

Southwick's Zoofari Drive-Thru Audio (2021)

TRACK 1 – Welcome/Pre-Tour Info [Sign to play in parking lot]

Welcome to Southwick's Zoofari Drive-Thru! On behalf of the Brewer Family and the entire Southwick's Zoo team, we thank you for your continued patronage and support.

Before you begin your exciting journey through the zoo, please keep in mind the following rules. Do not drive faster than 2 miles per hour. Please stick to the designated route by following the lead car at all times, and do not try to pass other vehicles. For the safety of the animals and people, please remain in your vehicle with all doors and tailgates closed for the duration of the tour. Please keep noise to a minimum; do not honk or play loud music as this might stress or scare the animals. For the safety of the animals, do not throw any objects, especially food, out of your vehicle's windows. Smoking and alcohol are prohibited during the tour and while on zoo grounds.

Thank you for following these rules to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone! When you reach the gate, it will be time to play Track 2; signs located along the route will indicate when to play the next audio track.

Staff will let you know when it is time to pull forward and begin your journey. Remember to drive safely and most importantly, have fun!

TRACK 2 – African Plains [sign at Gate 1]

As you enter the zoo and look to your left, you will see a flock of flamingos, also known as a flamboyance. Did you know that the bright pink coloration of their feathers is caused by the presence of natural pigments found in their food? That gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "you are what you eat"!

After you make a left turn, you will see the American alligator. Alligators are a great conservation success story. In 1967, the American alligator was listed as an endangered species. After many years of federal protection, the alligator is now abundant in the southern states. We often hear people asking if our alligator, named Snappah, is a statue, but he is definitely real! Alligators are excellent at remaining motionless to help them conserve energy and be expert ambush predators.

If you look to your right, you will see Ankole or Watusi cattle, a domesticated species named after the Watusi tribe of Africa. Both the males and females of this species grow horns that can be up to 8 feet long from one tip to the other.

Also on your right-hand side is the cheetah enclosure. We currently have five cheetahs, with our three adults, Logan, Katie, and Dottie, in the habitat closest to you. The other two cheetahs, Nyah and Zuri, are only about a year old and will be part of our breeding program in the future. They reside on the other side of the habitat allowing them to get acclimated for a slow introduction to the adult cheetahs. Did you know that cheetahs can purr?

[SOUND CLIP: cheetah purring]

Just like in domestic cats, this purring indicates that the cheetah is content and relaxed.

On your left is our African Plains mixed species exhibit. The white and brown scimitar horned oryx are considered extinct in the wild, but there has been some success with a few re-introductions of populations into the wild. Both males and females have long, ridged, sharp, curved horns that grow to be several feet long. When viewed from the side, it looks like they only have a single horn, which is believed to be the origin of the unicorn myth.

The zebras that reside at Southwick's are Grants zebra, the smallest subspecies of zebras. They are herd animals, generally led by one adult male or stallion. Each zebra has its own unique pattern of stripes, which consist of black and white fur on top of black skin. These stripes help keep zebras safe by confusing both predators and insects.

The ostriches you see are all females, which are called hens. Ostriches are the largest and heaviest of all birds. As such, a single ostrich egg is equivalent in volume to two dozen chicken eggs. That's one big omelet! However, it is also the smallest egg in relation to the size of the bird. Ostriches are ratites or flightless birds, but they can run over 40 miles an hour.

As you continue down this path, keep an eye out for the four tallest animals at the zoo – Molly, Dottie, Pinda, and Pandora. Giraffes may be the tallest animal, but did you know that they have the same number of neck bones, or vertebrae that most other mammals, including humans, do? That's right! Their 7 vertebrae are just much, much larger than ours. In order to pump blood up their long necks, their heart is also much larger – it weighs around 25 pounds!

The next animals you might spot are the spotted hyenas. Our hyenas' names are Biff and Giggles, but don't let the cute names fool you. Spotted hyenas have large jaws that can crush down with 1100 pounds of pressure per square inch, which means their jaws are more powerful than a lion's or tiger's. With such powerful jaws, they can even eat, chew, and digest bones, which often makes their droppings white in color!

[SOUND CLIP: hyena vocalizations]

Did you recognize that sound? Hyenas are known for “laughing” when they are frustrated, fearful, or even excited, which is why you often hear them “laugh” during feeding time!

TRACK 3 – Deer Forest [sign at Deer Gate]

Welcome to the Deer Forest, home of the Eurasian fallow deer, and one of the favorite habitats for zoo visitors. This peaceful place is 35 acres for you to enjoy nature. One of our blessings at Southwick's is that we have a large tract of land. The zoo is spread over 200 acres, which is more than 4 times larger than the average zoo in the United States. As you continue to follow the path, look around at the vegetation. This is a deciduous forest, a biome dominated by deciduous trees and generally four seasons. The trees, like oak, maple, birch, and beech lose their leaves seasonally. Lichen, moss, ferns, and other small plants can be found on the forest floor, while shrubs fill in the middle layer.

Between the trees, you might glimpse some of our fallow deer. They have many color variations including red, tan, dark brown, and white. Unlike the white-tailed deer that are native to the United States, some fallow deer keep their white spots as adults. Fallow deer are a very social species and live in both small and large groups. A number of baby deer, or fawns, are born each year. The mother deer, or doe, will generally leave the young fawns in the forest while searching for food. The fawns have a spotted coat, which allows them to camouflage and stay safely hidden until mom returns.

As you continue to journey thru the deer forest you may notice other wildlife that visit Southwick's Zoo. There are many chipmunks, squirrels, groundhogs, snakes, turtles, and salamanders, as well as a variety of birdlife. On occasion, we have wild turkeys and Canada geese that choose to call Southwick's Zoo home. As you continue through the Deer Forest, what animals do you see?

[SOUND CLIP: woodland ambient noise/woodland animal vocalizations]

While searching for deer amongst the trees, you might have noticed the presence of a small pond in the middle of Deer Forest. This natural water source is frequently visited by all the animals that live in Deer Forest, and is an especially important habitat for native water snakes, painted turtles, and frogs. Did you know that participants in our Wild Adventure Summer Program get to examine this micro-habitat and its residents up close, and even get to observe tadpoles turning into frogs? This program is just one of many educational programs at Southwick's Zoo, provided by our 501c3 non-profit, EARTH Limited. EARTH Limited offers keeper talks, ZooMobiles, summer programs, junior zookeeping, animal presentations, and memberships. EARTH Limited also works closely with Southwick's Zoo to support many grassroots field projects. We support conservation initiatives all over the world and others right here at home. You can learn more about EARTH Limited and all of our wonderful education and conservation programs at www.earthltd.org.

As you exit the Deer Forest, please stay to the right. You will pass the EARTH Discovery Center on your left-hand side. This is the home-base for EARTH Limited and houses many of our education and conservation animal ambassadors.

TRACK 4 – Servals & Camels [sign at Servals]

If you look to your right, you might catch a glimpse of Lilly and Andre running around. These small cats have often been confused for baby cheetahs due to their spotted coats, but they are an entirely different species called African servals. The serval has the longest legs and largest ears for its body size of any cat. If we had ears in the same proportion to our head as servals do, they would be the size of dinner plates!

As you continue down this path, look for the yaks on your right-hand side. They love the winters here and grow thick coats to handle the colder temperatures. Have you ever wondered what happens to the animals here during the winter? We have 22 heated buildings for animal care. So even though we are open to the public for only 6 months of each year, all the animals call Southwick's Zoo home year-round.

The next exhibit on your right is home to our bactrian camels, Bobby, Willow, and Fergie. There are two types of camels, which are easy to tell apart by the number of humps. Bactrian camels have 2 humps, just like the letter B in their name. In contrast, Dromedary camels have one hump, just like the letter D in their name. Camels are amazing creatures that are adapted to both extreme heat and cold. They are just as comfortable in the summers as the winters, and on occasion will be seen sitting outside in frigid snowstorms.

TRACK 5 – Monkeys & Birds [sign at Maze]

As you pass by the maze, you are now entering the oldest part of Southwick's Zoo, which has already been renovated a number of times. We are constantly upgrading and improving the zoo as we are able, to provide the best experiences for both our animals and visitors.

The habitats on your left are home to Schmidt's guenons, a type of monkey, and White-handed gibbons, which are lesser apes. You can tell the difference between monkeys and apes by looking for a tail – monkeys have tails, while apes do not!

Across from the petting zoo, are the white-faced capuchins. Capuchins are extremely intelligent and are well-known for their use of tools. Next to the capuchins are Patas monkeys. While these monkeys are comfortable high up on branches, you'll notice that they have long legs, which makes them well-suited for running on land. In fact, they are the fastest primate, clocking in at 34 miles per hour!

You are now passing one of our aviaries, where you will see African crowned cranes, Mandarin ducks, and some of our younger peacocks. Justin Southwick, the founder of Southwick's Zoo, was one of the world's leading authorities on migratory birds and waterfowl.

As you continue down this path, you might be lucky enough to hear our kookaburras. These small, white and brown birds native to Australia, get their nickname "laughing kookaburra" from its laughter-like call. Listen closely for this sound:

[SOUND CLIP: kookaburra vocalization]

This call usually occurs at early dawn and dusk, earning the birds their other nickname of "bushman's alarm clock."

Time to highlight one of our most notable exhibits, the Red Bat, located on your right in the bright red house across from the Zebra Cafe. They feed on fly balls, are commonly found in parks in teams of 9, and roost in dugouts. Their greatest predator is the Green Monster. This is one of the zoo's best kept secrets, so don't give it away!

TRACK 6 – Seriemas & Rhinos [\[sign at Zebra Cafe\]](#)

As you make a left turn around the Zebra Café, and travel down the hill past the pavilions and carousel, you'll notice the seriemas on your left. These unique birds are one of the most vocal residents at Southwick's Zoo. Their calls often coincide with the arrival of our field trip guests coming through the group entrance. Have you heard this sound before during a visit to Southwick's Zoo?

[SOUND CLIP: seriema vocalization]

Seriemas are found in grasslands where there are a lot of snakes, and they prey upon these snakes by slamming them to the ground. Our male seriema, Pongo, who is usually seen up in his nest, has been trained to demonstrate this behavior with a rubber snake.

Pongo is just one of the many birds our trainers work with here at Southwick's Zoo. In the arena to your right, we offer a variety of bird shows, which highlight our birds' natural behaviors through positive reinforcement training, as well as topics like bird conservation. Together with our non-profit EARTH Limited, we support a project in Bolivia, South America to supply nest boxes to the critically endangered blue-throated macaws. This field work has been crucial, helping macaws continue to increase their numbers each year.

You are now passing our white rhino exhibit on the right, home to Thelma and Louise. Rhino conservation is another project that is very important to us here. EARTH Limited and Southwick's Zoo offer rhino encounters to raise money for Project Rhino in South Africa. These encounters are valuable for raising awareness not only about rhinos, but for the many species that share their homes. Rhinos are a keystone species who play an important role in their ecosystems. As mega-herbivores, or large animals that consume large amounts of vegetation, they help shape the African landscape. This benefits other animals and keeps a healthy balance within the ecosystem. Where there are more rhinos, there is greater biodiversity of plants and other animals. If you would like to support rhino conservation and stop the senseless poaching crisis, visit www.earthltd.org or ask us how you can help.

TRACK 7 – Big Cats [sign at Tiger exhibit]

As you continue on this lower road, you will pass by two species of big cats on your left. You will first see the Bengal tigers, Taj and Kya. Did you know that each tiger has their own pattern of stripes? Just like human fingerprints, these stripe patterns can be used to tell individual tigers apart. This has been extremely helpful for researchers monitoring wild tiger populations. Unfortunately, research has shown that populations are rapidly declining from habitat loss and poaching, making tigers endangered.

Next to the tigers, you'll find our two lions, Levanna and LJ. Only male lions have manes, which helps to protect them from potential rivals, and also serves to attract females. It is believed that darker manes indicate stronger, healthier males. As you can see, our male, LJ, is a strong, powerful animal. He will often roar loudly first thing in the morning and at the end of the day. A lion's roar can be heard up to 5 miles away, so some of the zoo's neighbors are lucky enough to hear LJ roaring from their homes! Sadly, we might soon only hear this sound in zoos or as a recording, because wild lion populations are also declining due to poaching and habitat loss.

As you make a left around the playground, and drive up the hill, be sure to look out on your left to get one last view of the lions and listen for a roar like this:

[SOUND CLIP: lion roaring]

On your right is a big, open yard that is home to our young emus. You might notice that they have light stripes. These stripes provide camouflage in shadowy grass and trees when they are young, and gradually disappear as they get older and can rely more on their size and powerful feet to defend themselves.

TRACK 8 – Primates [sign at Flower Bed]

As you get to the top of the hill, stay to the right. You'll pass ring-tailed lemurs on your left. You might recognize these lemurs as one of the stars of the movie "Madagascar". There are many types of lemurs, but they are all found on the island of Madagascar off the coast of Africa. Because they are only found in one area, they are greatly affected by habitat loss, and currently all lemur species are endangered or critically endangered.

As you continue down this road, look for the white-handed gibbon family on your right.

[SOUND CLIP: gibbon vocalization]

As mentioned earlier, gibbons are a type of ape (you won't see a tail here!). Gibbons have very long arms, which helps them move gracefully in the trees. This type of swinging arm over arm is called brachiation.

On your left, you will pass by two different species of monkeys. Grivet monkeys are known for their dark faces outlined with bright white fur. They are very social, so you might glimpse some of the youngsters playing, or older individuals grooming each other. Debrazza monkeys also have bright white fur on their face, but on their chins, making them appear to have beards. Like many other monkeys, Debrazza monkeys have cheek pouches, so you will often see them stuffing their mouths full of food to save for later!

As you come around the bend, the chimpanzee exhibit will be on your right-hand side. As you follow the road to the right around their exhibit, you might notice that there are a lot of large rocks and branches for our chimpanzees to climb on. Chimps, like many other apes and monkeys, are arboreal, meaning they spend a lot of time in the trees. They are well-adapted to this lifestyle, with long arms and very strong, opposable thumbs. They even have opposable toes! Their big toe is offset from their other toes making their foot look more like our hand, allowing them to use their feet to grasp onto branches and objects.

When they do come down to the ground, chimps get around by knuckle-walking, having to fold under their fingers to account for their long arms when walking on all-fours.

Currently, we have four chimpanzees in our troop; Terry, our adult male; Tabitha, our adult female; their daughter, Tanzie; and another adult female, Jingles. Jingles just turned 51 last year, which is quite extraordinary since chimpanzees live around 45 years on average. Chimpanzees in human care tend to live longer since they have access to top-notch husbandry and veterinary care that they would not receive in the wild. Like all of the other animals here at the zoo, they also do not have to worry about finding food, escaping predators, or being hunted by poachers.

The chimp troop here is very vocal and visitors will often hear the chimpanzees before seeing them.

[SOUND CLIP: chimpanzee “pant hoot” vocalization]

Does this sound familiar? What do you think is happening here? Chimps “pant hoot” for a variety of reasons, but mostly to bond troop members together.

As you reach the bottom of the hill and head to your right, you might catch a glimpse of one of our North American porcupines in the exhibit to your left. Many people think that porcupines can shoot their quills, but this is actually just a myth! Porcupine quills are just a special type of hair, made out of the same protein, keratin, that makes up our own hair. So, just like we can’t shoot our hair off our heads, neither can porcupines shoot their quills. However, those quills can fall out, again, just like our own hair, so if an animal tries to bite a porcupine, they can release their quills and run away, leaving a very sore predator behind. North American porcupine quills are especially hard to remove because they are barbed or hooked on the ends.

TRACK 9 – Lower Road [[sign at iguana exhibit](#)]

As you continue down this lower road, you’ll pass by the prairie dogs who are hiding in their underground tunnels, and then make your way past our other porcupine exhibit on your left. These are South African or Cape porcupines. You’ll notice that their quills are much longer and striped. They still can’t shoot them out though! To help keep themselves safe, Cape porcupines have some special hollow quills on their rumps that they shake to make a loud, rattling noise like this:

[SOUND CLIP: quills rattling]

Would that scare you away? If that noise doesn't scare their predator, it's time to run away and stop short, making sure those quills poke right into the predator's face!

Listen closely for a clue as to "whoooo's" next!

[SOUND CLIP: owl hooting vocalization]

The Eurasian eagle owls on your left, Hansel and Gretl, keep a close eye on zoo visitors with their keen eyesight. Did you know that owls can turn their heads almost all the way around? A full circle is 360 degrees and owls can rotate their heads 270 degrees in each direction, so there's little chance of remaining out of sight of these fascinating raptors, or birds of prey!

TRACK 10 – Wetlands/Elk Forest [sign at Elk gate]

You will be entering a very special woodland and wetland area which is home to North American elk and many native species. The term wetland refers to habitats that are seasonally or permanently waterlogged land areas. Preserving wetlands is so important because they are among areas most vulnerable to destruction. Currently, most wetland areas have been drained to eliminate breeding grounds for insects or to be reclaimed for agriculture & forestry, or otherwise modified for water supplies. By preserving this land in its natural state we are providing a habitat for many creatures to thrive. This area was inspired by Mr. Justin Southwick, who was a pioneer in the study of migratory waterfowl. It is with him in mind that this area is so special to us and we can share it with you.

The largest inhabitants here are the North American elk. Elk are second only to moose in size of the entire deer family. Elk are known as very social animals that are rarely found without other elk nearby. Elk are also very vocal, using a series of grunts and squeals to communicate with each other. What do you think these elk are trying to say?

[SOUND CLIP: elk vocalization]

If you look to the tree line or sky you may be lucky enough to catch sight of some interesting birdlife. This area is home to many red-tailed, Cooper's, and sharp-shinned hawks. Hawks are carnivores, or meat eaters, who belong to the category of birds known as raptors. You will also see many great blue herons. These large members of the crane family have a wingspan of up to 6 feet. They are fierce hunters and their diet consists of fish, frogs, snakes, small mammals, birds, and some plants.

You might also catch a glimpse of our trumpeter swans.

[SOUND CLIP: trumpeter swan vocalization]

These swans are white with black beaks, but may be difficult to see because they are starting to nest in the wetland area and like to keep their distance from people and other animals. We are always happy to see this nesting behavior each year, because it is an important part of another conservation project that we are very proud to partake in, the Trumpeter Swan Restoration Program.

Despite being the largest waterfowl species native to the United States, trumpeter swans were nearly extinct by the early 1900s due to overhunting. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources developed a plan to restore this species to Iowa in 1993, with the goal of having 15 free-flying nesting pairs by 2003. By 2017, about 1,220 swans had been released in over 80 sites in the state. Over the last two years, staff have released swans, hatched at Southwick's Zoo, back to the wild in Iowa. EARTH Limited and Southwick's Zoo are proud to have the opportunity to help restore this species to its native habitat.

This concludes our tour. We hope that you have enjoyed your drive-through journey at Southwick's Zoo.

When you reach the road, turn right to head back towards the main entrance. Here you can visit the zoo gift shop for a souvenir or stop in at Galliford's for a bite to eat. Thank you again for supporting EARTH Limited and Southwick's Zoo! We hope to see you again soon!