



NEWS

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Knoxville Zoo · P.O. Box 6040 · Knoxville, TN 37914
MEDIA RELATIONS OFFICE · 865.637.5331, ext. 377
Fax: 865.637.1943

Knoxville Zoo Mourns the Passing of Bern Tryon, Director of Herpetology

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Contact: Tina Rolen, 865.637.5331 ext. 377
Cell: 865.919.1240, trolen@knoxville-zoo.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knoxville Zoo is saddened to announce the passing of Bern Tryon, the zoo's director of herpetology. An iconic figure in his field, Bern was instrumental in the preservation and survival of endangered bog turtles in East Tennessee. During his 27 years at Knoxville Zoo, he built a legacy that rallied a community behind the conservation of a tiny turtle and their fragile habitat.

"With the passing of Bern Tryon, conservation has lost one of its greatest champions. Our Knoxville Zoo family has lost a friend and a highly respected family member. Bern had instilled his passion for conservation and animal care in his staff who will continue his important work," says Jim Vlna, executive director of Knoxville Zoo.



Bern's professional career started in 1971 in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was a reptile keeper at Zoo Atlanta. His path took him to Fort Worth Zoological Park and Houston Zoological Gardens before he joined Knoxville Zoo as Curator of Herpetology in 1984. His interest in the protection, management and restoration of habitats for rare and endangered species of reptiles made him a passionate champion of bog turtles when they were discovered in a single bog in upper East Tennessee in 1986. Bern became the primary researcher for bog turtles in the state, and in the ensuing 25 years worked to attain the long-term viability of bog turtles and protection of their habitats.

Bern received numerous honors and awards for his work, including recognition from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) Turtle Conservation Lifetime Achievement Award. It was also under Bern's leadership that Knoxville Zoo was recognized with the prestigious Bean Award, presented by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), for being the first in the world to successfully breed Papuan pythons.

Bern passed away on Friday, May 6, 2011, after a long battle with cancer. He leaves behind a thriving population of bog turtles in sites throughout upper East Tennessee, and a dedicated team who will continue the vision Bern had devoted his career bringing to fruition.

"Bern's reach and influence stretched across the country and around the world," says Phil Colclough, curator of herpetology at Knoxville Zoo. "He was an icon to conservation and zoo herpetology, but more importantly, he was a friend to many. We will miss him dearly."

Knoxville Zoo is Knoxville's largest year-round attraction. Located off exit 392A from Interstate 40, the zoo is open every day except Christmas Day. Knoxville Zoo is nationally accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and is committed to the highest standards in animal care and well-being, ethics, conservation, and education. Currently, the zoo is open Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and from 9:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Admission and ticket sales stop one-hour before the zoo closes. Next-day admission is free after 3 p.m. For more information, please call 865.637.5331 ext. 300 or visit www.knoxvillezoo.org