**

A wolf... if I had to pick a "wild" animal, primarily due to their K-9 attributes and [because they're] typically found to enjoy colder weather, just like myself. However,

I love dogs more than anything. We have two pups right now, a golden-basset mix rescue (Maggie Mae Henderson) and a Pembroke Welsh corgi (Roxie Joe Henderson), as well as one pup that has moved on to "pupper heaven," Willow Jan Henderson, who was a black Lab rescue.

**How do you like to spend your time outside of NALZS?**

Honestly, most of my time is spent working, haha, but outside of that we have two small businesses we run as well as go on as many adventures as

## Did You Know?

You can support NALZS by shopping at Kroger! Scan the code below to get started with Kroger Community Rewards, and help us reach our goal of gaining 30% more subscribers. Best of all, it's free to sign up!



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## Volunteer Highlight

### Chris Martin, NALZS Volunteer



**Why did you decide to be a NALZS volunteer?**

My wife and I have visited zoos across the country, and visiting the local zoo is one of our favorite activities when we visit a new city. I wanted to volunteer for NALZS for a few reasons. I think it is important to contribute to the community I live in. I think zoos are a beneficial source of education and inspiration for furthering individuals' understanding and passion about wildlife conservation.

**How do you like to spend your time outside of NALZS?**

I enjoy spending time with my wife, traveling, and doing Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

**What is your favorite animal, and why?**

My favorite animal is the red panda because they are so quiet and mysterious. I can just imagine walking through a high-altitude forest in Asia, looking up and seeing a red panda silently walking through the trees.

# Thank You to Our Donors

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## Join the NALZS Zoo Crew!

We're looking for volunteers to help out with fundraising, projects, events, and more.

Learn about our volunteer opportunities at [NALZS.org/volunteer](http://NALZS.org/volunteer)

## Don't get left BEHIND!

Make sure your family or company are part of the permanent honor wall and donor display at the zoo!

**Claim Your Spot at the Zoo!**

**NALZS** NORTH ALABAMA ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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It's easy, just visit the site below.

[nalzs.org/ClaimYourSpot](http://nalzs.org/ClaimYourSpot)

