

2021 Strategic Communications Report

Date: January 31, 2022

To: Toronto Zoo Board of Management

From: Senior Director, Strategic Communications & Guest Experience

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report will update the Board of Management on the primary activities and achievements for the Strategic Communications Branch at the Toronto Zoo for the year 2021. The Strategic Communications team oversees the public facing communications outlets to connect our audiences to our animals, messages, events and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Director, Strategic Communications & Guest Experience recommends that:

1. The Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

The Toronto Zoo reports annually on the activities of the Strategic Communications branch to the Board of Management.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2021.ZB14.5>

COMMENTS

For the second year in a row, our Strategic Communications team has worked diligently to support the constant changes in operational needs, to share the important conservation and animal stories, and engage our audiences with the many ways their

Toronto Zoo was supporting our community throughout these challenging times. Our Mission of connecting people, animals and conservation science continues to fuel our communication efforts and is at the core of all of our strategies.

Included in this report is an overview of the achievements and opportunities we explored as we once again adapted to new and unplanned circumstances and found innovative and exciting ways to share our Toronto Zoo stories with the world.

Key accomplishments in 2021 are listed below for Social Media, E-Marketing, Media Activity, Website, Promotional Partnerships, Advertising, and more.

Social Media

Online audience and engagement growth:

We live by one straightforward communication rule – content is king! Luckily, we have some extraordinary content to work with. Our Social Media Coordinator continues to curate the extensive amount of content into compelling, fun, meaningful and well-timed stories that keep our audiences engaged.

The Zoo's online following now totals **over 860,010** people across all platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and TikTok), a **54% increase over 2020 which ended the year with 558,559**. Of note, our Toronto Zoo Facebook remains #1 in ranking against other major Toronto attractions and other Canadian zoos, and ranks #2 against the top US Zoos and Aquariums. We are also #1 for Instagram against the key Toronto attractions/Canadian Zoos, and at #4 against other the US Zoos & Aquariums. An important note as well, we have not yet needed to pursue paid impressions on Facebook, as we are still receiving an average of 300k+ impressions per day, which is a great achievement!




Twitter Post 1	
TheTorontoZoo Fri 6/4/2021 5:49 pm UTC	
Kanzi is one happy hyena 🦒 She enjoyed watermelon that doubled as both a tasty snack and a form of enrichment!	
Total Engagements	29,415
Likes	5,153
@Replies	25
Retweets	1,522
Post Link Clicks	32
Other Post Clicks	22,683
Other Engagements	0

Twitter Post 2	
TheTorontoZoo Mon 5/10/2021 6:03 pm UTC	
After a very difficult weekend of valiant efforts from the Wildlife Health and Wildlife Care teams, we are saddened to	
Total Engagements	28,138
Likes	425
@Replies	41
Retweets	34
Post Link Clicks	586
Other Post Clicks	27,052
Other Engagements	0



The Toronto Zoo
Sat 7/24/2021 7:29 am PDT


Weekend plans: watch #TOTigerCub live on the Giant Tiger Live Cam 📺 Tune in at <https://bit.ly/3xR7kme>. Want came



Total Engagements	848,485
Reactions	359,578
Comments	10,921
Shares	31,739
Post Link Clicks	2,349
Other Post Clicks	443,898

The Toronto Zoo
Wed 1/6/2021 9:18 am PST


Playful Poe 🐘 Little #BBZeeBee is now over a month old! Poe is a lot taller standing almost 5 feet tall (at the tips



Total Engagements	274,237
Reactions	180,217
Comments	4,687
Shares	18,864
Post Link Clicks	78
Other Post Clicks	70,391

The Toronto Zoo
Wed 12/8/2021 7:22 am PST


Let's talk about tur 🦃 When you visit Eurasia this winter, you may notice our West caucasian tur battling it out with



Total Engagements	169,464
Reactions	32,891
Comments	282
Shares	4,510
Post Link Clicks	19
Other Post Clicks	131,762

The Toronto Zoo
Fri 6/4/2021 10:51 am PDT

Kanzi is one happy hyena 🦒 She enjoyed watermelon that doubled as both a tasty snack and a form of enrichment!




Total Engagements	145,742
Reactions	43,300
Comments	2,497
Shares	6,104
Post Link Clicks	119
Other Post Clicks	93,722



thetorontozoo
Tue 6/15/2021 6:28 am PDT


#TOTiger Update 🐅 She now weighs over 5kg – Keepers have had to get a new scale, since she has outgrown the



Total Engagements	17,153
Likes	16,608
Comments	214
Saves	331

thetorontozoo
Mon 7/12/2021 5:36 am PDT

Ready to meet #TOTigerCub? 🐅 Starting today (Monday, July 12), you can catch a glimpse of her from 10:00am to



Total Engagements	15,862
Likes	15,171
Comments	213
Saves	478

thetorontozoo
Mon 5/17/2021 11:07 am PDT


The #TOTinyTigers are girls 🐅 Mazy's two cubs have been closely monitored and while continue to do well, one cub



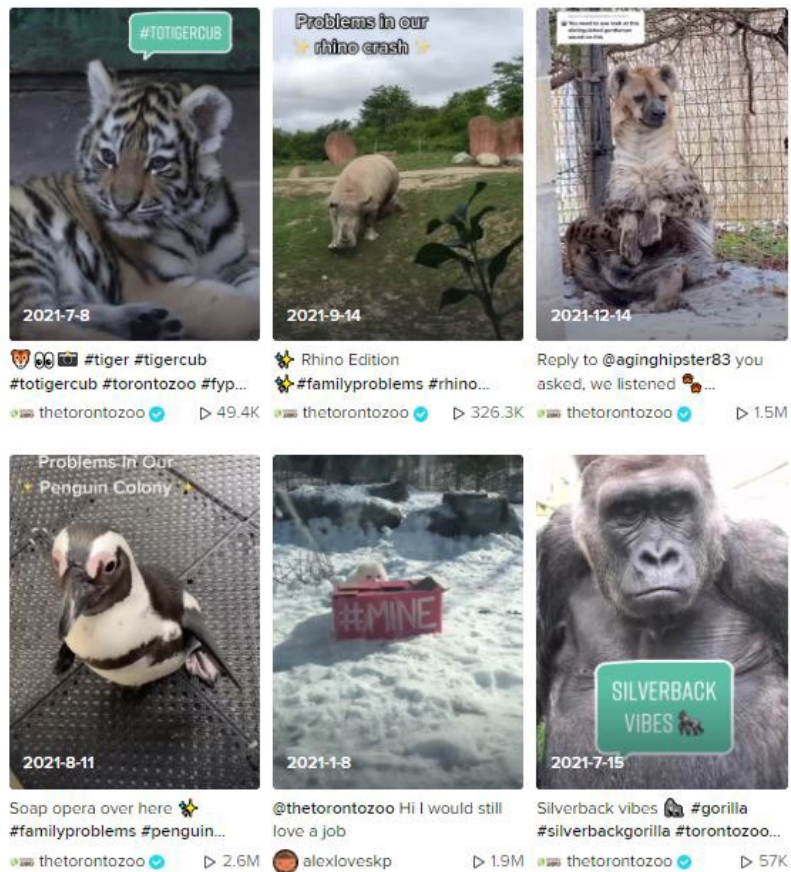
Total Engagements	14,888
Likes	14,404
Comments	219
Saves	265

thetorontozoo
Mon 5/10/2021 11:58 am PDT

After a very difficult weekend of valiant efforts from the Wildlife Health and Wildlife Care teams, we are saddened

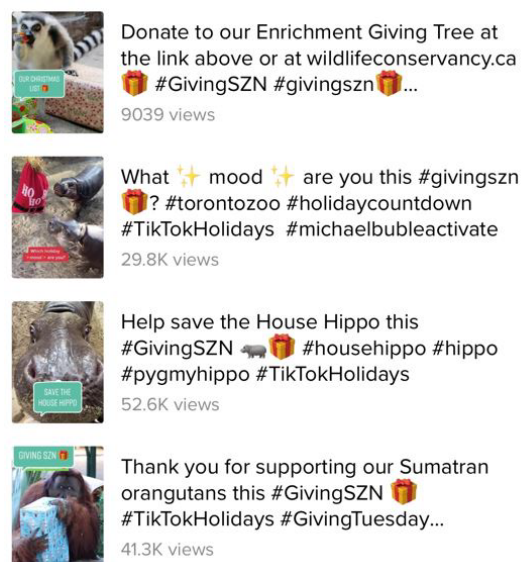


Total Engagements	13,829
Likes	12,786
Comments	805
Saves	238



Our team was very proud and excited to work directly with TikTok Canada on their #GivingSZN campaign this past year. They reached out to us, as our content was performing exceptionally well, and they thought it would be great alignment for us.

The campaign involved working with not-for-profits and charities across Canada to help raise awareness and donations during the holiday season. For participating, TikTok Canada made a generous \$30,000 donation to the Wildlife Conservancy.

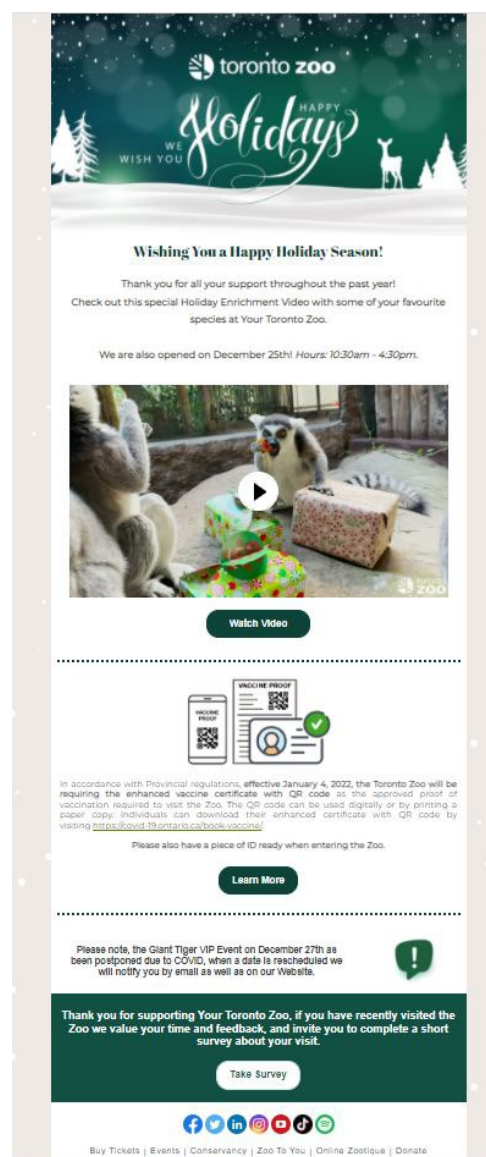


E-Marketing Program

In Spring 2021, we hired a new position in our Strategic Communications team, an E-Marketing Coordinator. This position was integral in developing a new e-marketing program for our Zoo, improving the email communications system to our Zoo Members, media, and other email groups that we had plans to enhance and grow. Previously, we had been using Microsoft Outlook to deploy bulk emails which was far from optimal, both from a formatting perspective, and also because Outlook is not a mass email system, so did not provide any metrics or analytics to help analyze performance of the e-blasts.

Our new E-Marketing Coordinator spent most of 2021 researching, developing, testing and then integrating a custom e-marketing system that would connect to our member e-database of over 28,000 member emails, and which is a dynamic database with members being added and subtracted constantly. Our first email was sent using this new system in the fall, and already has provided us with some preliminary data, analytics and reporting opportunities which will be utilized to help drive our content and e-marketing strategy moving forward.

For December, here is an example of the new type of reporting and analytics we can start collecting/reviewing more regularly:



Month	Total Emails Sent	Open Rates Average Per Email Send *	Unique Open Rates Average Per Email Send	Clicks Avg Per Email Send	Unique Click Rate Average Per Email Send	# Of Unique Clicks Per Email Send
Dec	157,687	21,552	49.44%	1,987	3.10%	804

*Each batch email send is typically around 28,050 emails

Note: An Industry Average Open Rate is typically around 12-25%, and average click rate is usually between 2-5% (sourced from constant contact and campaign monitor)

-Unique Open Rate is defined as a single user opening a single email

-Unique Click Rate is defined as a single user clicking a single link

Media Activity

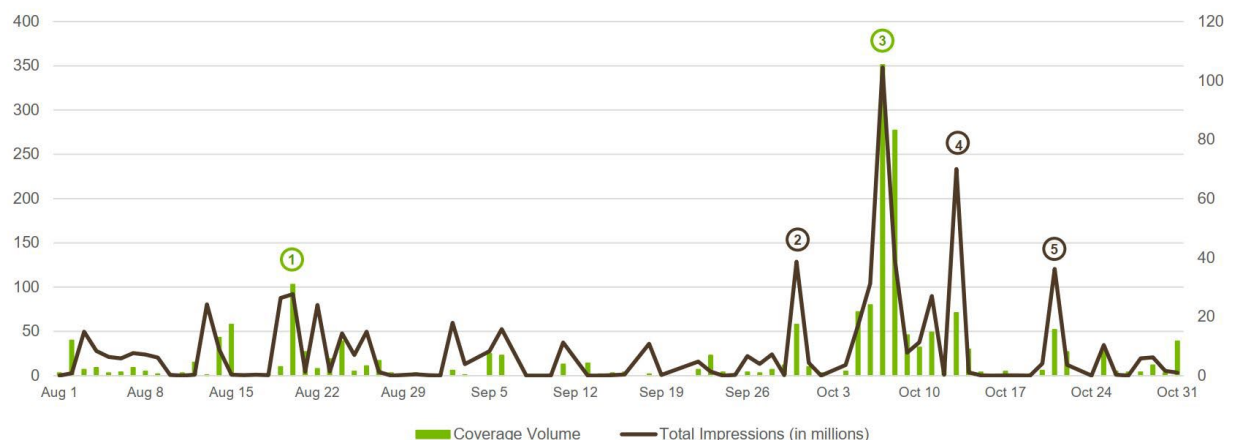
Media Relations continues to be an integral component of our strategic communications strategy to support our limited advertising budgets.

Our new media tracking service which came into effect in July, provides us with a turn key system/dashboard to generate reports with ease. Our new Media Relations Coordinator began in October 2021, and is currently being trained to be able to generate more regular media reporting in-house, which will allow our team to track more closely where we need to increase our coverage and which markets to target through other communication/advertising channels. With the addition of a dedicated media relations coordinator, we will be developing a strategy for media outreach only in the GTA but throughout Canada and globally to further position our Toronto Zoo as leader in wildlife science and conservation.

August to October Quarterly Reporting:

The Toronto Zoo was mentioned in 1,903 news stories this quarter, garnering a total reach of 25.7 million and UVPM of 703.7 million. On average, the Toronto Zoo appeared in 146 stories per week, and 634 stories per month.

SPIKE ANALYSIS



- ① **August 20:** August 20th saw a slight spike in coverage with 103 stories, largely due to the announcement that the Toronto Zoo will implement a [mandatory vaccination policy](#) for staff and volunteers.
- ② **September 30:** Despite having only 58 stories, September 30th saw a peak in impressions (38.6 million), mainly due to coverage coming from higher reaching outlets. The story that dominated headlines was about Ontarians observing their first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, which included hundreds gathering at the Toronto Zoo to mark the day ([1](#), [2](#)).
- ③ **October 7:** October 7th saw the highest spike in both coverage (351 articles), as well as impressions (104.4 million) for the quarter. Notable stories include a heavily syndicated article about the Toronto Zoo announcing that [endangered orangutan, Sekali, is pregnant](#) and due to give birth in April, as well as articles outlining what was open and closed on Thanksgiving in Toronto ([1](#), [2](#)).
- ④ **October 13:** October 13th had another spike in impressions with 69.9 million from 71 stories, led by high reaching articles about the Toronto Zoo announcing that starting October 25th, all guests will need to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to visit ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)).
- ⑤ **October 21:** October 21st saw another small spike in impressions (36.1 million) from 52 stories. The top story for the day was about the Toronto Zoo planning to vaccinate its animals against COVID-19 ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#)).

Broadcast content had the largest share of media type, accounting for 74% of total coverage. Notable broadcast stories include the announcement that our Toronto Zoo animals will be vaccinated against COVID-19, as well as videos of various Toronto Zoo animals enjoying carved pumpkins for Halloween. Online articles accounted for 23% of total coverage. Top online stories include the announcement that all visitors to the Toronto Zoo must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the announcement of our endangered orangutan pregnancy, as well as researchers discovering a secret colony of endangered marmots on Vancouver Island, mentioning the Toronto Zoo's marmot captive breeding program. Print had the smallest share of volume at 3%. Notable print stories include articles about the Toronto Zoo's plea to the public to help find an escaped red fox, as well as the announcement that the Toronto Zoo was implementing a mandatory vaccine policy for its visitors.

Highlight of Media Relations/PR activity included:

213 media requests coordinated (written statements, filming and virtual interviews)
 28 Newsletter submissions written and submitted (Destination Toronto, We've Been Expecting You, Scarborough Community Renewal Organization SCRO, Highland Creek Villager, West Rouge Life & Live Green)
 12 Scarborough Mirror Columns written and submitted
 55 press releases issued
 Media events, including Zoo re-opening with Mayor Tory (June), Sumatran Tiger Cub Media Event (July 2021), Scarborough Hero Awards Event (August 2021), Toronto Zoo & SHN Kids Vaccine Clinic Media Event (Dec 2021)

Other Media Features/Highlights:



YOUR TORONTO ZOO OFFICIALLY OPENS TO THE PUBLIC!



Left to Right: Councillor Paul Ainslie, Ward 24 Scarborough-Guildwood and Chair, Board of Management, Mayor John Tory, Don DeJong, CEO of your Toronto Zoo and Councillor Jennifer McKelvie, Ward 25 Scarborough-Rouge Park. Photo Credit: Toronto Zoo

TORONTO, ON, Saturday, June 19, 2021: Today, the Toronto Zoo was excited to officially reopen to the public after being closed to pedestrians since November 23, 2020. With timed tickets being sold out and anticipating 5,000 guests on its first day of full operations, a number of VIPs were on hand to officially open and welcome the eager Zoo guests. Mayor John Tory, Don DeJong, CEO of your Toronto Zoo, Councillors Jennifer McKelvie, Ward 25 Scarborough-Rouge Park and Paul Ainslie, Ward 24 Scarborough-Guildwood and Chair, Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo were on hand to welcome guests and to celebrate the Zoo's newest habitat "Goat World".

When our Toronto Zoo finally re-opened Saturday June 19th, 2021 we hosted a media opportunity and welcomed Mayor John Tory, Board Members and City Councillors Paul Ainslie and Jennifer McKelvie, and also launched our newest attraction, Goat World!

TORONTO STAR FEATURE: WOMEN IN STEM



Inclusion in the special interest section for the Toronto Star and online at [innovatingcanada.ca](https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/celebrating-women-who-have-made-great-strides-in-areas-of-research-and-innovation) celebrating women who have made great strides in areas of research and innovation. Our Toronto Zoo featured four notable scientists doing incredible conservation work: Dr. Gabriela Mastromonaco, Pala Mackie, Dr. Elizabeth Okruhlik and Siga Lapinskas.

This feature appeared in the Saturday September 4, 2021 print edition of the Toronto Star, and online at the link below.

<https://www.innovatingcanada.ca/environment/building-connections-for-wildlife-science-and-species-survival/>



Toronto Zoo Re-opening Media Event – June 2021

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA – media event and launch of “Zoophony” – a collaborative animal/musical educational program



Breakfast Television live remote (5 segments) to promote the Holiday Marketplace – December 2021. Frank Ferragine featured various parts of the Holiday Marketplace, Stirling the donkey, and our Greater one-horned rhinos.



Website

With over 13,000,000 page views in 2021, the Toronto Zoo website remains an active communications tool to share information with our audience. For a second year we used constantly changing graphics and messaging to share important updates and content as required, including changes to operational policies, updates on our programs

and offerings, highlighting virtual programming while closed, and promoting animal updates and attractions seasonally.

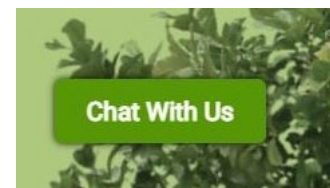
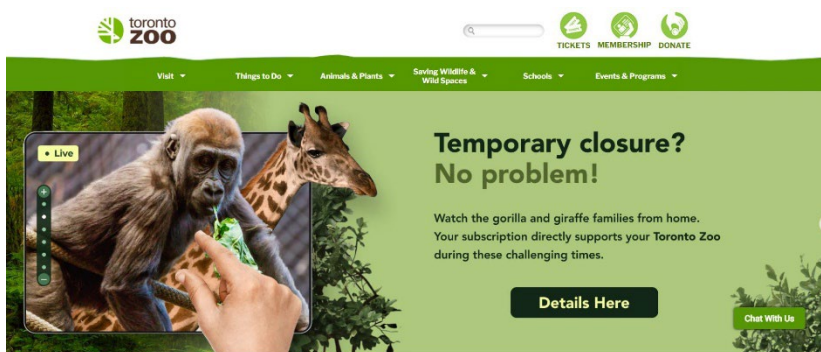


The Toronto Zoo website saw a 50% increase in total page views and a 7% increase in total web sessions in 2021, even being closed for several months of the year. Total page views and sessions reached record-high numbers in 2021, the highest we've seen compared to the last nine years.

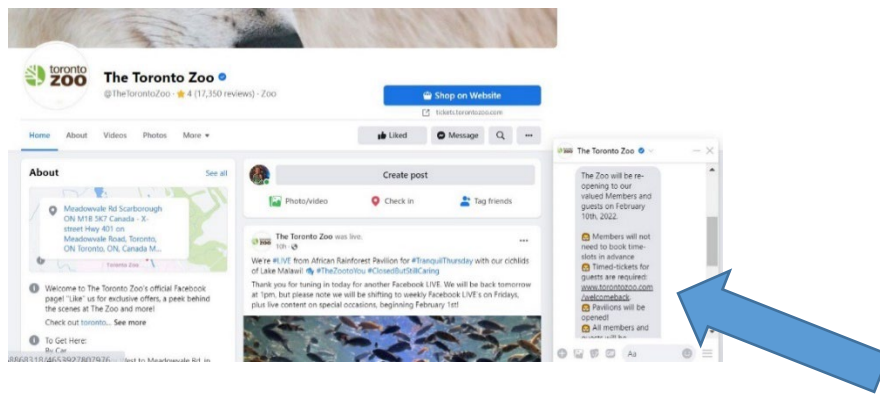
NEW to the website – Chat bot!

In 2021 we introduced a new website feature – our Chat bot. We have partnered with Satisfi Labs, a company that has successfully implemented Chat bot systems for a number of other top Zoos and Aquariums across North America. Located in the bottom right of our website pages, and in our Facebook messages.

On our website:



Chat bot on our Facebook messages page:



The Toronto Zoo's chat bot currently has a database of 148 answers that link to questions asked by website visitors on our homepage and "Welcome Back" page. Between the launch of our chat bot on August 20th, and November 30, 2021, the chat bot has received over **13,357 inbound messages** from **4,502 unique users**. Based on Satisfi Labs historical data and comparisons they estimate the Zoo to have **saved 350+ staff hours** responding to messages in this time.

Promotional Partnerships

The need to leverage strong partnerships and in-kind promotional opportunities has never been more important. A few significant partnerships included:

Toronto Star: Our strong partnership with the Toronto Star included an in-kind print promotional plan for our Name the Baby Tiger Contest and Holiday Marketplace, reaching over nine million readers.

City Parent Magazine: City Parent is Canada's largest FREE Family publication for 35 years reaching 125,000 readers in the GTA. Our ongoing partnership supports full page ads in monthly issues (value of ~\$3k per issue).

Retail Pages: Front page advertisements in a monthly publication called Retail Pages which is distributed free in Durham region in exchange for Zoo passes. The Zoo has a different ad for each month of the year and will continue to utilize this to promote Zoo events.

Toronto City Key program – continued to participate in this exclusive program that offers opportunities for "key holders" to access discounts and special offers to explore some of the most exciting attractions in the City.

Attractions Ontario – continued supporting various promotional opportunities with Attractions Ontario through online contesting and exchange of passes for digital promotions.

Destination Toronto – participated in the #NeverHaveIEver campaign to promote the Zoo and our Lumina Experience, and were featured as one of the top Attractions in the Breakfast Television paid spot

Toronto Attractions Council – feature partner in “Attractions Week”, a 10-day celebration featuring local tourism destinations (October 2021)

ParentSource.ca and Toronto4Kids.com – maintained partnerships with these targeted family online resources to share updates and information about the Zoo in exchange for Zoo passes/giveaways

Advertising Campaigns

Paid advertising was held back given the extended Zoo closure for the first half of the year. A paid advertising campaign was executed to support Lumina, Holiday Marketplace and the Zoo being open Christmas Day/holidays. The campaign leveraged numerous partnerships/contra promotional opportunities, as well as paid campaigns with the following:

Toronto Star: digital and print ad campaign (November and December)

The Toronto Star campaign
Campaign Highlights:

The campaign ran for 35 days throughout the two flights
Overall CPM performed better than the agency KPI of \$5.00 at \$2.13
CTR performed higher than the agency’s reported industry benchmark of 0.10% at 0.46% which achieved our goal given the shift to online ticket purchase

Toronto Star Digital Assets:



CHFI: radio and digital buy (November and December)

98.1 CHFI is Toronto’s Christmas Music Station, playing 24/7 Christmas music throughout November & December, so it was a natural fit for the Zoo’s Holiday Marketplace promotion

One of the radio programs they air is called Santa Claus Radio Hour, which the Toronto Zoo sponsored in 2021. This Christmas program is highly anticipated and garners strong audience reach at the exact time of our Holiday programming. Our sponsorship of Santa Claus Radio Hour included 3 weeks of on-air promos, live announcer mentions, :30 host reads, :60 branded conversations and digital/social. We also ran a contest with 98.1 CHFI to showcase our Holiday Market, Lumina and Wild Encounters.

CHFI Contest page graphic:



Durham Radio:

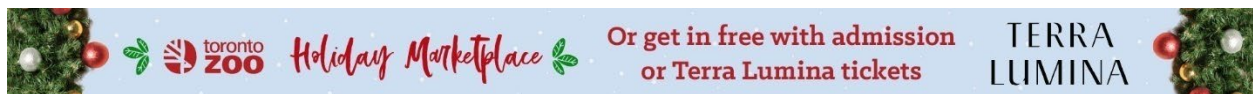


30 second commercials running for three weeks from November 22 to December 13th
 Combination of paid and free promotional value
 Target market well aligned geographically as Durham is a key region for our guests/members

CP24: banner advertisements (3 weeks)

10 second, on-screen visual multi-layer (4) billboard Ad unit display
 Banners appear once per hour, every hour, all week long on CP24 – 168 times per week
 Reach – 1,569,000 unique daily viewers (3,900,000 weekly)

Engaged audience – viewers typically tune in 5X daily, 9, 10, 15 minutes at a time on average



Tourism and Marketing Award-winning Accomplishments!

We were proud to be the recipients of some signature industry awards in 2021:

Outdoor



Toronto Zoo's Scenic Safari Drive Thru

It was only about one month in to the initial onset of the pandemic in 2020 (April), and while Attractions, Restaurants, Recreational Activities, Retail and more in Toronto and more widely in Ontario were all closing due to the lockdown, the Toronto Zoo team began thinking fast and furiously about how to adapt and reinvent the Zoo experience. Within weeks, the team of Guest Experience, Facilities, Wildlife Care, Communications staff and many more staff were able to quickly and creatively develop an entirely new experience offering for our guests and our community: The NEW Toronto Zoo Scenic Safari Drive Thru Experience! By making use of the large space that the Toronto Zoo grounds occupy, and coming up with an innovative new routing that took our guests on a drive through areas they could never have previously accessed via vehicle, the Scenic Safari was a most welcome opportunity for our guests and community at a time that there was truly nothing else open for them to enjoy recreationally.

Toronto Star Reader's Choice Awards: Once again, the Toronto Zoo was a big winner in 2021, voted "best of" in SIX categories: Platinum (1st) in Children's Entertainment, and Gold (2nd) in each of Day Trip, Family Activity, Local Water Park, Local Tourist Attractions and Outdoor Tourist Attraction categories.



Brizicam – Zoolife Livecam Program

The Zoo is continuing to grow our livecam programming with Brizicam, who has been awarded as an official service provider through an RFP process. As the first Zoo to sign

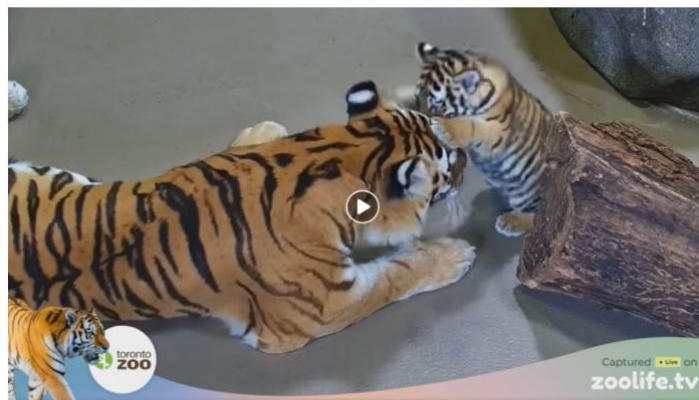
up with this company, we have been instrumental in guiding the development of a custom platform (“Zoolife”) that will share livecam content from numerous Zoos around the world (there are now four Zoos with livecams).

The platform is subscription based with a revenue-generating model that could provide consistent revenue in the future. Our promotion of the program has been fairly light, normally including links to Zoolife from stories related to the animal habitats that have the livestreaming only as we await a higher value proposition once we are able to add more cameras. Currently we have three cameras that are live, the gorillas, giraffes and tigers. Expansion of the program will expedite now that the new network is being installed, and for 2022 the target is to have an additional ten cameras made available, and push subscription opportunities with stronger communications plans.

We were also able to test a sponsorship opportunity tied to the livecam with our tigers, securing Giant Tiger with the livecam being the primary benefit of the sponsorship. For this opportunity we were able to simul-cast the live feed of the tigers onto the Zoo’s Youtube page and website, with Giant Tiger as the presenting sponsor. This type of opportunity will be considered for other cameras as appropriate as well.



THE GIANT TIGER LIVE CAM HOSTED BY ZOOLIFE IS NOW LIVE!



GIANT TIGER **TIGRE GÉANT** **zoolife**

Tune in at www.torontozoo.com/tz/totigercub. Want camera control and enhanced zoom features? Join Zoolife, where 80% of proceeds support animal care and conservation efforts at your Toronto Zoo zoolife.tv/torontozoo.

Want camera control and enhanced zoom features? Try Zoolife FREE to explore behind-the-scenes and observe the fascinating daily lives of our Gorillas, Giraffes, our Tiger cub, and many more! 80% of proceeds directly fund our essential care and conservation efforts here at your Toronto Zoo.

Podcast

Now in our third year, our Toronto Zoo “Wild For Life” the podcast continues to prove a great resource in sharing stories, connecting audiences to important conservation stories.

Total podcast downloads for 2021: 73,711
Average downloads of an episode in 7 days: 750
Average downloads of an episode in 30 days: 1200
Average downloads of an episode in 90 days: 1700

Total downloads since launch: 300,322

Episode 59: Frogs and their conservation had the highest amount of downloads in the first 7 days (911 downloads) and the first 30 days (1,431 downloads) and total (2,601 downloads).

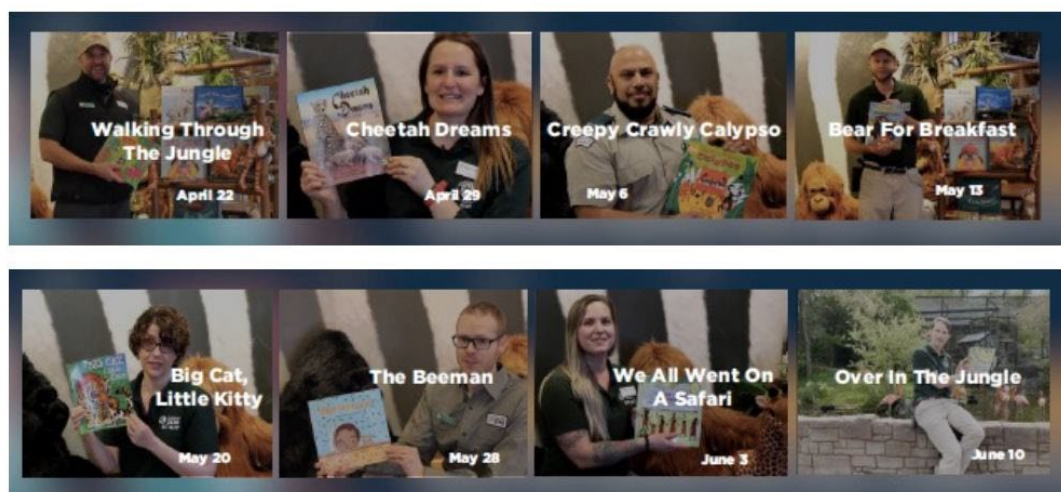
Sponsorship

Sponsorship Canada is the organization that currently holds the contract with the Toronto Zoo for securing Sponsorships. 2021 started out with great difficulties given the closures. However at various points possibilities were exercised to find alignments and mutually beneficial opportunities.

CAA presents “Goodnight Zoo”

Digital Weekly Bedtime Story Series (8 Wks) featuring Animal inspired bedtime stories read by Toronto Zoo Staff

- Total people reached: 105,438
- Total Engagements: 4,655
- Total Page views: 13,856



“This Clear View” brought to you by Windex.

Demonstrate Windex's leadership and environmental commitment by continuing to raise awareness for Windex's recyclable plastic bottle, made of 100% ocean—bound plastic. Promote sustainability in a meaningful and impactful way.



Giant Tiger – presenting sponsor of the Amur Tiger Cam
Giant Tiger wanted to grow their brand presence within the GTA and make a meaningful connection with families. It also helped drive content for their social platforms
Announcement of the Giant Tiger Live Cam Facebook post reached over 2.1 Million people, over 250k engagements and received 180k likes
Included \$5,000 donation to the SSP for Amur tiger conservation



2021 Highlights for Strategic Communications Support

Wildlife Conservancy – 2nd round of “Zoo Food For Life” Campaign - design and launch
Closure messaging
Virtual programming
Scarborough Hero Awards
Zoo Babies – Madagascar Spider Tortoise, Vancouver Island Marmots, Amur Tiger (#TOTigerCub), Black-footed Ferrets,
Re-opening – launch, digital, video, social, media support
#TOTigerCub - Naming Promotion and reveal
Giant Tiger Sponsorship
Lumina launch (2nd season) – website, media, social
Toronto Zoo Holiday Marketplace – 2nd year (sort of!)
Community Partner and MOU support
Launch of TSO Partnership and Zoophony
Conservation Story Sharing – wildlife release programs, reproductive programs

Ongoing Communications Activity
Social Media
Website updates
Graphics (onsite and online)
Digital Marketing
Marketing and Advertising
Podcasts
Membership communications
Partnership Communications/Support:

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