



Leopard tortoise

# MARCH

MONTHLY OVERVIEW REPORT / 2026

COLCHESTER  
ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

# THE ZOO



Our group of weaver birds and leopard tortoises moved back to their renovated habitat in Kingdom of the Wild in time for opening of the building ready for the Easter holidays.

Village weaver bird

## INTERNAL TRANSFERS

On 27th March, female cheetah Anika moved from Edge of Africa to the now vacant lion habitat. With work due to commence in Edge of Africa on the new lion enclosure, the Edge of Africa cheetah habitat will be redeveloped, with the male cheetah due to leave soon.

Following the loss of male crowned crane, Charles, male Benedict moved from the crane group in the paddock at Kingdom of the Wild to join our female Camilla. They are currently off show for mixing but once settled, will go back into the mixed habitat with the dik dik.

## ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

The trio of skunks left the collection on the 2nd March for Askham Bryan college. We no longer hold this species in the collection. Next month, a pair of meerkats will join the collection and go into their vacated enclosure.

A group of 18 tinfoil barb arrived on 19th March, these are currently off show serving 30 days quarantine.



Sadly, this month, we saw a number of losses in the animal collection. African lion, Bailey, and our remaining two female Patagonian sea lions, Milan and Sydney, were put to sleep following decline in their health and welfare due to their aging status.

We also lost female giraffe, Isha, on 9th March. A post-mortem was conducted which revealed cancer of the liver and abdominal cavity.

African lion, Bailey



New heating was installed in the Iguana Forest habitat this month.

Green iguana

# THE ZOO

## DEVELOPMENT WORK

The ramp leading to the top floor of Kingdom of the Wild was completed in time for the Easter holidays. The weaver bird and leopard tortoise habitat was also completed with a new airlock, lighting, ventilation, planting and substrate and new windows and rockwork were added to Aardvark Burrow.

Beams were added to the saki monkey habitat at Inca Trail.

Adaptations were installed at Lion Rock in order to house the female cheetah, including change of substrate, electric fencing and platforms.

Adaptations were made to the skunk habitat at Sensation Station in order to house meerkats.

The maintenance team commenced work at Playa Patagonia in order to adjust the land area and viewing windows for a future group of sea lions.



Welfare work focused on completing detailed welfare assessment audits for the buff-headed capuchins, cherry-crowned mangabeys and Colombian black spider monkeys following the new BIAZA assessment toolkit.

Cherry-crowned mangabey

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## MORE NEWS

The Zoological Director attended an online BIAZA Elephant Welfare Group meeting.

An internal team leader meeting centred on an animal escape drill with two spider monkeys 'escaping' from their habitat.

The Education and Rainforest Teams delivered a successful day of training for primates as pets licencing officers from local authorities.

The Head Keeper attended the EAZA midyear carnivore taxon advisory group meeting at Hertfordshire Zoo and the Curator attended the EAZA midyear bear TAG meeting at Zlin Zoo, Czech Republic.

Our Deputy Team Leader on Africa Section visited ZSL Whipsnade Zoo to shadow the lion keepers, our Lead Keeper attended the EAZA Welfare Forum in Antwerp and the Deputy Team Leader and Lead Keeper of Farm Section attended an ABWAK Domestic Workshop at Jimmy's Farm.

# EDUCATION



**12**

HOME EDUCATION SESSIONS  
WERE RUN THIS MONTH  
FOR A TOTAL OF

**333**

PARTICIPANTS

**102**

SCHOOLS VISITED  
COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY THIS MONTH

BRINGING

**4,137**

STUDENTS

**135**

SESSIONS WERE RUN  
THIS MONTH

Outreach was busy in March:

VIRTUAL OUTREACH

**6**

SESSIONS FOR

**284**

PARTICIPANTS

CAREERS FAIRS

**3**

SESSIONS FOR

**130**

PARTICIPANTS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**4**

SESSIONS FOR

**200**

PARTICIPANTS

The team also delivered 4 blocks of half-day teaching for ARU Writtle, including virtual, in person and at the zoo sessions.

This month, the team conducted a tour for Suffolk University as part of the due diligence for a potential degree programme and met with Essex University hospitality teaching staff to talk about ways they can provide business and tourism students to collect data that may be useful for us.

# VOLUNTEERS

On a number of days during March, six volunteers volunteered per day.

The props continue to be popular education tools, including furs, skulls and claws.

1,055 visitors also participated in 882 Exploratorium boxes.

**113** VOLUNTEERS

**565** HOURS DONATED

**11,000** VISITORS  
ENGAGED WITH

# UMPHAFA NATURE RESERVE



## CHEETAH TRACKING

The collar for the female cheetah, Ashia, was changed this month as it had a faulty battery, this will enable the team to continue to reliably track her location.

## RESERVE ANIMALS

The vulture restaurant is continuing to do well. Still no vultures as of yet, although there are regular bush pig visits.

A new species was recorded for the Reserve this month, a long-tongued horsefly. It is noted for having the longest extension of the labium (a fused mouth part) used to obtain nectar.

An injured sub-adult secretary bird was found on the Reserve and taken to FreeMe Wildlife. It was given electrolytes, vitamins and fluids as it was extremely dehydrated, exhausted and had not eaten in a few days. FreeMe Wildlife will hopefully be able to bring him back to good health and return this majestic bird to UmPhafa once he has made a full recovery.

Another buffalo calf was born this month, bringing the total to 45.

## RESERVE MAINTENANCE

The team have been busy clearing the silt from some of the dongas, putting gabions along the main road to reduce the flow of water and reduce erosion and waterproofing the security outpost roof which had been leaking.

A new flooring was also laid in one of the workshops and new grass slashers were delivered this month.



New sprayer donations



Laying the new workshop floor

## INTERN ACTIVITIES

The majority of interns left this month, leaving just one intern until East Coast College arrive in mid-April.

They carried out a night patrol, assisted with road repair, visited FreeMe Wildlife and enjoyed their last day with the field rangers on an anti-poaching exercise.



Interns on the Reserve

## OTHER NEWS

The Reserve Managers went to Zululand for 3 meetings concerning wild dogs, vultures and predators, attended a security meeting and also a meeting with the Cheetah Advisory Group.

The bee hives were collected by the beekeeper. Unfortunately, since they have been here, we have not had much rain and there is a limited food source, so the beekeeper has removed some of them to new areas, so our existing colonies can create their own food for the coming winter.

Poachers ventured into the reserve again, seen by tracks of humans and dogs. It looks like they got away with an animal as there was blood near the exit hole.

# CONSERVATION & RESEARCH



A BIAZA webinar on invertebrate conservation was held this month, which a couple of staff members watched in order to gain more information to further invertebrate conservation at CZS, now that we are no longer participating in the breed and release of Fisher's Estuarine Moths.

The Zoological Director attended the online BIAZA Conservation Committee meeting for which she is vice chair.



African white-backed vulture © Vulpro

## RESEARCH NEWS

One new study commenced this month looking at the effects of visual and acoustic anthropogenic stimuli on conspecific social behaviour in captive golden lion tamarins (*Leontopithecus rosalia*).

Golden lion tamarin

Funds were sent over this month to VulPro with a donation of £5,493.64 to support breeding monitoring of tree nesting vultures across South Africa. These tree-nesting species are particularly vulnerable, with white-backed, hooded and white-headed vultures all listed as critically endangered, and lappet-faced as endangered. Monitoring consists of surveying over a hundred nesting sites across South Africa on a bi-annual basis. The data gathered during these surveys enhances understanding of breeding success and the underlying factors influencing it.

Funding is instrumental in covering essential monitoring costs such as fuel, accommodation, staff, and equipment. This critical support ensures the continuity and success of VulPro's conservation efforts, safeguarding vulture populations and their habitats across southern Africa.