

## At the Zoo

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bers, attending bio-fact tables, giraffe feedings, animal encounters and much more," she said. "We will need help every day starting March 17 through March 24. Sign up for one day or all week."

Those interested contact the zoo's volunteer office at 212-0244 or [zoovolunteer@elpasotexas.gov](mailto:zoovolunteer@elpasotexas.gov).

The one-week zoo camps are open for ages six through 10 and run 9 a.m. to noon Mondays through Fridays during the months of June and July. Registration is available for this year's camps beginning Feb. 1.

Lopez said that each year's camp focuses on a different animal theme, with this year's campers learning about the worlds of tamanduas and tamarins. Each animal's camp is offered every other week, so guests can sign up for either camp or both.

Other educational opportunities include the Zoo Adventure Programs (ZAP) offering zoo sleepovers and behind-the-scenes tours, interactive TEKS and STEM focused curriculum guides, and offsite programs that allow educators to integrate the zoo's conservation message into their curriculum.

Educating the public about the mission of the zoo is also something staff members try to do everyday.

Zoo director Marshall said he always makes sure to stress when talking to groups or giving presentations about the zoo's mission "to celebrate the value of animals and natural resources and to create opportunities for people to rediscover their

connection to nature," is the significance of being an AZA accredited zoo. As of Oct. 2018, there are 233 total AZA accredited zoos and aquariums, 16 in Texas alone.

"I always share there are three things they may not know about accredited zoos and aquariums," said Marshall, a member of the AZA Board of Directors. "First, is we provide 'excellent, expert, and compassionate care for our animals, prioritizing their welfare and wellbeing.'"

As such, every animal resident of El Paso Zoo is on a health plan, and has its own medical records, whether it was born at the zoo or transferred from another one. They get regular care and annual checkups by veterinarians who hold the utmost interest in the animals' well being.

"We go to extremes to take care of our animals," Marshall said.

The second, Marshall explained, is the zoo staff work to "actively save wildlife from extinction through our conservation work at the zoo and in the field." Marshall said they also plan on working with conservation efforts in Bhutan, inspired by El Paso's unique connection to that nation.

"We are actively involved in rescuing wildlife from extinction, and have sent our staff all over the world to do that," Marshall said, adding staff members have



El Paso Zoo carousel

## LIVING DESERT ZOO

At Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park in Carlsbad, N.M. all of its more than 40 animal species and hundreds of plant species are native to the Chihuahuan Desert. All the animals are either rescued or captive born.

Built by and still maintained by the nonprofit Friends of the Living Desert, Living Desert is part of New Mexico's State Park System. It's also home to the Succulents of the World Greenhouse featuring native and exotic species.

"In June 2014, the new reptile building opened, in July 2017 renovations were completed on the burrowing owl exhibit, and our owl was put on display," said Allison Leimer, Southeast Regional Interpreter for the zoo. "In December of 2017, walk-through aviary renovation was completed with a new roof, addition of drains, pruning of trees and planting of new vegetation."

Last year, the zoo welcomed some new, young residents, as three young javelina were placed in the newly renovated exhibit in May, and Bolson tortoise juveniles were given homes in the newly constructed exhibit in July.

The zoo is also the site for several special events including their popular Full Moon Walks, guided tours through the zoo by the light of the full moon. The first one of the season on May 18. Advance registration is required.

The zoo started their year with its annual celebration of Maggie the Black Bear's Birthday in January.

Upcoming events include a live Raptor presentation on Feb. 16, and the Earth Day Festival and Taste of Living Desert on April 13. May events including hosting the "Unique Arts & Craft Show" May 4-5, and Endangered Species Day on May 18.

The park is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily Memorial Day to Labor Day and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. the rest of the year. Last entrance is 3:30 p.m. Information: (575) 887-5516 or [livingdesertnm.org](http://livingdesertnm.org).



Prairie Dogs

traveled as far as Madagascar and close to home to the Gila Wilderness, for various conservation works. In addition, the zoo selects pairs of some endangered species for breeding.

Finally, Marshall said accredited zoos such as El Paso "act and communicate with the purpose of inspiring people to

value wild animals" as well as take action and responsibility to ensure their place in the wild.

"This is about teaching people about conservation and being a better citizen of the planet," Marshall said. "We don't think there's a better way to do that than a good zoo experience."

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