

You can travel the world in Phila.

Philadelphia is international in every sense, home to outstanding cultural, scientific, educational and business institutions that make the city a destination and fitting host to worldwide travelers. Our city and our residents connect to the world in another real way: through the animals at the Philadelphia Zoo, which represent almost every region of the globe, from equatorial jungles to arctic ice floes to remote islands. And just as internationally relevant is our role in working to save endangered wildlife here and around the planet.

The zoo's species-saving efforts span many continents and initiatives — we support safeguarding of penguin colonies in Peru, environmental education programs around endangered bats on the Indian Ocean island of Rodrigues, and habitat protection for golden lion tamarins in Brazil, to name a few. Recently, our team initiated a rescue program for critically endangered frogs from Haiti, creating an "amphibian ark" at the zoo.

Our everyday decisions impact animals and habitats in every corner of the globe, from coral reef fish in the Caribbean to the iconic polar bear of the north. While the zoo's international conservation actions are a key part of our mission, our greatest responsibility and opportunity lies in engaging the help of our more than 1.2 million visitors each year. Through experiences with amazing animals and compelling programs, our objective is to create future generations of planetary stewards. In doing so, the Zoo connects visitors with the world while fulfilling its important role as a wildlife protector right here from our home in Philadelphia.

The zoo has dedicated this year to a single animal with an uncertain future — the orangutan. If deforestation continues at current rates, orangutans could become extinct in the wild within as little as 15 years, with the Sumatran orangutan at particularly great risk of becoming the first of the great apes to disappear in the wild. UNLESS...

This is why we have declared 2012 the Year of the



Guest Notebook

Andrew J. Baker

Orangutan at the Philadelphia Zoo and have engaged nearly 7,000 schoolchildren in our UNLESS Contest, which challenges students to help us imagine, create and participate in the zoo's conservation efforts for orangutans. As part of the celebration, the zoo is presenting a special exhibit in partnership with Dr. Seuss Enterprises — Trail of the Lorax. This experience will provide interactive ways in which our visitors will follow a trail of clues left by Dr. Seuss' beloved character while learning the true story of this species in peril, with parallels to the cautionary tale of the book.

On the horizon is the Hamilton Family Children's Zoo and Faris Family Education Center, which will open in April 2013. This amazing learning environment invites kids of all ages to explore and understand the power we all have through other simple daily choices — energy use, water use and recycling — to impact the survival of animals that share our planet, from those in our own neighborhoods to others living in faraway places.

As Philadelphia continues to expand its international reach, the zoo remains committed to spreading its global impact as well. The zoo has created memories that last a lifetime and it is a place to create connections with the world and with its remarkable wildlife to last generations.

ANDREW J. BAKER is the chief operating officer of the Philadelphia Zoo. This column is an installment of the Global Philadelphia Association (www.globalphiladelphia.org) series entitled "Philadelphia: The Once — And Future — International City."