



Zoocheck News & Views

August 2023

Welcome to Our New E-newsletter!

Welcome to the first edition of Zoocheck News & Views. Coming out approximately once each month, this communication will feature current news, interesting information, upcoming event notices and, perhaps most importantly, details about Zoocheck's wildlife protection work throughout Canada and around the world.

Thank you for your support and for being part of the Zoocheck community.

The Zoocheck Team

London Takes Reptilia to Court

London, Ontario is taking the Reptilia Zoo to court after receiving complaints from local citizens and Zoocheck about prohibited and restricted animals being kept at their newly opened shopping mall facility.



In early 2023, Reptilia approached the City (for the third time) to request that they be exempted from London's Animal Control By-Law PH-3 so they could keep prohibited and restricted animals in the City. Interestingly, Reptilia also claimed they were already exempt from the by-law because they held a provincial permit for keeping certain species of native wildlife in captivity. On February 14th, London City Council refused to facilitate Reptilia's request. Reptilia then stated their intention to open their Westmount Shopping Mall zoo location with prohibited animals regardless and did so in late April. Just days after opening, Zoocheck conducted a review and found the majority of Reptilia's animals were species that are prohibited or restricted in the City, so a complaint was lodged with the appropriate City authorities.

This is not the first time Zoocheck has been involved in wildlife captivity issues in London. In fact, for years we played a significant role in addressing problematic local roadside zoo issues in London and area and in the 2013 closure of the City's aging Storybook Gardens children's zoo, including relocation of the zoo's animals. Our concerns about a potential new commercial reptile zoo in the City have been registered since Reptilia first proposed the idea of a London branch in 2017.

It should be noted that Reptilia's previous requests for local bylaw amendments in Toronto and St. Catharines were turned down. A comprehensive review and consultation in each City resulted in both municipal Councils voting unanimously against changing their bylaws for Reptilia. London is the third municipal Council that has said no to Reptilia.

The first court hearing regarding Reptilia in the City of London and the presence of prohibited and

restricted animals is set to take place on September 1st. We'll have more news on this issue and other developments in the coming weeks.

READ THE MOST RECENT ARTICLE



No Place for a Sloth!

Guest post by Kira Pedersen

"NEVER PET OR HOLD A SLOTH!"

I recently visited a mobile zoo exhibit where I met a sloth for the first time and it wasn't fun. While it was a miserable experience for me, it was undoubtedly worse for the sloth.

The exhibit was set up on a quiet Sunday in a small-town municipal building. The show was held in a drab, boxy room, windowless with fluorescent lighting and tiled walls. On entry it was difficult to reconcile this space as a venue to encounter live, exotic animals, as there was nothing reminiscent of the natural world in the room. Instead, the bright colours of the various signs and merchandise for sale at the door presented a strange blend of civic banality and carnivalesque side show.

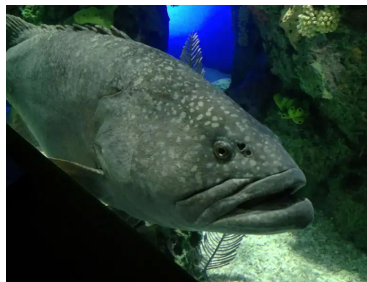
Reptile displays were lined up along one wall, with the obligatory information placards stating the animals common and scientific names, as well as their natural habitats. There were also a few sentences about behaviours in the wild, conservation status and other assorted facts, but they were all things any child could find online in a minute or two. The information seemed to have little or no relation to the specimen found on the other side of the glass. Those animals were lodged into corners or awkwardly wound around displays, surrounded by plastic foliage, and all silent and unmoving.

There were also a number of mammals present, including baby wallaroos (a relative of kangaroos), sugar gliders and African crested porcupines. They were kept in open enclosures with low fencing and some wood shavings spread on the concrete floor. Visitors could easily lean over the partition

and were encouraged to engage directly with the animals – holding them, patting them, and peering into the homemade cotton bags that were slung around the fence, containing the sleeping or hiding baby wallaroos.

[Read Full Story](#)

[9 Ways to Help Sloths](#)



Reflections on Captive Fish Prompted by New Quebec Aquarium Proposal

Opinion commentary by Rob Laidlaw

As a young child I developed a fascination with wildlife of all kinds. At some point that I can't remember I became particularly interested in fish and that led me keep fish in aquariums at home. I kept a wide variety of freshwater tropical fish, bought books about fish, attended fish shows and belonged to an aquarium society. I could walk into any pet store and identify pretty much every fish they were selling and I was up on the latest husbandry gear. I can't really remember how many aquariums or how many fish I kept, but it was a good number.

Even though I was young, I did my research and I believed I was a diligent, responsible and informed fish keeper. But I remember one day looking at my fish and wondering what was going through their minds. What was their life really like? They were confined in glass boxes and they could swim from one end of their small space to the other but there wasn't much else they could do. I thought that even tiny fish in the wild, like the neon tetras I kept, would live in a complex, environments orders of magnitude greater in size than they did in my aquariums. I came to believe their lives were rather purposeless and wasted because they were there just for my personal interest and amusement and I imagined they must be as miserable as fish could be.

Back then, no one had really studied the cognitive, emotional and social lives of fish in great detail, so they were generally thought of as being not particularly bright and driven largely by instinct. We now know that's not the case, that fish are exceedingly complex, often very advanced, animals that share attributes common to mammals, birds and many other animals. Fish, it turns out, are not the animals they were thought to be.

[Read Full Story](#)



Zoocheck documentary short **Shoreline Socialites: Why the Fuss About Cormorants?** wins another film festival award!

Feature Video

Our 10 minute double-crested cormorant documentary short has just won another award! Shoreline Socialites has won the 2023 Toronto Beaches Film Festival award for Best Nature/Wildlife Film.

For many years, Zoocheck has been focused on protecting the heavily persecuted double-crested cormorant populations in Ontario, the Great Lakes Basin and elsewhere. This documentary is a small part of Zoocheck's response to Ontario's nonsensical, establishment of a cormorant hunting season.

Watch Shoreline Socialites to learn more about cormorants, what's going on in Ontario and why these incredible birds should be left alone. **There are no graphic scenes in the video.**

[Watch Video](#)



Fabulous original wildlife art from **Barry Kent MacKay**

25% of proceeds from purchase of original art will support Zoocheck's wildlife protection work!

Renowned Canadian bird artist, writer, naturalist, conservationist and longtime Zoocheck board member, Barry Kent MacKay has “always been an admirer of birds, anxious to see them, paint them, and care for them.” Barry’s biological and ecological accuracy has put him in demand for commissions, to illustrate books, scientific journals and various print and digital media. He has painted birds and other wildlife from around the world, often life size, working in oils, watercolours, and acrylics.

He prefers to sell original art, and keeps prices low. “Actual, original art should be affordable for middle class buyers,” he says. “I avoid having to depend on selling reproductions so that the market does not dictate what I paint, which can often be little-known species. He was named Artist of the Year by Bird Studies Canada and has won numerous other awards and honors for his work as an artist, conservationist and writer.

Barry will be donating 25% of the proceeds from all original art sales to support Zoocheck's wildlife protection work.

If you would like to purchase an original artwork (images of original works can be found at the link below), please email zoocheck@zoocheck.com and we will put you in touch with Barry. Original artwork is not sold through the website link below.

[Learn more about Barry's artwork.](#)

Let's Make a Better World for Animals

Help us as we work to improve wildlife protection, and end the abuse, neglect and exploitation of wild animals in Canada and around the world. We can't do it without you - we appreciate your support immensely!

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