

Potter Park Zoo Audio Script

Segment 1: Introduction

Welcome to Potter Park Zoo!

Today we are going to take a tour around the zoo and visit our animal's habitats. This audio tour is divided into multiple segments. You will learn information about each animal housed outside in the zoo. We have audio tours for our feline house and reptile house available on this webpage as well. We hope you have a great time!

Segment 2: Peafowl

When you enter the zoo, you may see peafowl strolling freely through zoo grounds. They are commonly allowed to roam around zoos as they are domesticated and comfortable around people. A primary example of birds with stark differences between sexes, male peafowl - called peacocks - are known for their blue and green plumage and their long "tail" feathers marked with what look like eyes. Females - called peahens - are a mottled brown color and do not have a tail like males do. Males are able to fan out their trains in a display to attract females, strutting and shaking their feathers during courtship; they are believed to have more than one mate. Though they can fly short distances, they tend to run to escape danger instead. They nest on the ground but commonly roost up in trees at night.

Segment 3: Arctic Fox

The first habitat we see as we enter the zoo is the Arctic fox. These canines are known for having bright white fur with a large bushy tail, but in the summer their fur is dark blue-gray or brown. Their thick coats protect them from the harsh climate of the cold Arctic tundra, where they have been known to withstand temperatures of nearly -100 F. They have been found within 300 miles of the North Pole and are usually found on rocky shores. Arctic foxes bury and conceal their leftover food for the winter, with a highly varied diet that includes small mammals, birds, rodents, and squirrels, as well as insects and fish. They are not currently facing a high risk of extinction. The life expectancy of an Arctic fox is up to 15 years in human care, but only 3-7 years in the wild due to poaching.

Segment 4: North American River Otter

Continuing down the path, on the left are the North American river otters. Otters, a mustelid and close relative of the weasel, dive through the water with short legs and long, streamlined bodies that allow them to swim incredibly quickly. They reach speeds of up to 8 mph in the water using their webbed feet. River otters can see very clearly underwater, but outside the water they are nearsighted. This predator spends up to 60% of its time hunting for fish, as well as amphibians and turtles and even occasionally small

mammals. River otters usually hunt at night and use scent glands near the base of their tails to mark their territory and communicate. Though they have faced significant population declines in the past due to habitat loss, otter populations have recovered significantly thanks to conservation efforts.

Segment 5: North American Bald Eagle

On the right side of the path across from the otters are the North American bald eagles. Adult bald eagles have mostly large dark brown feathers on their bodies, with a distinctly white head and a bright yellow orange hooked beak. They can fly at speeds of up to 30 mph by gliding, without needing to flap their wings to travel great distances. Bald eagles are aggressive hunters that feed on many different animals, including fish, insects, birds, and small mammals, and they can spot their prey from up to a mile away. They are also scavengers that feed on carrion (already-dead prey) and will steal it from other birds. Bald eagles nearly went extinct in the lower 48 states due to the use of pesticides that damaged their eggs. Two laws, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act made it illegal to harm, kill or disturb bald and golden eagles. Thanks to these laws and a ban on pesticides like DDT, their population has rebounded, and they are now common. Their median life expectancy is 16.5 years, but the oldest documented bald eagle in human care was 47 years old.

Segment 6: Emu

Continuing with another bird habitat, we approach the emu. These flightless birds have soft brown feathers, a long neck, and long legs with three forward-facing toes. They are endemic to Australia and the tallest native bird there - they are the third-largest bird species in the world behind two species of ostrich. Their strong legs allow them to run up to 30 mph. Emus are actually the only birds with calf muscles, which helps them achieve these impressive speeds. Their feathers protect them from the sun so they can live in hot climates, and they are commonly found in savannah woodlands and sclerophyll forests. A sclerophyll forest is a dry-climate forest with hard, leathery-leaved evergreen trees like eucalyptus. Emus travel in pairs across long distances to reach food. Their diet consists of fruit and seeds as well as small animals and insects. The egg of an emu is large enough to make an omelet that can feed up to six people. Emu eggs are a dark, speckled green.

Segment 7: Canadian Lynx

Next up is the habitat of the Canadian lynx. They are known for their long, dense yellowish-brown fur, with pointy tufts of fur on their ears. Lynx have large paws that allow them to move across soft snow, supporting almost twice as much weight as a bobcat's before sinking. Found in Alaska, Canada, and the northern United States, Canadian lynx live in dense boreal forests, where they rely on snowshoe hares for food. Due to the difficulty of hunting in deep snow, they do not immediately chase their prey and instead stalk the hares for up to several hours before pouncing. This species is heavily dependent on snowshoe hare populations, and Canadian lynx populations will rise and fall with those of snowshoe hares. To match the nocturnal activity patterns of these hares, Canadian lynx are active at night and travel up to 5 miles daily to hunt for them. As skilled climbers, they can climb high up in trees to avoid

predators, and they are also efficient swimmers. Due to both habitat loss and snowshoe hare population declines, Canadian lynx are only found in a handful of states today.

Segment 8: Red Panda

Turning a corner and passing by the Farmyard, the red pandas can be seen. These auburn-colored mammals, contrary to popular belief, are not closely related to giant pandas. However, both animals have elongated wrist bones, known as “false thumbs”, that they use to grab bamboo. Black fur covers the red pandas’ belly and legs. Their faces are light with dark red markings and large, upright ears. Red pandas’ long bushy tails with reddish ring patterns are used to cover their faces and keep their noses warm in cold weather. They are also used for balance while the panda is climbing or sleeping in trees. As animals that are largely arboreal, or tree-dwelling, red pandas inhabit coniferous forests in the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China. While their anatomy is more suited to a carnivorous diet, bamboo shoots and leaves make up most of their actual diet. Because of this mismatch and the low nutritional content of bamboo, they have to spend much of their day eating to get enough nutrition from the bamboo, which is harder for their bodies to digest. This species is considered endangered due to poaching and deforestation, but conservation programs are being initiated in many countries to protect them from extinction.

Segment 9: Okapi

Directly across from the red pandas is the okapi habitat. With their large body size, hoofed legs, dark brown coat, and white striped markings, many people think they resemble zebras - however, they are most closely related to giraffes. Commonly referred to as a “forest giraffe”, okapi have long, prehensile purple tongues that can reach out and wrap around leaves that they eat from trees. Their tongues are up to 18 inches long, and they are also used to clean the okapi’s ears and eyes. Due to the remote nature of their habitat, scientists aren’t entirely sure what benefits their striped legs and rumps provide, but it may help them hide from predators amidst the dense vegetation or it might help young okapi follow their mother in the dense - high canopy forests. Okapi are found exclusively in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa. Males have horn-like protrusions, called ossicones, on top of their heads, like giraffes. Females do not have ossicones, but instead have hair whorls where the ossicones would be found on males. Though they are mostly solitary, scent glands between each toe leave scent markings as they walk to communicate with other okapi. Prized in the bushmeat trade for their meat and skin, the okapi is an endangered species; however, it is fully protected under Congolese law.

Segment 10: Alpaca

Passing through the Farmyard and enjoying the cows, goats, donkey, and guinea hogs, we focus on the alpaca. Their coats come in 22 different colors, and they have a slender neck and body with big, pointed ears. These domesticated camelids were traditionally kept in herds in Southern Peru, Western Bolivia, Ecuador, and Northern Chile. They are now found on farms and ranches worldwide and are popular in North America, Europe, and Australia. The two breeds of alpacas, Huacaya and Suri, are distinguished by their wool; Huacaya alpacas have crimped fluffy wool, while Suri alpacas have fast-growing silky wool. To show dominance while agitated or distressed, they communicate through body language and spitting.

They live in family groups consisting of a territorial male, females, and their young. Groups maintain their order through communication and setting boundaries, and while they can be aggressive, they can also be gentle and intelligent.

Segment 11: Pallas' Cat

Moving past the red panda, okapi and Farmyard habitats, the next enclosure on the left is the Pallas' cat. These small felines have distinctly rounded ears near the side of their head and long gray fur, though the longer outer fur is white, confusing their prey as they peek over rocks. Black markings found on the back and head help with camouflage. Unlike the pupils of other cats, which form narrow slits, Pallas' cats' pupils constrict to small circles. These wild cats reside in rocky montane grasslands and shrublands across a large region in Central Asia. They find shelter in the abandoned burrows of other small animals and stalk and ambush prey from their crevices, feeding on small mammals as well as insects and birds. Scent marking through spraying urine is a common form of communication for the solitary Pallas' cat. The species is classified as least concern due to their wide range and assumed large population, but they are susceptible to population decline from hunting, logging, livestock farming, and more.

Segment 12: Patagonian Cavy

Next up is the Patagonian cavy. Despite their upright ears and resemblance to a jackrabbit, these animals, also known as Patagonian hares or Patagonian maras, are not rabbits. They are actually rodents, more closely related to capybara and guinea pigs. Their long, muscular hind legs let them reach speeds of up to 20-25 miles per hour. Patagonian cavy are largely herbivorous, feeding on vegetation and fruit. They are found in large parts of Patagonia, a region that includes parts of Argentina and Chile. They mate for life, a trait only seen in a handful of animal species. They can live for 7-10 years in the wild and 14 years in human care. Patagonian cavy populations have been declining due to increased competition for food from the introduction of sheep and the European hare to their habitats.

Segment 13: Giant Anteater

In the same habitat as the Patagonian cavy is our giant anteater. Known for their elongated snouts that take up most of their heads, giant anteaters have shaggy brown fur with black markings and a long, bushy tail. They use their large foreclaws to dig up ants and termites and collect them with their 2-foot-long tongues, as they have no teeth. Their sense of smell, which is 40 times more powerful than human's, is used to track their prey. They can eat up to 30,000 ants and termites in a day. Anteaters are found in multiple habitats, like grassland and rainforests, and while they forage in open areas, they rest under the shade of forests. They can swim across large rivers to bathe and will climb termite mounds for food. As a threatened species, giant anteaters are hunted for food and driven out of their habitats by human activities such as the spread of cities and agriculture. Only 5,000 giant anteaters are estimated to remain in the wild.

Segment 14: Black Rhino

Passing the Feline and Primate Building, we continue down the path to the black rhino habitat. Despite their name, their colors vary from brown to gray, and they have two large horns protruding from their skull. These horns, used for defense and intimidation, are made of keratin, like our hair and fingernails. They have thick skin that protects them from sharp thorns. Compared to the white rhinoceros, black rhinos are smaller, with a pointed prehensile upper lip that they use to eat leaves and twigs, as opposed to a white rhinoceros' square lips for eating grass. They can run up to 35 mph and will charge when threatened. Only found in parts of Africa, black rhinoceros are critically endangered, with about 3,000 mature individuals remaining in the wild.

Segment 15: King Vulture

Near the Reptile and Small Mammal Building is the king vulture. These scavenging birds from South America have predominantly white plumage, with a black ruff, and black flight and tail feathers. Their bald heads and necks can be a variety of colors, like red, orange, and blue. Their orange beaks are more powerful than any other vulture's, allowing them to break through tougher hides. They hunt from up high, either in canopies or soaring through the air. As scavengers, they feed on the carcasses of various animals, from fish and lizards to cattle and monkeys. Eating carrion is not only beneficial to the vulture, but to the environment - without scavengers, insect populations would increase and diseases would spread more quickly. King vultures make the initial cut in a fresh carcass, allowing access to smaller vultures that don't have beaks strong enough to break through the hide. Though king vultures have no natural predators, their eggs may be eaten by snakes since they don't build nests, but rather lay these eggs in rotting logs or stumps. King vultures only lay one egg each year.

Segment 16: Magellanic Penguin

Rounding the corner and traveling up a ramp along the far edge of the zoo, we pass by a set of public restrooms to the rocky Magellanic penguin habitat. Like other penguins, they have black backs and white bellies. oft downy inner feathers keep them insulated, and smooth outer feathers allow them to dive more than 250 feet in search of small fish and squid to eat. These South American birds breed in coastal Patagonia, including Argentina and Chile. They mate with the same partner every year, with females recognizing the calls of their mates. Nests are built in burrows or under bushes. This species typically lay two eggs in a nest, four days apart in late September to October. The first egg is slightly larger than the second and is more likely to survive. Though the species is classified as being of Least Concern, their populations are vulnerable to oil spills as exposure to oil reduces penguins' immunity to bacteria and can contribute to lung problems. Many zoos and aquariums are working to clean up oceans and breed healthy penguin populations as part of their conservation efforts.

Segment 17: Eastern Bongo

The first of two species in the next habitat is the eastern bongo. These forest dwelling antelope have an auburn coat with vertical white stripes and long slightly spiraled horns. A critically endangered species,

they are only found in one remote region of central Kenya. They live in dense tropical jungles with fresh, low-level vegetation to feed on. They use their long prehensile tongue to grab leaves and grasses. As they require salt in their diets, they also often visit natural salt licks and even eat burnt wood after storms for salt and minerals. Unlike antlers, their horns are not branched, never shed, and both males and females grow them. Bongos are timid and rarely seen in large groups, with males traveling alone and females with young traveling in groups of 6 to 8. They are able to run quickly through the dense undergrowth by tilting their head upwards and laying their horns flat along their back to ensure they don't get caught on anything while they run. Serious fights between male bongos are rare - usually visual displays like bulging their necks and pacing back and forth are used to confront another male instead.

Segment 18: Southern Ground Hornbill

The second of the species in this habitat is the southern ground hornbill. They have mostly black plumage, with white tips on the wings and patches of bare red skin on the face and throat. Solely found in eastern and southern regions of Africa, they are the largest species of hornbill worldwide. They inhabit savannah grasslands and light woodlands, usually in national reserves and protected areas as they are a vulnerable species. Southern ground hornbills are predators and forage on the ground, feeding on reptiles, insects, frogs, and mammals up to the size of hares. They are incredibly vocal, and their rhythmic calls can be heard from nearly two miles away, allowing groups to maintain their territory. While classified as vulnerable globally, in South Africa southern ground hornbills are considered endangered due to habitat loss, persecution for breaking windows out of territorial aggression, and secondary poisoning from rodents or other prey animals

Segment 19: Elk

Next up is the large North American elk habitat which can be reached by descending stairs or via the accessible path through the backyard garden. Elk are the second largest species within the deer family, second only to the moose. Their fur is dark brown in the winter and tan in the summer with darker areas around the head, neck, belly, and legs. Males have branching antlers that can be over 3 feet long and are shed each year as the weather warms. Males perform ritualized mating behaviors such as bugling - a series of loud throaty whistles and screams that establish dominance over other males and attract females. Antler wrestling is also a common method of determining dominance if neither bull backs down. As an incredibly social species, a herd of elk can reach 400 individuals during the summer. Vocalizations are frequently used to communicate within herds. In the summer, their diet consists of grasses, sedges, and forbs; in the winter, they eat woody growth like cedar and hemlock. The current population of elk in Michigan stems from a small group that were reintroduced in 1918 after the original population was extirpated through hunting and habitat loss.

Segment 20: African Spurred Tortoise

Next, we pass by the African spurred tortoise habitat. This species is also sometimes referred to as the Sulcata tortoise. They have a brown to yellow upper shell, called a carapace, and thick skin that is a

golden to yellow-brown color. The largest mainland species of tortoise in Africa and third largest in the world, these reptiles are native to the Sahara Desert and found on hills and flat areas with shrubs and high grass. During the hottest part of the day in this arid climate, they burrow into the ground to cool down. African spurred tortoises can burrow up to 15 meters deep. From the moment they hatch they are aggressive towards others, flipping over other tortoises so often that the leading cause of death is being unable to right themselves after being flipped onto their back during a fight. Their diet consists of many types of grasses, plants, and cacti. African spurred tortoises are an endangered species. Tortoises and turtles worldwide face many pressures due to illegal poaching for the pet trade.

Segment 21: Raven

Continuing through the sensory garden, we come next to the common raven. These birds are entirely black, with 11 subspecies that have very little variation in appearance. Ravens are among the smartest birds in the world, demonstrating notable problem-solving abilities and have been known to make and use tools in the wild. Ravens have a highly varied diet. They will feed on carrion, but will also eat berries, food waste, cereal grains, small animals, and more. Their omnivorous diet has contributed to their success as a species. Commonly mistaken for a crow, ravens are larger and have different calls and flight patterns. They also have longer neck feathers and a thicker, more curved beak than crows. A great way to tell if you're looking at a raven or a crow is to look at the tail. Ravens have a diamond-shaped tail, and crows have more rounded tails. Ravens are found in various habitats around the world, mostly preferring wooded areas with large expanses of open land nearby.

Segment 22: Eurasian Eagle-Owl

Next up, in a habitat just off the main path is the Eurasian eagle-owl. One of the largest species of owl, females can grow to have a wingspan over 6 feet. Their feathers are various shades of brown, and they have large vivid orange eyes and distinctive ear tufts. They are one of the most widely distributed owl species, found across many regions in Europe and Asia. Eurasian eagle-owls inhabit diverse habitats, from northern coniferous forests to vast deserts. They periodically shed and replace their feathers over the span of several years. Eagle owls are extremely proficient hunters that can silently swoop down upon their prey from above, grabbing prey with their powerful feet. Their keen eyesight, acute hearing and ability to fly silently all contribute to their success as hunters. They eat many species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Like most owl species, they are nocturnal and use their excellent night vision to track their prey. They are only vocal at night and during colder months, using vocalizations for territorial and courtship purposes. As non-migratory birds, they never leave their native range, including those in harsh winter climates.

Segment 23: Western Tufted Deer

The Western tufted deer is in the next habitat. This is a small deer species that is found in the dense forests of southern and central China. Their short fur is a cool-colored light brown with the exception of the black tuft of hair between their ears. They are timid animals, that travel alone or in pairs, and they are defensive about their territory, which they rarely leave. The small antlers of male deer are barely visible in

their tuft of fur. The males use these small antlers, along with their large, fang-like canine teeth, to fight over territory. When alarmed, the tufted deer will flee with cat-like jumps. They are both grazers and browsers, as they eat both grass and other vegetation. Due to hunting and deforestation, tufted deer are considered near threatened.

Segment 24: Red Kangaroo

Taking a slight left and passing through the last stretch of the zoo, we approach the Australian habitat. This habitat houses three species, one of which is the red kangaroo. They are the largest living marsupial and native to Australia. Males typically have red-brown fur that fades to a pale tan below and on the limbs, and females are blue-grey with a brown tinge and pale gray below. An identifying feature of red kangaroos are the white patches both males and females have on the side of their muzzles. Red kangaroos have long pointed ears and incredibly muscular hind limbs that allow them to reach speeds of around 15 mph. Males can cover 26-30 feet in one leap, reaching heights of around 6 to 10 feet. Inhabiting scrubland, grassland, and desert habitats, they rest under the shade of nearby trees to cool down. Another way kangaroos will stay cool is by licking their forearms. They eat plants and are able to get enough nutrition even when most plants look brown and dry. As marsupials, females have a special reproductive ability to carry and nurture their largely undeveloped young in a pouch on their abdomen. Ritualized fighting between males is known as boxing and consists of jabbing and then kicking one another using their tails to support their weight. These fights tend to involve more wrestling than in other kangaroo species, and as males are not territorial, they fight solely over females.

Segment 25: Western Gray Kangaroo

The other kangaroo species found in this habitat is the western gray kangaroo. Though not as large as the red kangaroo, they are some of the largest macropods in Australia. The western gray kangaroo has two subspecies that are slightly different in color. Individuals in a subspecies from Kangaroo Island, off the coast of Australia, are dark brown to black with shorter limbs, ears, and tails while the subspecies on the mainland of Australia has darker brown on the head and back, with blueish grey fur underneath. Western gray kangaroos feed at night, eating grasses and forbs as well as leafy shrubs. As a nocturnal species, they can lower their body temperatures based on the daily temperature of their environment. Lowering their body temperature during the summertime is believed to allow them to conserve energy when food availability is low. They are nicknamed “stinkers” due to the curry-like odor of mature males.

Segment 26: Red-necked Wallaby

Also in the Australian habitat are wallabies. Wallabies are small to medium-sized marsupials native to Australia and nearby islands. They look like smaller versions of kangaroos, with strong hind legs for hopping, long tails for balance, and soft fur that can range from gray to reddish-brown. Unlike their larger kangaroo relatives, wallabies often live in forested or rocky areas. Despite their smaller size, they can leap up to 10 feet in a single bound! Red-necked wallabies, also known as Bennett’s wallaby, are found in south-eastern Australia. They are named for the reddish fur on their necks and shoulder. Their young spend nine months in their mother’s pouch before they start hopping around on their own.

Segment 27: Binturong

As we make our way back to the entrance, we pass by the final habitat in this tour - the binturong. Also known as a "bearcat", they have thick, coarse black hair, short legs with sharp claws, and a tail that can be as long as their bodies. They use this bushy, prehensile tail to help them climb through the canopies of the tropical rainforests in Southeast Asia, where they reside. They feed on animals such as birds, insects, and small mammals, as well as figs and eggs. They are essential seed dispersers, especially for the strangler fig. Binturongs usually live alone or in small family groups, communicating through scent by marking trees using an oil gland under their tail. A binturong's distinctive odor is compared to that of popcorn. They are listed as a vulnerable species due to poaching for traditional medicines and the pet trade, as well as habitat destruction.

Segment 28: Outro

Thank you for exploring Potter Park Zoo!

We hope you had a great time learning about the animals in the zoo.