

Coppery titi monkey

MAY

MONTHLY OVERVIEW REPORT / 2026

COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Charity no. 1105621

THE ZOO



Female cherry crowned mangabey, Maja, gave birth to a female offspring on the 27th May.

Cherry-crowned mangabey

ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

On 1st May, two female squirrel monkeys, Sophia and Lucia, joined us from Emerald Park in Ireland. For the first few weeks of the month, they were housed off-show until on the 13th May, when male bearded saki monkeys, Kaburi and Kanuku, transferred to Dublin Zoo and then they were moved to their vacated enclosure on the 19th.

Humboldt penguins, OJ and Diego, hatched two eggs, the first on the 4th and the second on the 7th May. The first chick is being reared by the parents at Inca Trail, whereas the second chick had some medical issues so is being reared off-show but has now recovered.

On 19th May, male ostrich, Lewa, transferred to ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, leaving us with a female only group.

Towards the end of the month, three rainbow lorikeet chicks hatched.

On 9th May, female coppery titi monkey, Copper, gave birth to a single offspring in Worlds Apart.

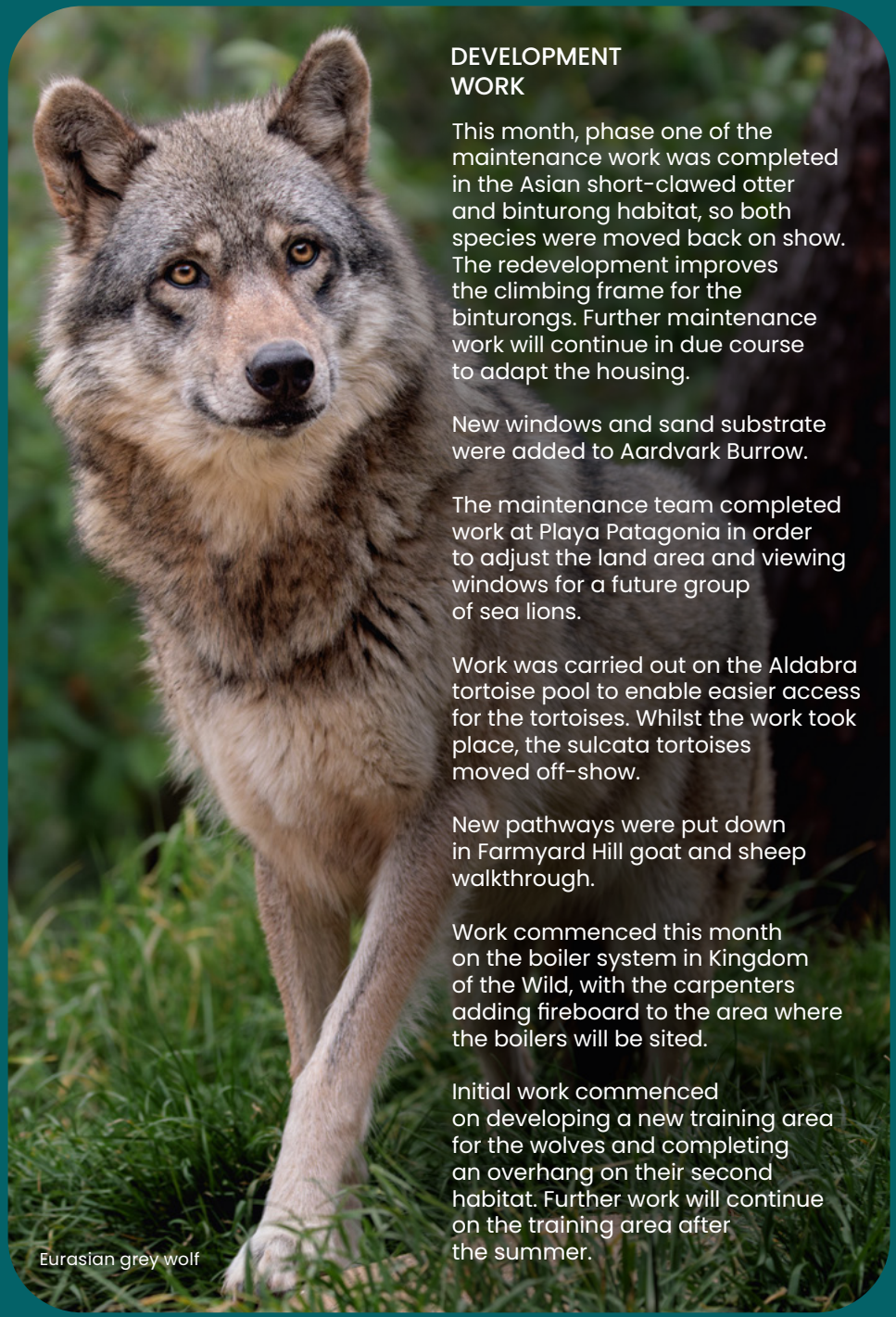
INTERNAL TRANSFERS

The two new female alpacas, Alba and Ashea, that joined us in April, finished their quarantine and joined our current group of alpaca and llama at Southern Wild.

On the 13th May, our group of male meerkats moved off-show and our new pair, Victor and Fang, who arrived in April, moved into the Suricata Sands habitat.



Alpacas and llama



Eurasian grey wolf

DEVELOPMENT WORK

This month, phase one of the maintenance work was completed in the Asian short-clawed otter and binturong habitat, so both species were moved back on show. The redevelopment improves the climbing frame for the binturongs. Further maintenance work will continue in due course to adapt the housing.

New windows and sand substrate were added to Aardvark Burrow.

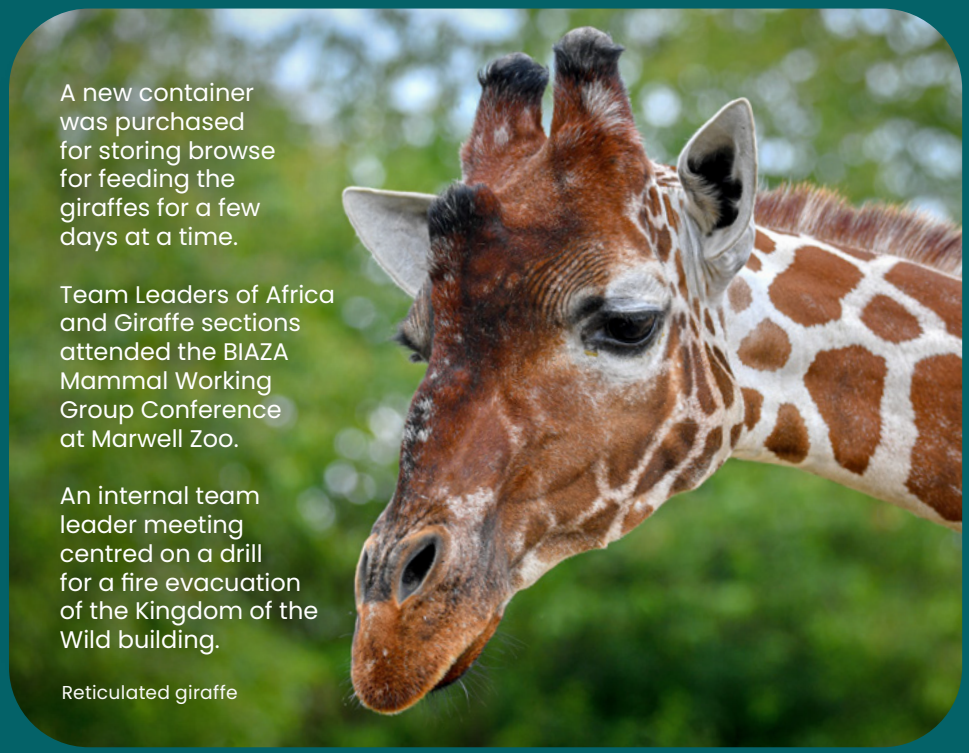
The maintenance team completed work at Playa Patagonia in order to adjust the land area and viewing windows for a future group of sea lions.

Work was carried out on the Aldabra tortoise pool to enable easier access for the tortoises. Whilst the work took place, the sulcata tortoises moved off-show.

New pathways were put down in Farmyard Hill goat and sheep walkthrough.

Work commenced this month on the boiler system in Kingdom of the Wild, with the carpenters adding fireboard to the area where the boilers will be sited.

Initial work commenced on developing a new training area for the wolves and completing an overhang on their second habitat. Further work will continue on the training area after the summer.



A new container was purchased for storing browse for feeding the giraffes for a few days at a time.

Team Leaders of Africa and Giraffe sections attended the BIAZA Mammal Working Group Conference at Marwell Zoo.

An internal team leader meeting centred on a drill for a fire evacuation of the Kingdom of the Wild building.

Reticulated giraffe

MORE NEWS

Welfare work focused on reviewing welfare audits for Andean condors, Komodo dragons, gelada baboons, penguins, rabbits, red pandas and mandrills. A meeting was also held with the sections caring for reptiles to consider a rapid welfare audit of all reptile species. A number of quality of life assessments were reviewed this month for individuals of various species, including buff-headed capuchins, bush dogs, L'hoest's monkeys and white-lipped tamarins.

The Zoological Director attended online Elephant Welfare Group Meetings, led various internal species plan meetings. and attended a BIAZA trustee meeting at Jimmy's Farm in her role as vice chair of the BIAZA Conservation Committee.

The Ethics Committee met to discuss the ethical considerations of Colchester Zoological Society. This committee meets in person bi-annually.

At the end of May, Curator Clive Barwick retired from his position at Colchester Zoological Society after over 40 years. Interviews were conducted this month for the position of head keeper. Other work responsibilities will be reallocated over the Animal Management Team.

EDUCATION

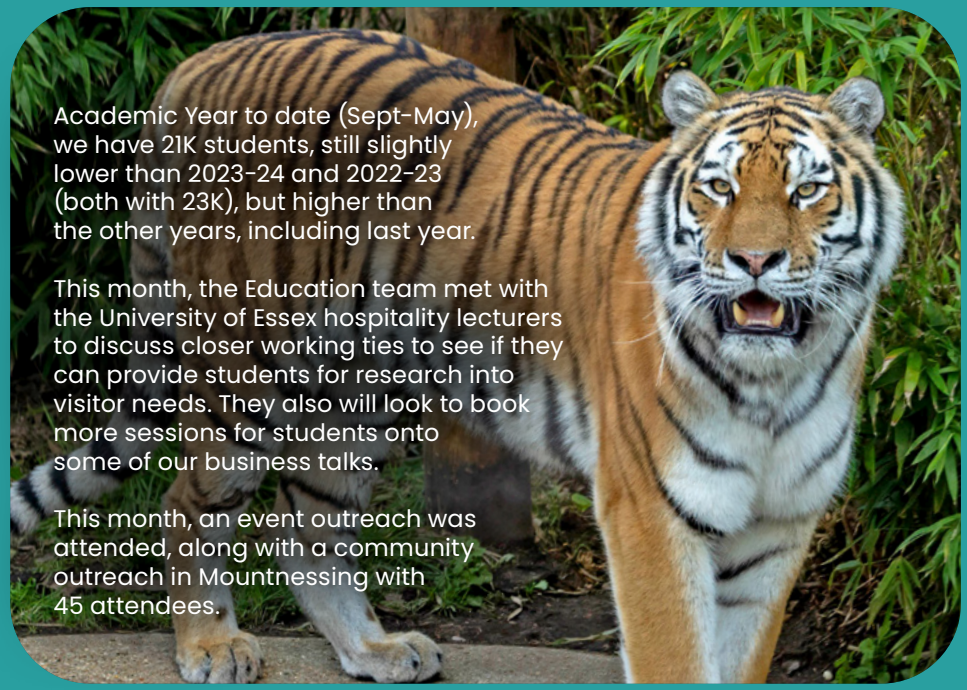
11
HOME EDUCATION SESSIONS WERE RUN THIS MONTH FOR A TOTAL OF
362
PARTICIPANTS

Home Education numbers of attendees across the whole programme (Sept-May and the SEN and Christmas sessions) are our highest yet with 3.2K (compared to 2.8K in the 2023-24 year as the next highest).

77
SCHOOLS VISITED COLCHESTER ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY THIS MONTH

BRINGING
4,011
STUDENTS

75
SESSIONS WERE RUN THIS MONTH



Academic Year to date (Sept-May), we have 21K students, still slightly lower than 2023-24 and 2022-23 (both with 23K), but higher than the other years, including last year.

This month, the Education team met with the University of Essex hospitality lecturers to discuss closer working ties to see if they can provide students for research into visitor needs. They also will look to book more sessions for students onto some of our business talks.

This month, an event outreach was attended, along with a community outreach in Mountnessing with 45 attendees.

VOLUNTEERS

UP TO **6** VOLUNTEERS ATTENDED PER DAY AND **225** VOLUNTEER HOURS WERE DONATED

The volunteers engaged with school children and visitors, utilising different props, including skulls and skins, including sun bear and otter props which led to discussions about the zoo's conservation work.

UMPHAFA NATURE RESERVE

CHEETAH NEWS

On 1st May, male cheetah, Storm got his collar got stuck in his mouth! The Interns check on Storm each day so they can monitor health and well-being, and, luckily enough, they went first thing. He was fine the evening before when they checked. The vet was called to remove the collar. On inspection the collar had irritated his mouth, there were a few cuts, and his neck was chaffed. Storm was treated with antibiotics, as well as an IV drip as he was dehydrated, but he made a full recovery.

The team left the collar off as it was damaged. They contacted the Cheetah Advisory Group and informed them of what had happened as their vet fitted the collar. Forever Wild, who had been looking after Storm whilst he was recovering in the boma in the north of South Africa, agreed to fund a new collar, for which we are very grateful.

At the end of the month, male cheetah, Balula, and female, Ashia, joined up - this was the longest they have been together since they both came to the Reserve, so we are hoping they will go on to breed in the near future.

RESERVE ANIMALS

The bushpigs were again eating the few carcasses at the Vulture Restaurant and as yet we haven't had vulture activity there.

Another 27 blesbok were delivered bringing our total to 243 in recent months. The team did a game count and some of them were spotted joined up with the eland breeding group on the ryefield. Since their release, we have lost a few to predation and injury – it looked like a leopard got one at the ryefield as 55+ vultures circled. They seem to prefer the ryefield to the Vulture Restaurant, the reason for which the team will investigate further.

Another new buffalo calf was spotted this month.


Cheetah, Storm


Cheetah


Bushpigs

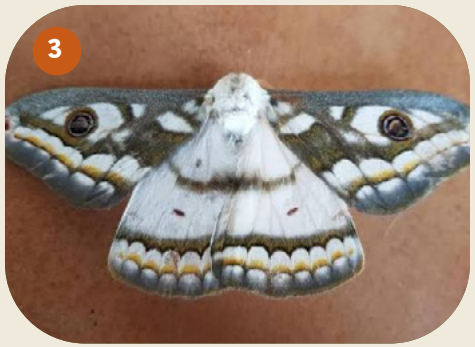
RESERVE ANIMALS

A number of new species were discovered on the Reserve this month, particularly with the help of iNaturalist:

1. Common wolfsnake; it was found near accommodation probably looking for somewhere nice and warm to hibernate.
2. Brown leather-back slug
3. Marno's marbled emperor
4. Tugela rock scorpion
5. Banded groundling dragonfly
6. Leprous milkweed locust
7. Koppie foam grasshopper
8. Highveld lesser-thicktail scorpion
9. Christmas butterfly
10. Pale African cotton stainer
11. Tinker reed frog
12. Platacantha Lutea
13. Convolvulus hawkmoth







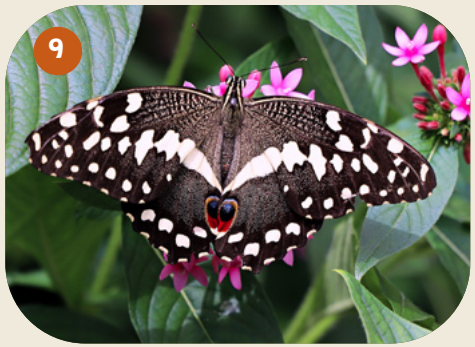




















INTERN ACTIVITIES

East Coast HE joined us this month and, out of the 11 that have joined us (including teachers), for six of them it is their second visit.

As well as helping with the cheetah checks, they have been doing maintenance, camera trapping, night drives, a trip to Nambiti, cheetah monitoring and surveying tracks and signs. They also got to witness the blesbok release.

East Coast left in the middle of the month and were replaced by a single intern joining for two weeks. Despite joining on her own, she made the most of the experience helping with maintenance, camera trapping, dam repopulation, as well as seeing her first leopard.



Camera trapping



Blesbok release



Gabion building

RESERVE MAINTENANCE

The maintenance team worked on a new storeroom at the Managers' House. Work also started on the new garage there to free space for cars and equipment in the workshop - a 2 vehicle garage is being built out of recycled poles and bamboo harvested from the Reserve for the sides.

Both teams have been fixing fences this month and putting in new gabion rocks to reduce erosion along the fence line.

An old water filter was recycled – it was cleaned and fixed and attached to the water tanks at the Intern Accommodation to try and clean the water before it goes into the tanks, in the hope that this and the new plumbing of the tanks will reduce the sediment in the water.



Fire breaks start early

OTHER NEWS

With the number of animals on the ryefield, and a distinct lack of rain this year, the team have not been able to keep up with the wetlands and the volume of water there. They have therefore replaced the pump and solar panels with a much stronger one and even in the winter sunshine it is able to pump approx. 16,000 litres, and in summer this should be more than 18,000 litres with the longer days and more intense sunshine. Even now you can see so much more water being pumped out from the river to develop this vital habitat.

The local community put in a fire to burn around their houses which was set quite a distance from the Reserve, but unfortunately a few hours later with the wind pumping it jumped across the fence slightly, which thankfully the Reserve team put out effectively. The team took the decision to start the fire breaks early so burnt part of the northern fenceline to hopefully prevent such fires jumping onto the Reserve.

The Reserve Manager, Maintenance Manager and 2nd in Command Field Ranger went on a First Responder course. The course was organised and run by the Honorary Officers who are ex-police intelligence. The course touched on how to manage a wildlife crime scene and the legalities around that and reporting.

CONSERVATION & RESEARCH

CONSERVATION NEWS

£250 was donated this month to The Civet Project following activities organised by our Carnivore Section Lead Keeper on World Binturong Day. This day was celebrated on the 9th May 2026 with donations collected from coffee sales over the weekend to help raise awareness of the cruel civet coffee trade, along with posters and educational materials to educate our visitors to put a stop to civet coffee. Additional binturong talks also took place to enhance awareness of this charismatic species.



Binturong

£5,310.24 was donated to Lwiro Primates Rehabilitation Centre (LPRC), located in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. We have supported this vital project since 2013 and funds donated will support essential food provision for 129 orphaned chimpanzees and 97 monkeys.
These primates, rescued from illegal wildlife trafficking and the bushmeat trade, depend on a consistent, nutritionally balanced diet for their survival, recovery, and rehabilitation. Funds will ensure approximately 19,068 individual meals will be provided over four weeks to 220 rescued primates.



Chimpanzee

The Colchester Zoo Stampede was held on the 17th May. 2,248 runners took part in the event to raise funds for conservation.



RESEARCH NEWS

A new MSc level project commenced this month to conduct social network analysis on a captive colony of Humboldt penguins: investigating impacting variables and accuracy of zookeeper pairing knowledge.

Humboldt penguin