

ZOO ATLANTA

ANNUAL REPORT

2019



JOURNEYS

Atlantans are going about their business, but today – Marc – there is a spirit of excitement.

The Hall and Bingley Show, a traveling circus, has gone bankrupt near the city. Its employees have quit and left for parts unknown, leaving behind a ragtag group of animals. They include a lioness, a jaguar, two monkeys, a dromedary, three camels, others – creatures most Atlantans have probably never seen, from parts of the world they may know only from books.

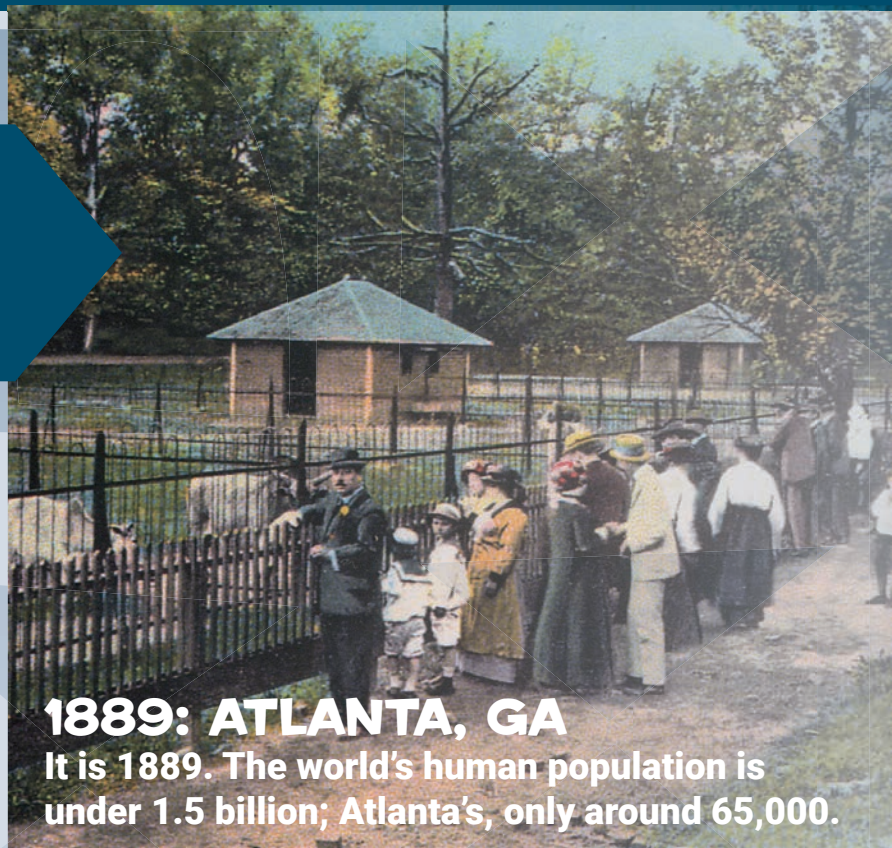
Citizens come from all over the city to gawk at the animals in their cages, awed by this unexpected visit from the wild world. But the bigger question for Atlanta's civic leaders is, what to do with them? There is no means of housing them, feeding them. It is decided that the animals will be offered up individually for sale at auction.

The auction captures the interest of George Valentine Gress, a local businessman of some means. Gress cares about his city. Although Atlanta is still young – not even 50 years old – Gress believes the city can excel among its peers, have a cultural life that distinguishes it. He purchases the entire collection of animals and gives them to the City of Atlanta with his vision that they will form Atlanta's first zoo.

**"The nucleus will, at no remote day, expand,"
Gress writes to the Atlanta City Council,
"into a zoological garden which will be like all other enterprises
to which Atlanta lays hold, the finest."**

In the days that follow, city leaders will search the town for an appropriate location. Piedmont Park will be considered, but it is Atlanta's first park – Grant Park – which will be chosen. In April, the Zoo will open to the people of Atlanta, nearly 12,000 of whom will pour into the park during opening weekend, forcing streetcar operators to work overtime to accommodate the crowds.

Nine years later, another attraction will capture the interest of George Valentine Gress. In 1899, he will purchase "The Battle of Atlanta," a cyclorama painting, and will donate it to the City of Atlanta. Twenty-two years after this purchase, a grand building will be erected to serve as the home of this civic treasure.



1889: ATLANTA, GA

It is 1889. The world's human population is under 1.5 billion; Atlanta's, only around 65,000.



Atlantans are visiting the all-new African Savanna at Zoo Atlanta, enjoying an early spring.

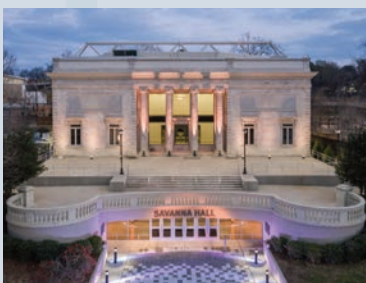
The transformation they experience there is the pinnacle of an effort years in the undertaking, all traced back to a single gift from two Atlantans whose contribution to their city created a domino effect in Atlanta's cultural community – not unlike the ripple effect made possible by George Gress 130 years ago.

In 2014, a gift from Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker enabled the move of Gress's second gift to Atlanta, the cyclorama

painting "The Battle of Atlanta," to a new home and a restored future at the Atlanta History Center. The move paved the way for Zoo Atlanta to become the new steward of the grand building that had been the painting's home for more than 90 years, joined with the adjacent property that would make possible the new elephant habitat and African Savanna.

After more than a year of construction and painstaking efforts to preserve historic elements of the building's past, on February 5, 2020, the newly-named Savanna Hall would open for its first event: "Transformation Celebration," a grand opening party for the donors of the Zoo's Grand New View capital campaign, which ultimately raised more than \$50 million.

The hope for Atlanta's newest premier special events venue is that it will draw new friends, new advocates and new conservationists to the city's oldest cultural destination – with hope for a future for wildlife, from the backyards of Georgia to distant continents around the world.

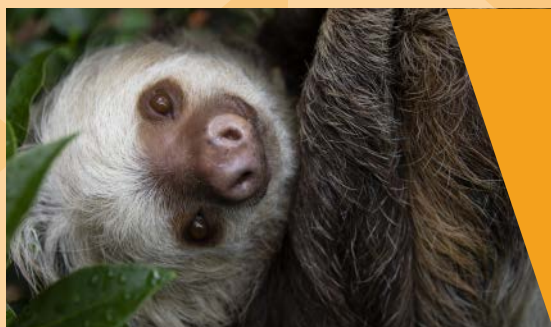


In looking back at this our 130th anniversary year, we celebrate these connected stories and the many other ways we are all connected: to one other, to the events that shape our story, to the lives of the animals in our care, and to the future of their wild counterparts around the world.

Join us for a look back at 2019, an amazing year!

MOMENTS

Zoo Atlanta celebrated the birth of **Floyd**, an infant gorilla born to Lulu on July 24, 2019. A grandson of the legendary late Willie B., Floyd is the 24th gorilla born at Zoo Atlanta since the opening of The Ford African Rain Forest in 1988.



The Zoo Atlanta family welcomed **Nutella**, a new female Hoffmann's two-toed sloth. Nutella's move to Atlanta was recommended by the Hoffmann's Two-Toed Sloth Species Survival Plan® (SSP).

The **Chilean flamingo flock** gained new members with the hatching of four chicks in late summer. The Zoo's flock, which began breeding in the late 1980s and has been consistently breeding and nesting since 2001, is considered one of the most successful in the U.S.



Toward the tail end of 2019, two new tails made their debut at the Zoo with the arrival of **Lilo and Stitch** the Patagonian maras, a species new to Zoo Atlanta.

COMMUNITIES

Education is a crucial aspect of Zoo Atlanta's mission, and the Zoo is an invaluable resource for students, families and individuals seeking firsthand connections with the natural world.

Zoo Atlanta broadened community access to

its signature summer camp experience with the return of the Safari Camp Scholarship Program presented by Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority. Offered for the fourth year in a row in 2019, the program provided a week of Safari Camp for 60 children ages 5 to 11 from Title I Schools in the City of Atlanta and Fulton County.

New educational offerings in 2019 included Twilight Trek, an after-hours expedition in the Zoo that allows guests to experience the work of wildlife trackers, and new Zoo Yoga programs offering in-Zoo yoga classes featuring poses inspired by animals.

LEARNING AND GIVING BACK AT THE ZOO IN 2019: AT-A-GLANCE



More than
101,100
students served



More than **38,000**
education program
participants

43,294
Volunteer
hours served

96 Volunteers
ages 14 to 17

Few zoos in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) have made scientific research an organizational priority for as long as Zoo Atlanta, a leader in research for decades, has.



The Zoo Atlanta team published 14 peer-reviewed articles in 2019, bringing the Zoo's total to more than 360 papers published since 1978. The year's publications included studies appearing in *Nature* and *Science* – two of the scientific community's most prestigious journals.

Zoo Atlanta authors included:

- Great Ape Heart Project Manager Marietta Danforth, PhD;
- Associate Curator of Herpetology Robert Hill;
- Director of Research Joseph Mendelson, PhD;
- Vice President of Collections and Conservation Jennifer Mickelberg, PhD;
- Deputy Director Hayley Murphy, DVM;
- Lead Keeper of Herpetology Trent Niesen; and
- Senior Clinical Veterinarian Sam Rivera, DVM.

Zoo Atlanta research contributions in 2019

- Cardiovascular disease in western lowland gorillas
- Cognition in amphibian Class *Caudata*
- Diet in reptile Order *Squamata*
- Estimating population sizes in evaluating conservation progress with golden lion tamarins
- High-resolution Komodo dragon genome revealing species adaptations (The study used DNA from Rinca, the Komodo dragon at Zoo Atlanta and the late Slasher of Zoo Atlanta.)
- Life history of frogs of the Brazilian semiarid Caatinga
- Litter size and sex composition in callitrichine monkeys
- Problem-solving in varanid and helodermatid lizards
- Recovery engine strategy for amphibian conservation
- Reptile and amphibian medicine
- Scientific foundations of zoos and aquariums
- Serum trace nutrient values in giant pandas
- The aftermath of the amphibian fungal panzootic and its unprecedented loss of biodiversity

As a conservation organization, Zoo Atlanta embraces a culture of continuous improvement when it comes to working toward leading by example on Zoo grounds.

A key element of the organization's Conservation Strategic Action Plan, completed in 2017, is geared toward developing, enhancing, and expanding the Zoo's sustainability programs and practices.

SUPER BOWL LIII RECYCLING RALLY

400 PARTICIPANTS



87 PALLETS OF E-WASTE



281 CELL PHONES



42,446
POUNDS OF
E-WASTE
OUT OF
LANDFILLS

The Super Bowl LIII Recycling Rally hosted at Zoo Atlanta resulted in the collection of 42,446 pounds of E-Waste for recycling. The Zoo teamed up with the National Football League, Verizon and the Atlanta Super Bowl Host Committee to host the event, which contributed to the "greening" of Super Bowl LIII by keeping waste out of local landfills.

More than 400 participants contributed car and truckloads of E-Waste during the free event, which was sponsored by Verizon.

Volunteers collected 87 pallets of E-Waste, including hundreds of desktop and laptop computers; monitors; televisions; stereo and audio equipment; small electronic appliances; and glass items.

Items collected also included 281 cell phones.



SUSTAINABILITY ON ZOO GROUNDS

More than 10,000 plastic animal feed bags were eliminated from use by the Animal Nutrition Kitchen in 2019; the team now uses reusable containers and compostable bags for animal diet deliveries.

More than 1,000 cubic yards of bamboo waste were generated for recycling in 2019; bamboo not eaten by giant pandas is sent to power plants to generate power.

Zoo Atlanta gift shops have been plastic-bag-free for more than 25 years. In 2019, the shops saved 3,000 paper shopping bags by offering recyclable tote bags.

Zoo Atlanta's Retail Team partnered with Wildlife Artists, Inc., to carry its line of Eco Pals plush animals. These are made without plastic, are stuffed using 100% recycled paper, and are shipped without plastic packaging.



MADE WITH 100% RECYCLED PAPER AND NO PLASTIC

JOURNEYS

The opening portion of the Zoo Atlanta mission,

**"WE SAVE WILDLIFE
AND THEIR HABITATS,"**

is merely an introduction to the complex world of conservation. Just as the threats to biodiversity are many and complicated, so are the spokes of the wheel that fuel any successful conservation effort.

Diamondback terrapins

In another year of hope for an icon of Georgia's tidal creeks, the diamondback terrapin, Zoo Atlanta returned 25 diamondback terrapins brought to the Zoo in 2018 to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center on Jekyll Island, where they were released into the wild.

As part of the annual "Terrapin Swap," Zoo Atlanta introduced 25 new hatchlings from Jekyll Island to the Georgia Tidal Creek habitat in Scaly Slimy Spectacular, where they will live until they are large enough to present less of a target for predators in the wild. The terrapins are at Zoo Atlanta through the Zoo's support of the Georgia Sea Turtle Center's Jekyll Island Causeway Conservation Program.

The program focuses on a roadside management plan to reduce terrapin mortality on Georgia's causeways and elsewhere with the goal of reducing the unsustainable impact of highway mortality on the diamondback terrapin population. Zoo Atlanta supports the program by rearing terrapins hatched from females killed or injured by automobiles.





Supporting species on three continents

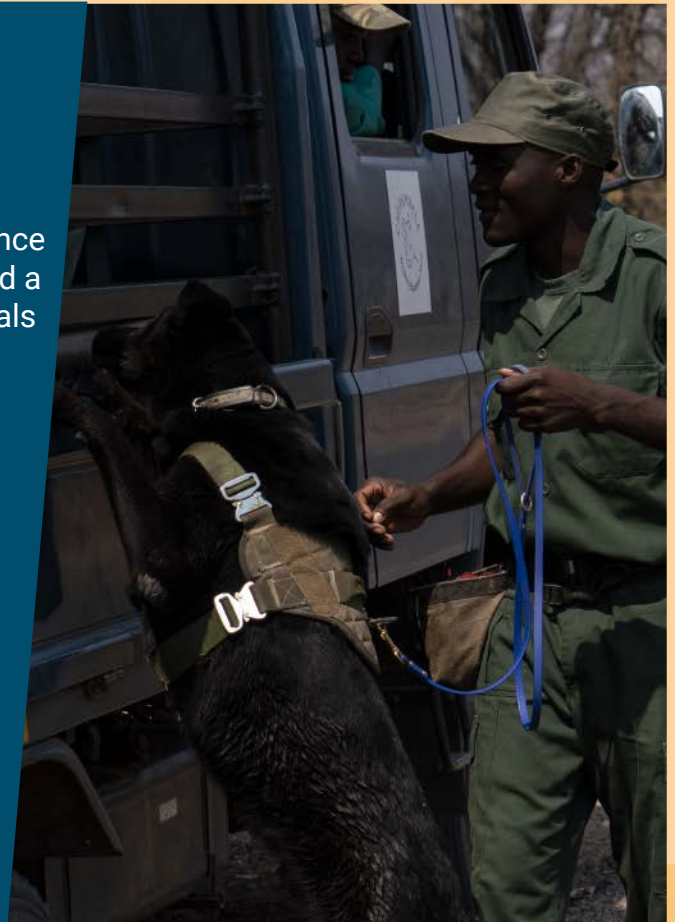
Zoo Atlanta's Mabel Dorn Reeder Conservation Endowment Fund annually awards grants to projects that enable the Zoo to amplify its conservation support.

In November, Zoo Atlanta announced the 2019-2020 beneficiaries of the fund, with a commitment of support for six conservation projects protecting western lowland gorillas in the Republic of Congo; red pandas in Nepal; northern pine snakes in northern Georgia and Alabama; vultures in South Africa; clouded leopards in Cambodia; and giraffes in Kenya.

Protecting the wildlife of South Luangwa

2019 marked the first full year of Zoo Atlanta's new partnership with Conservation South Luangwa based in Zambia. Conservation South Luangwa works to protect African elephants and other wildlife in South Luangwa National Park using anti-poaching patrols; aerial surveillance to locate animals injured or killed by poachers' snares; and a team of dogs trained to detect ivory, materials from animals killed for bushmeat, and ammunition and firearms at roadblocks and border checks.

Rachel McRobb, CEO of Conservation South Luangwa, visited Zoo Atlanta in April for a public talk on the organization's efforts and a tour of the Zoo's future elephant complex, then under construction. In fall 2019, Zoo Atlanta team members Nate Elgart, Elephant Program Manager, and Adam Thompson, Content Producer, visited Zambia for a firsthand look at Conservation South Luangwa's work.



**Conservation in action:
Zoo Atlanta's partners at
Conservation South
Luangwa in 2019**



Firearms confiscated: 66



Ten-day field patrols: 297



Snares recovered: 554



Poachers apprehended: 117



Day patrols: 418

The long-awaited debut of the all-new African Savanna, which officially opened on August 8, was a story filled with milestones and historic moments for the most significant transformation ever undertaken at Zoo Atlanta.



Kelly and Tara's unforgettable walk

On a joyous morning for Zoo Atlanta, African elephants Kelly and Tara packed their trunks for their move to a new environment. In a transfer many months in the making, the "girls" walked into their new habitat on Father's Day.

The elephants' former habitat, which had been under renovation for several weeks to facilitate the move, was modified to open up one end of the space, with protective barriers constructed to open up an area through which Kelly and Tara were able to walk the short distance to their new spaces, at their own pace and comfort level and with the encouragement of the Elephant Care Team.



The arrival of Msholo

In another celebratory moment for the elephant program at Zoo Atlanta, the Zoo welcomed a new social companion for Kelly and Tara: Msholo, an adult male African elephant from the San Diego Wildlife Park, on July 24.

With the single exception of a young male who lived at the Zoo for a brief period in the 1960s, Msholo is the first bull elephant to live at Zoo Atlanta; all others have been female. To prepare to welcome Msholo, members of the Zoo's Elephant Care Team spent time training at other AZA-accredited organizations in working with male African elephants, which are considerably larger than females. Members of the team visited San Diego to meet and spend time with Msholo, and two of Msholo's San Diego care team accompanied him to Atlanta and remained for several days as he acclimated to his new environment.

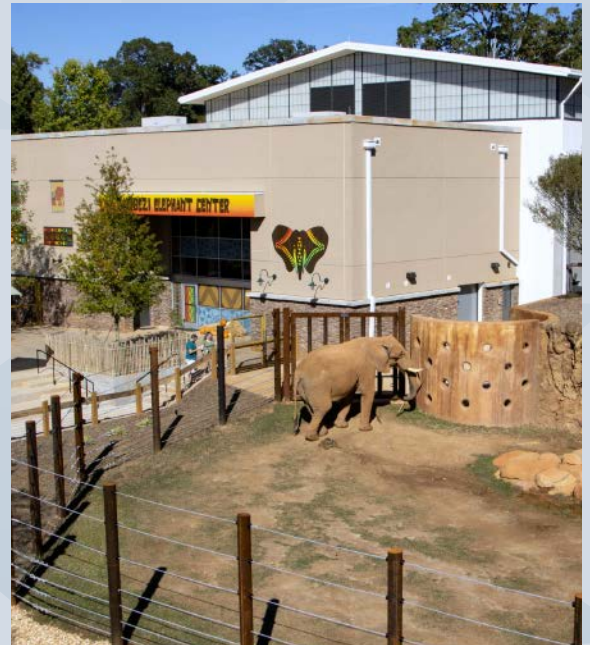
MILESTONES



A new home for elephants

The African Savanna environment more than triples the size of the elephants' former habitat and is a dynamic living space designed specifically with elephant well-being in mind. Elements include Abana Pond, the largest of the complex's three water features. Abana Pond has 360-degree access and a gentle slope for ease of use by the elephants. Additional features include two waterfalls and a feeder enrichment activity wall. Hand-crafted rockwork was designed to replicate an African river basin.

The indoor Zambezi Elephant Center has the capacity to house up to seven elephants and likewise features elements planned with elephant well-being in mind, including sand under the elephant's feet. New viewing opportunities give guests the chance to look inside the building to observe the elephants' care.



**MORE THAN
TRIPLE
THE SIZE OF
THE FORMER
ELEPHANT HABITAT**

MILESTONES

New habitats for giraffes, zebras, ostriches, warthogs and meerkats



The African Savanna also introduced a new mixed-species habitat for giraffes, zebras and ostriches. The new area is flatter than the Zoo's original African Plains habitat, with more usable space for the animals.

The new warthog environment, which is larger than the original warthog area, features dens that warthogs can use as they would in the wild.

On the opposite end of the Savanna, two new meerkat habitats, both considerably more sizable than the meerkats' former home, offer structures designed for sentry behavior and many opportunities for digging.



A new mob

Blaze, the only surviving member of the Zoo's original meerkat mob that arrived in 2007, gained four new next-door neighbors: males Kingsley, Petrie, Little Foot and Spike.



New conservation connections

The African Savanna interpretive experience focuses on the conservation connections that exist between Atlanta and Africa and the everyday choices visitors can make to have a positive impact on the future of Africa's wild savannas.

Presented in four main themes – **Be the Animal**, **Be the Animal Care Specialist**, **Be the Conservationist** and **Be the Change** – the educational experience also includes two other Zoo species native to the savanna, African lions and kori bustards.

As part of the experience, guests learn more about elephant biology with an interactive, life-sized African elephant sculpture outside the Zambezi Elephant Center.



Attendance and Membership superlatives: 2019

- Zoo attendance increased 19% over 2018 with the opening of the African Savanna, with record-breaking attendance in November and December 2019.
- Membership sales hit a record high in December 2019.



ZOO ATTENDANCE
INCREASED

19%

WITH THE OPENING OF THE
AFRICAN SAVANNA



MEMBERSHIP

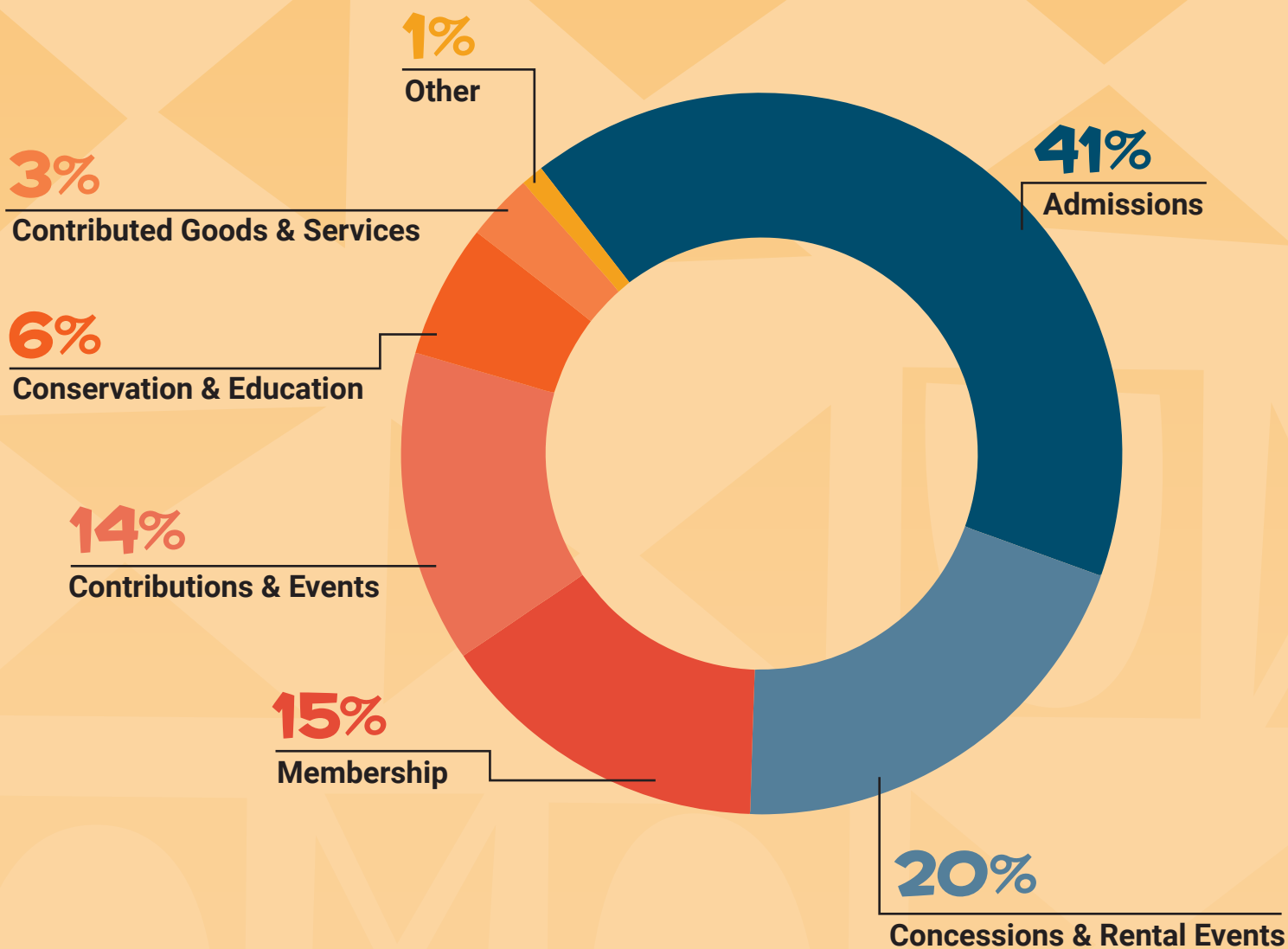
**SALES
HIT A RECORD
HIGH**

DECEMBER 2019



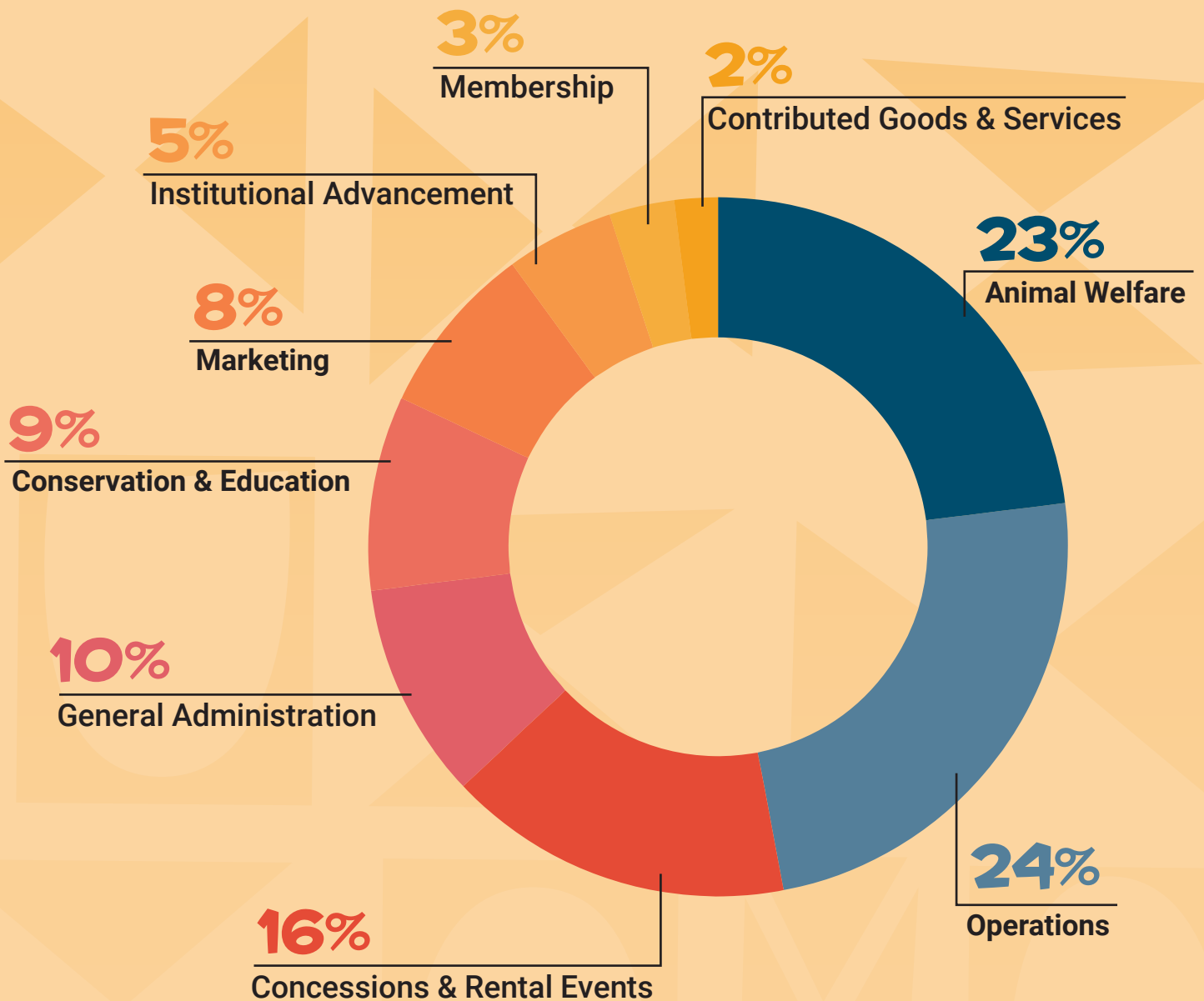
OPERATING REVENUE

ZOO ATLANTA 2019 OPERATING REVENUE \$22.5 MILLION



OPERATING EXPENSES

ZOO ATLANTA 2019 OPERATING EXPENSES \$23.5 MILLION



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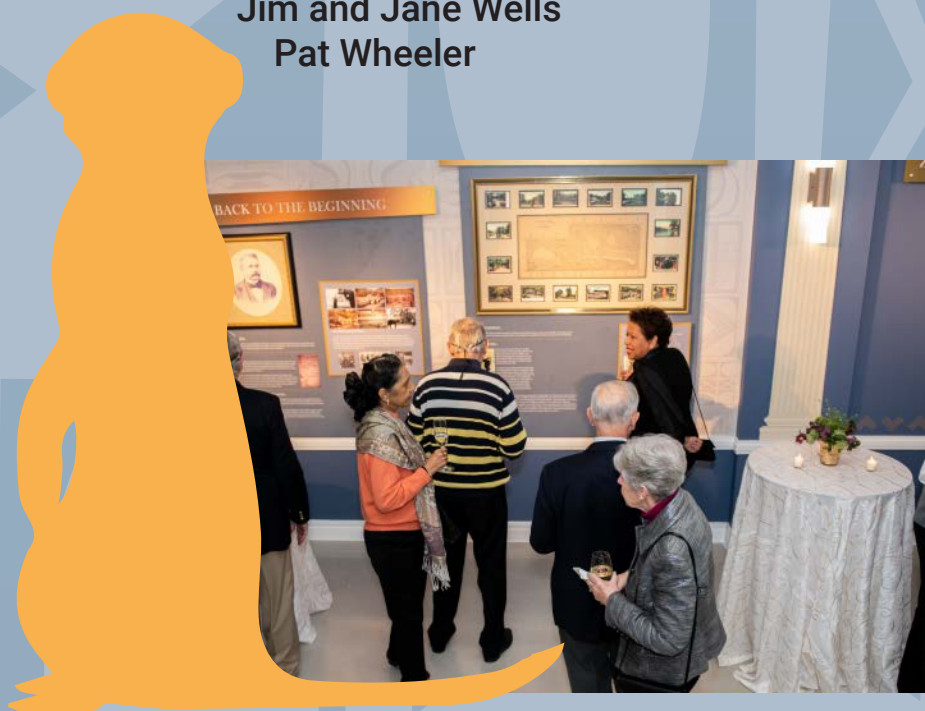
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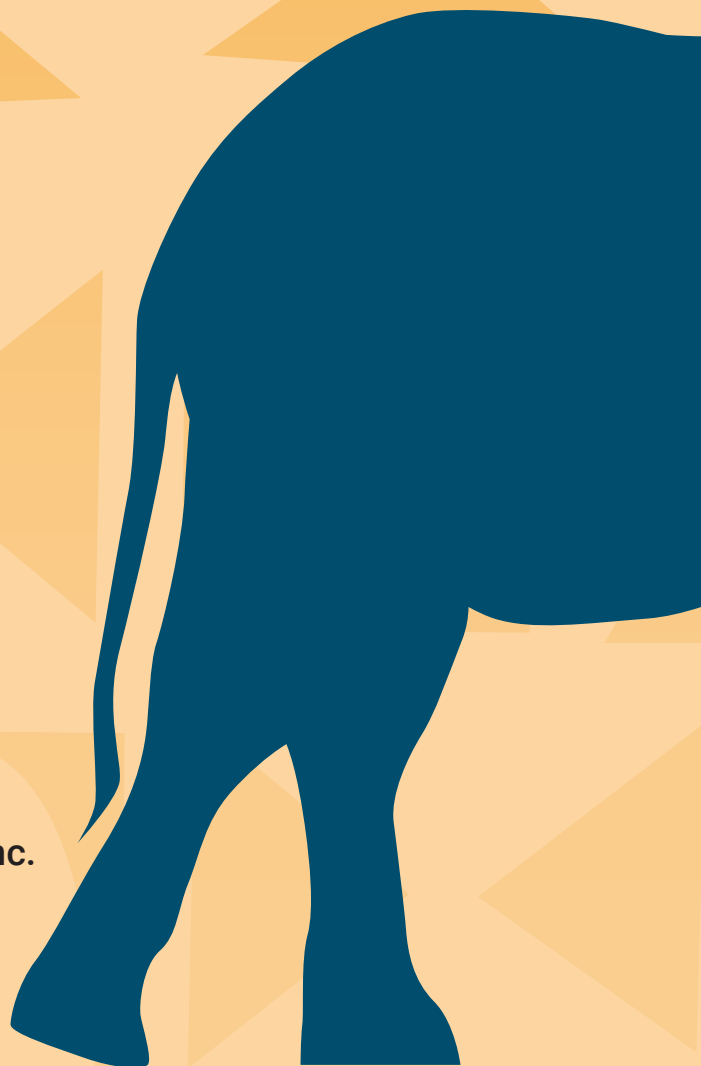
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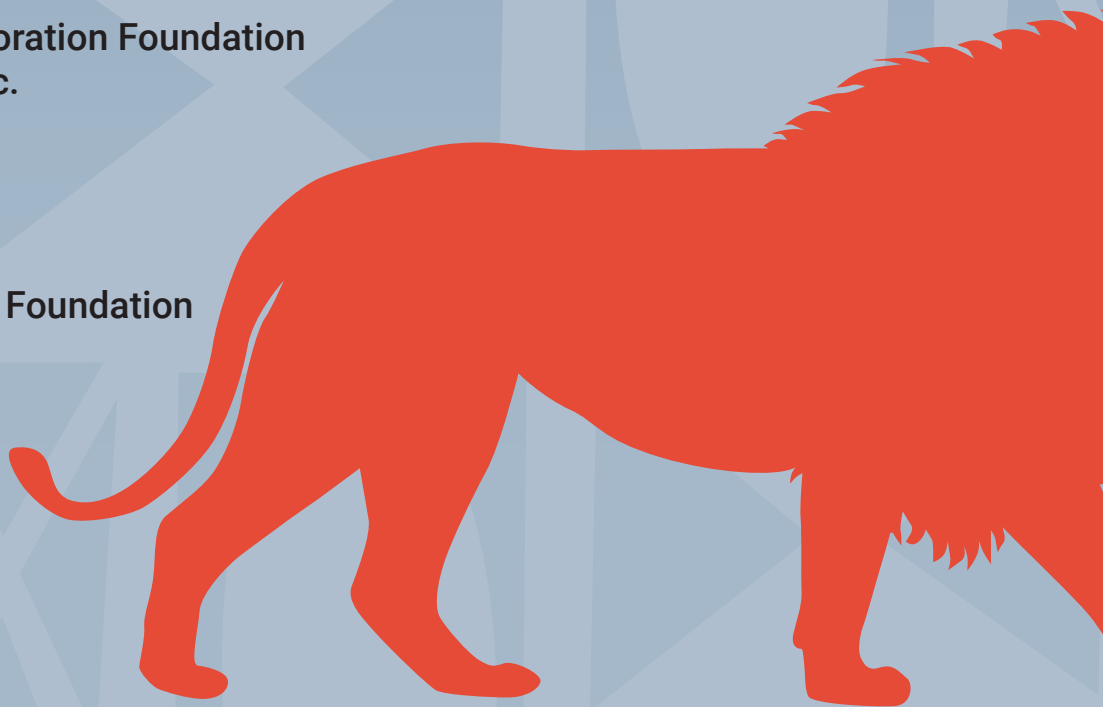
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