



Wild Connections



Photo Courtesy: Joel Sartore

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Holiday Happenings

The holiday season at the zoo sparkles with festive lights and cheerful decorations. Guests can enjoy special programs such as the popular Wild Lights festival or a memorable breakfast with Santa! It's a joyful time to celebrate wildlife and wonder.

Winter at the zoo brings a fresh sense of calm and wonder to every corner of the park. Many animals become more active in the cooler temperatures, giving guests a chance to see behaviors that are harder to spot in summer. Indoor habitats provide warm, cozy spaces for both animals and visitors to enjoy. It's the perfect season to explore, learn, and experience the zoo in a whole new way.



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

Winter 2025

Holiday Gift Giving

Look no further than the Miller Park Zoo for the perfect gift! Annual zoo memberships, ZOOadoption packages and gift shop treasures are sure to delight any animal lover! Members receive 20% off their purchase in the Miller Park Zoo, Children's Discovery Museum and Mclean County Museum of History gift shops through the month of November!

**NOVEMBER IS
MEMBER APPRECIATION MONTH**
MEMBERS GET 20% OFF AT ALL 3 GIFT SHOPS IN NOVEMBER



Zoo Memberships

The perfect gift!

Membership Benefits Include:

- **Unlimited FREE admission**
- **Discounts on concessions, zootique purchases and birthday parties**
- **Discounted entry to certain events**
- **Free or discounted admission to other participating AZA zoos & aquariums**
- **Invitation to members only events**
- **Discounts on camps and classes (restrictions apply)**

Visit mpzs.org to learn more

Enrichment Wishlist

Our animals love receiving gifts too! Please consider gifting an enrichment item from our Amazon [wishlist](#) to one of our animals this holiday season!



Animal Spotlight

American Alligator

Sally, the American Alligator, was born on November 24, 2002. She hatched at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm in Florida. After moving to Dallas Texas in 2009, she came to Miller Park Zoo in 2019. Sally is about 8 feet long and weighs around 163 pounds. American alligators are the largest reptile in the United States. Their average lifespan in human care is 50 years old, but the oldest living alligator on record is 90 years old! His name is "Muja" and he hatched between 1925-1935.

Sally's diet consists of about 1.5 lbs. of whole prey along with biscuits. Did you know that alligators survive 2 to 3 years without eating?! Well, don't worry. Sally is offered food a few times a week in the warmer months. In the colder winter months, she does not eat or train with keepers due to brumation (a period of dormancy) and her lethargic state. During these months, she spends most of her time in her pool because it's heated to 55 degrees! Sally has had multiple clutches of eggs, but none have been fertile.

Despite their small brains (they are the size of a quarter!) alligators are highly intelligent. Sally is trained to perform a number of tasks, such as going to her log to station, opening her mouth, going in the water and swimming between biscuits. She does all of these when her keeper gives her a command. What a smart girl! She is rewarded with whole prey or biscuits when she completes the task. Sally's training is also considered enrichment. She loves pushing boomer balls & pumpkins around in the water and crushing produce like watermelon, apples, and squash. Keepers have also set up a sprinkler for her to enjoy.

In August 2024, Keepers became worried about Sally as she was rubbing her face against her ramps. A full anestitized exam showed us she had a toothache. Vets removed the tooth and Sally woke up feeling much better!

Be sure to stop by the "gator pool" the next time you're at the Zoo.



Wildlife & Wonder

2025 Year in Review & 2026 Vision

By Loren Singer

Dear Friend of Miller Park Zoo,

We are deeply grateful for your generosity. Because of you, our zoo has had a wonderful 2025!

- We built a habitat for our new resident, Taco the two-toed sloth.
- Bindi, our wallaroo, gave birth to a little joey named Irwin.
- We purchased new monitoring equipment for the hospital.
- Four children were awarded the Jr. Zookeeper Scholarship.
- Three custom habitat enclosures were purchased for the ZooLab.
- Four new and very personable alpacas joined our zoo family.
- A red panda named Dorji joined our red panda, China.
- Under the MPZS grant, the Education Dept. did over 30 “Zoo to You programs” at local schools.
- Chili, our giant anteater, gave birth to a baby boy names Mr. Snoot!

Your kindness helps our animals thrive and strengthens our work in conservation and education. We truly couldn't do this without you.

Looking Ahead to 2026: A Home for Morticia & Wednesday

Our goal for the coming year is to build a dedicated habitat for our beloved Southern Ground African Hornbills, “Morticia and Wednesday”. If you've met them, you already know — they're impossible not to love. Here at Miller Park Zoo, they are more than beloved residents — they are ambassadors for their wild counterparts, inspiring guests to care about a species that urgently needs protection.

We are ready to build this new home... but we cannot do it without you.

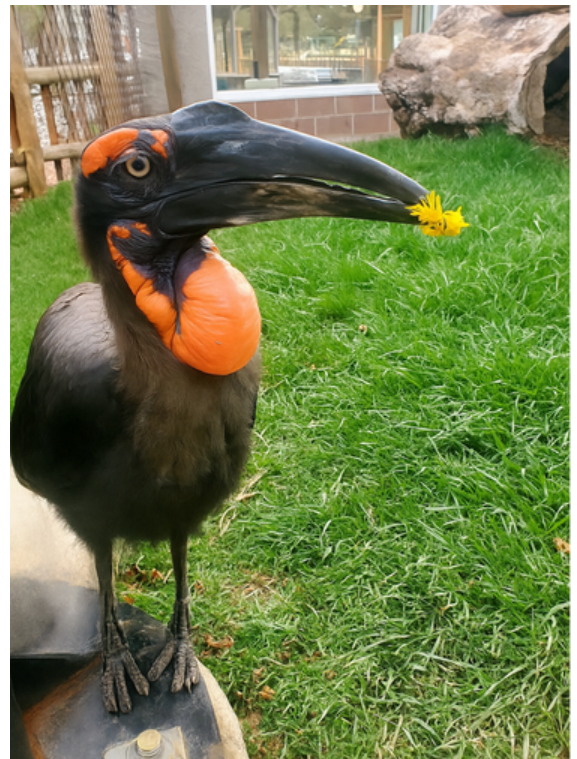
Every gift — large or small — brings us closer to giving these remarkable birds the environment they deserve.

You Can Make a Difference Today

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation by December 31st to help us create a joyful, enriching home for Morticia and Wednesday — a place filled with exploration, play, and the deep, resonant calls that make them so extraordinary.

Thank you for being a cherished part of our zoo community. Because of you, the future is bright — for our animals, our visitors, and the species we work to protect.

DONATE



Programs

Winter Wilds Day Camp: Night and Day

December 29, 30, 31

9:00am - 3:00pm

Ages 6-11

At this camp, we will explore the lives of diurnal animals to see the special abilities they need for being active in daytime. Then, we'll flip the switch & investigate nocturnal animals' nighttime powers! Along the way, we'll meet some Zoo animals, make a craft, & enjoy fun, educational activities. A snack will be provided. An animal video will be played during lunch between morning and afternoon activities.

Please bring a sack lunch & wear play clothes.

***Curriculum is identical for each day; please register for only one session**

Friday Night Twilight Safari

February 6, 13, 20

5:30pm - 8:00pm

Ages 6 - 12

Parents, plan a night out while your student enjoys an evening at the zoo! Participants will make friends (human & animal!), join in fun activities, & learn more about wildlife. A meal from zoo concessions will be included in registration fee with chips and a drink. Students will choose between a hotdog, chicken fingers, soft pretzel and mozzarella sticks at drop off. An animal video will be played to wind down after activities and before pickup. Come to one, come to all! Curriculum will differ each session. Wear comfy play clothes and bring a cozy blanket for wind down if you'd like.

Animal Crackers

January 30 & 31

February 27 & 28

Times - Various

Ages 3-5 with an adult

Animal Crackers is a Miller Park Zoo classic! Join us once each month for a story, animal encounter, craft, & snack. Our topic never repeats but is always a surprise. We have a great time guessing which animal will visit! One adult accompanies each child to class but does not pay an additional registration fee. Registration fee includes admission to the Zoo for the participating child & one adult on the day of class.

***Children must be at least three years old to participate. Unregistered siblings of any age may not attend.**

Zoo Explorers - Carnivores

February 16th

9:00am - 11:00am or 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Ages 6-11

Zoo Explorers is a terrific 2-hour adventure that includes animal encounters, classroom learning, and hands-on experiences out in the Zoo.



Volunteer Roundup Open House

January 20th 5:30pm - 6:30pm

January 24th 10:00am - 11:00 am

Calling all volunteers! Join us for an opportunity to learn what it takes to become a volunteer at Miller Park Zoo. There will be a short presentation describing the opportunities we offer.

We have jobs in animal care, building projects, light data entry, and events. If you want a meaningful way to give back to our amazing community, this is the place for you!

Events



Breakfast with Santa December 6th

Have breakfast with Santa at the Miller Park Pavilion! Two time slots available!

Enjoy a continental-style breakfast! There will be a chance to meet with Santa himself and take pictures with him and Mrs. Claus. Enjoy an animal encounter and an early morning stroll through the Zoo after breakfast. Spots for this event fill up fast, so don't delay!

8:30 AM and 10:00 AM time slots available.

All children must be accompanied by an adult.

All attendees must pre-register.

Fee: MPZS Members: \$20; Non-members: \$25



Wild Lights December 12-13 & 19-20 5-8 pm

Join us for a festive evening walk through the Zoo, all decked out with lights and decorations for the Holiday! There will be fun activities for the kids (kids at heart too!) and a craft. Enjoy some hot chocolate and an opportunity to purchase a \$3 kit to make your own s'more! Tickets can be purchased at the door or ahead of time by calling 309-434-2250

Fee: MPZS Members: \$5; Non-members: \$10

FREE Admission every Friday in February!

Stampede 5K, 3K, Fun Run March 7th 9:30 & 10:00

Come join the Stampede as we run for a wild cause! Participants will run or walk on a USATF certified course through historic Miller Park, surrounding neighborhood and Miller Park Zoo.

Kids ages 10 and under can take part in the ¼ mile fun run! Kids will run through the zoo and finish at the pavilion for an after party, including snacks and animal encounters!



Proceeds from this year's event will go towards a new habitat for our Southern Ground Hornbills "Morticia & Wednesday"! The Zoological Society raises funds that support our mission and partnership with the Zoo. Each year a project of greatest need is selected. Your participation in this event helps to enhance the visitor experience, provide exceptional care for our animals and to support global conservation initiatives.

REGISTER/VOLUNTEER



ZooDoption

By symbolically adopting an animal, you are helping to directly support and care for the animals at Miller Park Zoo.

ZooDoptions are the perfect gift for the animal lover in your life!

Packages include a personalized certificate, photo, zoo passes and more!

Recent ZooDoptions

Joni & Joe Painter - Giant Anteater

Patrick Zehr - Giant Anteater

ADOPT