



MARCH

MONTHLY OVERVIEW REPORT / 2025



THE ZOO

35 ANIMAL TRANSFERS

3 male and 2 female bush dogs left for Belfast Zoo on 4th March, along with our two male chimpanzees, Tombe and Tumba.

On the 28th March, we received the sad news that Tombe had passed away. Initial postmortem findings suggested a probable heart attack, but we are awaiting full postmortem results from the team at Belfast Zoo. Meanwhile, Tumba continues to do well integrating into the wider chimpanzee troop and the animal care team at Belfast are closely monitoring him.

Following the bush dogs' departure to Belfast Zoo, the male, Kourou, who arrived on 12th February from Zooparc de Peaugres, France was mixed with the remaining female on the 6th March. The introduction was successful.

26 Denison barbs joined the collection on 6th March. They are currently off show undergoing quarantine.

On 21st March, female aardvark, Oni, returned to Chester Zoo. Female Oq and her offspring Roo can be seen at Aardvark Burrow.

On 12th March, a female two-toed sloth, named Midnight, arrived from Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park. Midnight is currently not viewable to public but will move to Worlds Apart in the near future.



8 ANIMALS BORN

The strawberry poison frogs in Sensation Station have bred; three froglets developed and left the breeding site.

On 12th March, female white-lipped tamarin, Bonnie, gave birth to twins; this is Bonnie's first birth.

On 14th March, female warthog, Hermione, gave birth to three male piglets.

MORE

ZOO IMPROVEMENTS

Work continued this month upgrading the buff-headed capuchin habitat.

The shelter and first stage of the new fencing was completed at the goat and sheep walkthrough at Colenso Village.

New infrared basking areas were also installed in the rhinoceros iguana and green iguana habitat.



4 CONFERENCES & MEETINGS ATTENDED

Keepers from Carnivore, Farm and Rainforest sections attended talks as part of an online xenarthra conference, focusing on their species at Colchester Zoo; giant anteater, armadillo, sloth and southern tamandua.

Keepers from Carnivore Section attended an evening online session run by the Association of British Wild Animal Keepers (ABWAK) focusing on red pandas.

The Senior Keeper of Rainforest section attended the 2025 ABWAK Symposium at Chester Zoo.

The Team Leader of Africa section spent two days at ZSL London Zoo as part of a Keeper Exchange, working with their evidence-based animal care team. She will transfer her knowledge gained back to Colchester Zoo.

2 MEETINGS

The Head Keeper led an internal team leader meeting focusing on animal escapes, utilising a thermal drone in efforts to search the zoo for the 'escaped' animal.

The Team Leader and Qualified Keeper from Elephant section attended an Elephant Subgroup meeting at West Midlands Safari Park.



EDUCATION

91

SCHOOLS VISITED
COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY THIS MONTH

BRINGING IN A TOTAL OF

4,181

STUDENTS

134

SCHOOL
SESSIONS RAN
AT THE ZOO



21

OUTREACH SESSIONS

760

PARTICIPANTS

Easter is very late this year, so the usual March 'term-end trips' have moved into the first week of April. This means March is lower in attendance numbers than usual, but April is higher and overall, academic year to date, figures are looking fairly similar to other years.

VOLUNTEERS



UP TO

5

VOLUNTEERS
ATTENDED
PER DAY

REACHING OVER

200

VISITORS
IN A DAY



1,309 VISITORS
ENGAGED
WITH AT THE EXPLORATORIUM

EDUCATED USING
932
BOXES



The aardvarks, leopards and rhinos were focal species, as were the red pandas for panda day, and interactives such as the chimpanzee intelligence game were used with success.

School groups also engaged with the props and asked lots of questions as the volunteers moved around the Zoo.

UMPHAFA NATURE RESERVE

1 MALE CHEETAH LOCATED

The cheetah female released in February continues to do well. The team were hoping that we would have had the males by now but there has been ongoing discussions about health status of one of the males coming from Zululand to discuss whether he needs a TB test or not. In the meantime, the Cheetah Advisory Group have located another male to replace this one, which will be bought onto the reserve once he is of dispersal age from his mother.



1 CAUGHT POACHER

This month, the Reserve Managers caught a poacher cooking a porcupine on the reserve. The police were called and they took him to the station, he was charged with trespassing.

The police were also involved when a drunk driver crashed through the fence line. Unfortunately, 100m of fence was damaged and the team spent 4 hours fixing it; especially important as the cheetah seems to prefer this area and we didn't want to risk her escaping the reserve.



4 LADIES COMMENCED EMPLOYMENT

Four ladies from the local community commenced employment this month to start the major task of removing acacia karoo from the reserve. This thorny bush has got out of control across the reserve, and as it grows and expands, it reduces the amount of grass that can successfully survive in an area. We also received a new Agri drone which will be used to spray weeds on the fence line and to eradicate invasive plants. Combined with the work of the local ladies, this piece of equipment will be essential in improving the vegetation condition on the reserve.

CONTINUED

SAVSIM TRAINING

At the end of the February, a UK charity, called SAVSIM, visited the reserve to train the Field Rangers.

Their training continued into March. The training saw the field rangers become more competent in shooting, armed and unarmed combat and ambush and patrolling techniques.



2 MORE DONATED SECURITY CAMERAS

Wildlife Protection Solutions donated 2 more security cameras this month. Exciting news as the team can cover more areas of fence line/poaching hotspots with these effective cameras that send pictures instantly to managers' phones, so the team are very grateful for the donation.

1st GIRAFFE CALF OF 2025 BORN

The first giraffe calf of the year was born this month.

1 ANNUAL MEETING

The team hosted the annual Ezemvelo Honorary Officers meeting on the reserve this month, at the bush camp. These are a group of dedicated people that give their time voluntarily to support and carry out maintenance work on the state parks in KwaZulu Natal.



2 NEW INTERNS

2 new interns joined for the month. They carried out activities such as habituating the leopards, camera trap surveys, plaster casting of tracks (always good after rain as the wet ground is perfect for track impressions), bush encroachment, road repair and anti-poaching activities.

70 mm OF RAINFALL IN TWO HOURS

Heavy rain of 70mms in 2 hours caused the fence line to collapse and become covered in debris on the northern area of the reserve. Again, the maintenance team rushed to fix the fence line to prevent cheetah escape. Whilst the interns went to check that the cheetah was safe, they saw she had just chased a female kudu into the fence, causing another hole that needed fixing.

Despite positive weather, this month's game count did not yield high animal numbers, in fact it was one of the lowest game counts in the last few years. Game capture to remove a proportion of animals off of the reserve (to ensure suitable management of vegetation) was thankfully delayed due to the rains making the roads impassable, so hopefully the animals will all come out of hiding in time for the next game count and capture.

MANY

REPAIRS MAINTENANCE TEAM

The Maintenance Team installed a solar geyser at the Intern accommodation this month and started to collect the bricks ready for building a ranger outpost on the reserve's highest hill. Due to the weight, they can only carry 250 at a time in the tractor trailer. Road repair and grass cutting also continued this month, along with fixing a leak in the splash pool in the boma and repairing the pump in one of the boreholes.



CONSERVATION

This month, Colchester Zoological Society made its 2025 contribution to the Red Panda Network; a community-based monitoring programme for red pandas and their habitat in Nepal. Our contribution helps to sponsor a Forest Guardian.

Forest Guardians are on-the-ground partners, who are employed to monitor and protect red panda habitat and support red panda conservation.



**RED PANDA
NETWORK**

The Zoological Director attended an online Conservation Directors meeting.

