

# **New Staff Get Wrapped up in Zoo**

## *Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples welcomes outside specialists* *(fun photo available of new staff in coils of python)*

**Naples, FL** — As part of the continuous enhancements to one of the most popular attractions in Southwest Florida, six new staff members have joined the professional team at Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples. “The citizens showed how strongly they feel about the Zoo with the passage of November’s referendum. That vote of support helped attract a number of these professionals who wanted to be involved in a growing zoo. We are quite fortunate to have these new additions to our staff with their extraordinary experience to help further that growth,” said David Tetzlaff, Zoo Director. “These people along with our current team will mean great things for the community’s Zoo.”

Tetzlaff is proud to introduce the following professionals as part of the nationally accredited Zoo’s already talented and educated crew.

### **Conrad Schmitt – General Curator**

With more than 20 years experience in accredited zoos, Conrad Schmitt joined Caribbean Gardens as General Curator in April. Schmitt most recently served as Director of Mammals at the Kansas City Zoo and has also worked at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado Springs, Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, Miami Metro Zoo, and the San Diego Zoo. He is responsible for managing the animal department and helping Tetzlaff create master and strategic plans for the Zoo.

During his tenure at the Kansas City Zoo, Schmitt was responsible for many important initiatives including the importation of two east African black rhinos to the United States which resulted in two calf births of this highly endangered species. He has served on numerous conservation committees and the Government Affairs Committee for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). He also serves as an AZA accreditation inspector for zoos – part of a rigorous evaluation process zoos and aquariums undergo every five years to maintain their accredited status.

### **Jayne Hardwick – Supervisor of Shows and Training**

A specialist in animal behavior management, Jayne Hardwick comes to the Zoo with experience from accredited zoos like Jacksonville Zoological Gardens and the Phoenix Zoo as well as the World Bird Sanctuary. Hardwick, who joined the staff in March, is responsible for animal training procedures for the presentations in the Zoo’s Safari Canyon open-air theater including *Planet Predator* and *Serpents: Fangs and Fiction*. She will eventually be responsible for the behavioral training for the entire animal collection.

### **Jonnie Gove – Curator of Education and Conservation Biology**

By connecting zoo visitors with the animals they encounter and then informing guests of practical steps they can take, the Zoo hopes to inspire individuals to actively pursue a conserving lifestyle. Jonnie Gove will be central to helping

this part of the Zoo's mission become a reality for visiting school groups as well as in-school outreach presentations. She is responsible for creating and implementing a comprehensive education program to allow schools to use the Zoo as a learning tool for all ages and subject matters. Gove also previously worked in AZA accredited institutions including the Cape May County Park Zoo in New Jersey and the Philadelphia Zoo.

### **Doug Rickenbach – Director of Group Sales & Partnership Marketing**

Thrilled to be working at his first zoo, Doug Rickenbach brings nearly twenty years of experience of employment at themed attractions including the past decade with Six Flags, Inc. -- the world's largest regional theme park company. Rickenbach was most recently General Sales Manager of Six Flags America in Maryland. Rickenbach received the Six Flags Sales Manager of the Year Award, a national award covering all 30 parks in North America. He also brings his diverse experience and enthusiasm to overseeing the zoo's group events -- from company picnics and school groups to black tie evening affairs.

### **Nancy Baron – Retail Sales Manager**

Taking home a memory from the gift shop is an important way to support the Zoo. Nancy Baron makes sure the gift store is full of unique products so guests have a wide range of merchandise from which to choose – many of which benefit animals in their natural habitats. Baron is also responsible for the admission staff and the guest entrance experience. She brings a wealth of customer service and retail experience to the Zoo.

### **Denise Rendina – Director of Public Relations & Marketing**

Denise Rendina comes to the Zoo after promoting two of Kansas City's top tourist attractions. At the Kansas City Zoo, she was responsible for marketing, media relations and sponsorships. Most recently, she served as marketing director for The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, one of the top ten art museums in the nation. Rendina also served as President of the Kansas City Attractions Association and on the AZA National Public Relations Committee.

Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples looks forward to their efforts in making the Zoo an even better experience for its guests and animals. The Zoo is already one of the top 10% of American zoos accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association. The 52-acre zoo is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road in Naples across from the Coastland Center mall. In addition to the historic garden and rare animals, the Zoo features a daily variety of innovative presentations. Guests experience close up views of live animals as well as stunning wildlife clips on video screens during the Zoo's two feature shows, Planet Predator and Serpents: Fangs & Fiction. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes live in natural habitats. Alligator Bay offers a daily feeding and guests have opportunities to meet the keeper at select exhibits every day. Admission (\$15.95 adult/ \$9.95 children) includes all shows and the boat ride. Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. The Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30. To learn more, click [www.napleszoo.com](http://www.napleszoo.com) or call (239) 262-5409.

###

*For print quality **photo of staff and python**, please contact [denise@napleszoo.com](mailto:denise@napleszoo.com) or 239.262.5409 ext. 122*