



Same planet. Different world.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Toronto Zoo inspires kids to take eco action

Celebrating Canadian Environment Week (June 5-11)

Toronto, Ontario – As anticipation for the end of the school year reaches a fever pitch, thousands of school-aged children travel to the Toronto Zoo in droves for end-of-the-year field trips. They might not realize it, but they're in for much more than just a day away from the classroom.

Toronto Zoo uses its connection with over 35 Ontario School Boards each year to create environmental education opportunities – from informal talks with zookeepers and interpreters to structured educational tours and programs – all based on interaction with live animals and tied back to the school curriculum. The goal is to encourage the Zoo's younger visitors to connect with nature and ultimately become the next generation of environmental stewards.

"Education is at the heart of what we do at Toronto Zoo so it's incredibly rewarding for us to see the magical connections kids make with the animals every day," says John Tracogna, CEO Toronto Zoo. "In our increasingly urbanized world, a trip to the Zoo gives kids the chance to experience the magic of the natural world – an opportunity they might not otherwise have. Feeling inspired about nature and learning about the realities of disappearing wilderness, overharvesting and other threats to species and habitats can lead kids to make positive environmental choices in their own lives that make a real difference."

Eco-kids in action

As part of the Toronto Zoo's Operation Conservation Program, a grant funded program offered for students from the Jane-Finch and Malvern communities, participants this year focused their attention on exploring the new African Rainforest Pavilion where they learned about the Toronto Zoo's new Phone Apes™ initiative. Through walking tours, meet-the-keeper talks and helping to design an onsite conservation banner, the participants became experts concerning the negative impact the expanding cell phone industry has on African lowland gorilla habitats. With the extra incentive of winning an all expense paid class trip back to the Toronto Zoo, the students recycled over 250 cell phones! This amazing donation helped to raise \$200 for the Goulougo Triangle Ape Project: Securing the Future of Gorillas and Chimpanzees in a Changing Landscape.

The Toronto Zoo's full day school workshops, offered throughout the year, continue to be a popular choice among teachers. *"It was an excellent program, my kids loved it!"* – Grade 2 Teacher, Vradenburg Jr. P. S. *"...it was excellent, full of information!"* – Grade 2 Teacher, Jackman P.S.

The learning opportunities don't end there, the Toronto Zoo is also registered as a private school with the Ministry of Education for the delivery of Grade 11 Biology courses throughout July and August. Students comment on their unique experiences in this program saying, *"My Zoo School experience was fabulous; met lots of great people and interacted with animals, all while getting my Bio credit!"* and *"It was a lot more hands-on than a regular course, and we barely saw the textbook all month, it was the perfect balance of learning and fun."*

Toronto Zoo hosts over 144,000 school children each year and offers a variety of educational programming, including elementary level student workshops, half day guided tours, Zoo to You Outreach programs, and a variety of downloadable resources for teachers and students. The Zoo is also part of the network of Canada's accredited zoos and aquariums that together use their living classrooms to teach more than 11 million visitors each year about the natural world, the impact of human activities and the actions we can take to protect wild animals and their habitats.

For more information about the Toronto Zoo and the offering of unique educational opportunities, please visit our website at torontozoo.com

About CAZA

The Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a not for profit national organization that represents Canada's 25 accredited zoos and aquariums. It sets standards through its accreditation program, leads and coordinates work in the fields of research, conservation and education, and represents its members' interests with governments at all levels.

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