



Dedicated To Professional Animal Care



## National Zoo Keeper Week 2021

Improvise, Adapt, Persist: Keep On Zookeepin' On

Dear AAZK Chapter,

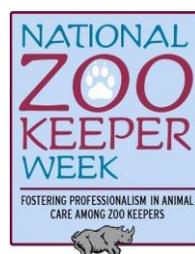
It's time to start thinking about National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW) 2021. To better prepare AAZK Chapters and facilities for the week, the NZKW Program created this planning packet to aid in your success.

For #NZKW2021, we're highlighting the adaptability it takes to be a successful force in the zooquaria field. We will be touching on the internal and external hardships that ultimately come with the career at times while highlighting the camaraderie, the positives, the dreams and persistence so present in our field. We will be providing tools to help communicate and share the true life of our profession. We need your help though -- over the next few months we will be asking YOU how you've adapted, past and present, to overcome challenges, big and small. We want to hear about how you've kept (zoo keeping) on in hard times and how your team and facility has adapted. We invite you to think about and share what few know outside of our field: ***zoo keeping takes improvisation, adaptability and persistence.***

Leading up to NZKW, AAZK's social media will be sharing parts of this packet to help guide zooquaria staff and public into NZKW. We'll ask for stories and share first hand accounts of how teamwork and perseverance got us through, and how some had to adapt to the times. During NZKW, we will encourage you to utilize the tools given to showcase you and your facility, and share with the world on social media some of the content you choose to share. This informational packet will not only help you prepare for NZKW, but also guide you through the process of sharing your stories, photos, and achievements of your team.

Included are ideas for chapter activities to help with education and recognition, a guide to AAZK's social media campaigns, and printable selfie papers. These elements can be used via social media and beyond to show the world how #ItTakesAZoo, what it means to #keepcalmandzookeepon and how you're celebrating #NZKW2021. Please look for this packet to be updated annually; it will be sent out via email and available on the AAZK website.

The NZKW Program and AAZK are here to help you make the most of National Zoo Keeper Week. As it is every year, this week is dedicated to sharing the passion and devotion of keepers to the world. We also want to help make sure there are ways to celebrate NZKW in a time where social distancing and split departments may limit some traditional ways of recognizing the profession. AAZK is here to support chapters and keepers, as we are in this together.



Sincerely,

Jenna Schmidt  
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# National Zoo Keeper Week 2021 Programming

## Social Media Campaigns

#NZKW2021 #ItTakesAZoo #KeepCalmZooKeepOn

The NZKW Program team has developed yearly hashtags to engage and connect AAZK's followers on social media with keepers across the country. This year, NZKW has three hashtags specific for NZKW 2020 to continue that trend. By using these tags across social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok etc.), posts will be connected and easier to search for and share. AAZK's social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter might share your public, searchable photos and posts about NZKW, and further elevate the impact of the animal care field. While "keeper appreciation week" and similar terms are frequently utilized, the current goal of the NZKW program is to go beyond appreciation and move towards professional **recognition**. As such, AAZK encourages the use of the unified NZKW hashtags and titles.

## Share Your Selfie!

Please download the selfie PDFs attached to the NZKW planning packet email with printable "selfie" pages. You are encouraged to print the pages out on recycled paper or other materials and fill them in with words or statements that you think complete the provided text.



Get creative! Take selfies (or regular photos) during your daily duties at work, with the animals you care for, or doing research in the field – and always remember to follow the social media policies of your facility or company. Share your images to the AAZK Facebook page (American Association of Zoo Keepers) or on Twitter or Instagram (@AAZKinc) with any (or all!) of this year's hashtags. AAZK will share selected images in the weeks leading up to NZKW - you may even see a few familiar faces from your favorite committees and the AAZK Board of Directors!

Please note, by sharing a photo with AAZK you're acknowledging the following:

*I hereby grant the American Association of Zoo Keepers permission to use my likeness in a photograph in any and all of its publications, including website entries, without payment or any other consideration. My permission indicates that my host institution has granted permission for the release of this photograph. I understand and agree that the image will become property of the American Association of Zoo Keepers. I hereby irrevocably authorize the American Association of Zoo Keepers to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, publish, or distribute this photo for purposes of publicizing the American Association of Zoo Keeper's programs on social media, first and foremost for the promotion and educational value of the zoo keeping profession, but also for any other lawful purpose. In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the photograph. I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge the American Association of Zoo Keepers from all claims, demands, and causes of action which, I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization. I am 21 years of age and am competent to contract my own name. I have read this release before submitting a photo, and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.*

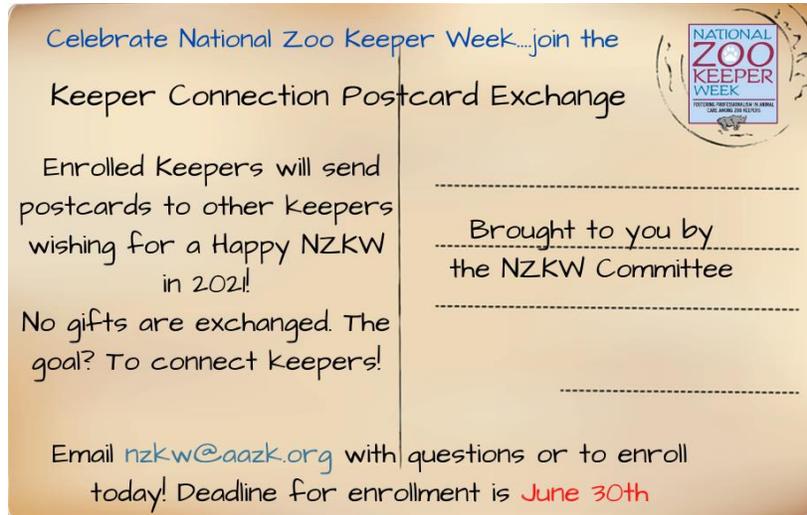
## Digital Cards

New this year to NZK are digital cards. Download these printable cards and share with your co-workers. A great way to be socially distant and to tell them how much you appreciate them in these tough times. These digital cards aren't just for keepers, use them to encourage other professionals in your facility. Small but sizable way to get everyone involved in NZWK. Make sure to have fun and enjoy these puns.



# Postcard Exchange

Consider truly making it a *National Zoo Keeper Week* by participating in NZKW's Keeper Connection Postcard exchange! Connect with keepers across the nation and share how you are celebrating the zoo keeper profession by signing up to send some snail mail. Between **June 1st and July 18th**, those participating will send cards to fellow keepers wishing them a "Happy NZKW!" To enroll in the exchange, **contact [nzkw@aazk.org](mailto:nzkw@aazk.org)** with your current mailing address by **June 30th**. All enrolled will send a card to a randomly assigned keeper, and then receive a card from another keeper. Cards should be animal-related, and even better if it's from your affiliated institution or AAZK chapter. Gifts of any sort should not be sent; this project is meant to connect keepers rather than be an exchange of goods. The random assignments of receiving keepers will take place upon registration. Participants will receive the name and mailing address of their assigned keeper via e-mail and will be required to have their cards mailed no later than the start of National Zoo Keeper week, **July 18th**.



# Word Clouds

During the past six years, the NZKW Program has created word clouds to emphasize the diversity of the animal care profession, both in title and in job description. With the previous generations of word clouds, AAZK and NZKW recognized how keepers were (and still are) much more than skilled laborers – they are complex problem solvers in an ever changing profession. This was done by creating dynamic word clouds shaped in varying species, tools and phrases. This year the main word cloud is of three animals who have been successful because of recovery efforts by conservationists and zoos and aquariums: Oregon spotted frog, Black-footed ferret and the Greater prairie chicken. The NZKW committee will be focusing less on word clouds this year and more on interactive items for keepers to recognize the week, but we will be sharing some favorite word clouds and a few new faces!



## Events & Activities Resource Sheet

The NZKW Program Committee has put together a simple resource sheet on how National Zoo Keeper Week can be celebrated from the individual to the facility. This year we have added some ideas on how to recognize ourselves and peers while still maintaining proper social distancing and mitigation protocols, as some areas and communities may still be dealing with COVID-19. This can be found attached to this planning packet as a PDF or on the National Zoo Keeper Week section of [aazk.org](http://aazk.org).

## Other Programming

Every year, NZKW strives to bring the best of AAZK and the animal care profession to you, your chapter, and your facility. This year is no different! The NZKW Program has a few other things up their sleeve to educate and promote keepers...check your social media feeds regularly! If you have stories or ideas you would like highlighted please reach out to Jenna Schmidt or Alexandra Rose at [NZKW@aazk.org](mailto:NZKW@aazk.org).

# About the American Association of Zoo Keepers and National Zoo Keeper Week

The American Association of Zoo Keepers is a non-profit volunteer organization made up of professional zoo keepers and other interested persons dedicated to professional animal care and conservation. AAZK's mission is to advance excellence in the zoo keeping profession, foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, support deserving conservation projects, and promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life. For more information, visit [www.aazk.org](http://www.aazk.org).

National Zoo Keeper Week promotes the dedication and hard work of animal care professionals year round, celebrates animal care professionals' achievements during the third week in July, shares the accomplishments of AAZK Chapters, creates awareness of AAZK Chapters' dedication to conservation and wildlife to the public, and communicates the necessity for zoos and aquariums by way of animal care professionalism, research, and fundraising efforts.

## Fact Sheet

### What is National Zoo Keeper Week?

An AAZK national program to recognize and promote dedicated zoo and aquarium professionals year round, culminating in an annual week of recognition during the third week in July.

**Purpose:** The National Zoo Keeper Week Program exists to provide members with the tools and support to recognize their peers and promote the animal care profession during National Zoo Keeper Week and throughout the year.

**Vision:** The National Zoo Keeper Week Program will connect the public with animal care professionals in the name of raising awareness of what animal care professionals do year-round, recognizing their hard work, conservation efforts, and passion.

**Mission:** The National Zoo Keeper Week Program will provide tools and resources for the members that promote the animal care profession and educate the general public, each year finding innovative and novel ways of doing so.

### When is National Zoo Keeper Week?

National Zoo Keeper Week begins *annually* on the third Sunday of July. Remember – it's never too early (or too late) to start planning for NZKW; check out the dates for upcoming years:

**July 18-24, 2021**

**July 17-23, 2022**

**July 16-22, 2023**

## What is the theme of NZKW this year?

In acknowledgement of the dedication to their craft no matter what is happening around them and in an effort to highlight keepers, teams and zoos that have been through challenges past and recent, the 2021 NZKW theme is **Improvise, Adapt, Persist: Keep On Keepin' On.**

## Who should you contact with questions?

**Jenna Schmidt**  
*NZKW Program Manager*  
*nzkw@aazk.org*

## What has NZKW done in the past?

National Zoo Keeper Week has focused on the diversity of zooquaria professionals – in what they do on a daily basis to what they do with their whole careers. These have been highlighted by posting daily keeping facts, chapter spotlights and inviting chapters across the country to share their stories. Chapters have shared their photos, activities, and events with AAZK National in order to bring zoo and aquarium staff together. NZKW has grown over the past couple years as more and more chapters get involved! Past themes of 'Keepers Care' and 'Golden Keepers' kept the focus on the above and beyond work keepers do for conservation both inside and outside their facilities. In 2019 NZKW worked on 'Keepin' it Real' by focusing on the little known sides of the animal care profession. During 2020 the focus was on how it takes collaboration between individuals, institutions and organizations to save species. Through infographics, testimonials and outreach we dispelled misconceptions about the profession and share what keepers are really up to. NZKW is committed to education more than ever before and provides sharable content throughout NZKW and beyond!

## Why is there a National Zoo Keeper Week?

As the need to protect and preserve wildlife and their vanishing habitats continues to increase, the animal care professional's role as educators and conservation ambassadors has become essential. Zoo and aquarium professionals care for hundreds of species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, in all weather (from hurricanes to blizzards, to heat waves, and everything in between), keepers have to be ready for anything. They are involved in captive animals' lives and welfare from birth to death and every moment in between, and often create lifelong bonds. A keeper's day can include an array of tasks including cleaning, food preparation and feed out, medical treatment, training, enrichment, landscaping, exhibit design, animal introductions, public outreach and education, and much MUCH more.

Most animal care professionals have bachelor degrees or higher, many with advanced degrees, and continue to advance their education by attending workshops, conferences, and certificate programs annually. They are not just skilled laborers, but professionals who continue to expand their knowledge of an ever-advancing field. Working with animals requires constant complex problem solving and progressive learning. Beyond their daily duties, keepers are involved in research projects, field work, and conservation organizations.

But, in the end, being a zoo keeper, aquarist, aviculturist – whatever you call it, they're all animal care professionals, and it is more than just a job. It's a career; it's a passion, it's a calling. THAT'S why we recognize zoo keepers year round, and THAT'S why we have a week dedicated to promoting their skills, dedication, and enthusiasm for wildlife to the world. *Join AAZK every third week in July to celebrate National Zoo Keeper Week!*

### Representative Susan A. Davis introduced House Resolution 509 on June 21, 2007:

This resolution was proposed to encourage individuals on a national level to engage in programs, activities, and ceremonies during National Zoo Keeper Week which encourage species conservation and public awareness of the important role of zoos in wildlife conservation.

*“Expresses support for the goals and ideals of National Zookeeper Week. Recognizes the contributions zookeepers make to the care and conservation of captive exotic animals and to research, public education, and recreation. Expresses a renewed dedication to the appreciation and preservation of animal wildlife and nature and an invigorated effort to foster conservation projects and increase awareness of the need for preservation.”*