



NORTH AMERICAN PORCUPINE

NATURE LEARN & PLAY

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION OF
CONSERVATIONISTS

NATURE LEARN & PLAY

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONSERVATIONISTS

This zone branches off the entry plaza to the right and focuses on creating nature play-based learning experiences for young children. The zone encourages wee ones to get up close and connect with active, charismatic animals while showcasing local biodiversity. Species in the zone are Canadian and include black-tailed prairie dogs, North American porcupines, burrowing owls, and American badgers, chosen because they are dynamic and active, or because their habitat design will allow families to view the animals in close proximity. Outdoor interpretive wetlands feature amphibian and reptile species. Plantings focus on native/local species.

Parallel play is an essential component of the zone. Parallel play structures adjacent to animal habitats are strategically designed to encourage perspective-taking, which is important to the psychology of developing conservation behavior in children. Play elements adjacent to habitats encourage young visitors to mirror the animal behaviours that they see, or make animal sounds or body movements, and may be designed to resemble animal enrichment or habitat furniture.

The anchor of the zone is a Conservation Education Centre, where current initiatives, including breeding and field programs, are featured in child-friendly, accessible ways. Play structures like tunnels or dens foster connection with at-risk species, helping children understand that many small or less well-known creatures still need our help. The Centre presents opportunities to highlight the Zoo’s local conservation focus on Central Parkland species and offers behind-the-scenes views into the conservation labs for

adults and children. The Centre will also serve as a research hub and a place for hosting conservation and research gatherings and learning opportunities. The Northern Leopard Frog Recovery Program will move this area, with indoor and outdoor space for breeding.

A new group entry plaza functions for education and rental opportunities, where guests with bookings can enter in a streamlined manner, separate from the main gates. A solar shade element flanked by a visitor outpost and relocated carousel provides shelter for a seating area inside the zoo and space where buses park that can be transformed into event space, expanding into the parking lot. This outpost focuses on the *Connect* umbrella concept, with stories that connect visitors with the river valley, connect with the community, and connect with animals.



REFERENCE IMAGE: ILLUSTRATION OF BURROW SYSTEMS



PRECEDENT IMAGE: CLIMBABLE SCULPTURES



PRECEDENT IMAGE: SMALL VERTEBRATE TANKS



PRECEDENT IMAGE: PLAY BURROW TUNNELS

VISITOR JOURNEY - NATURE LEARN & PLAY

Judy and David have a 5 year-old granddaughter, Alice. They are proud members of the Edmonton Valley Zoo, and love taking her on special adventures to see the animals (and have ice cream). They visit the zoo every couple of months, and they love that they get to visit their favourite animals while always seeing something new.

“Look Grandma, the turtle is swimming”

Alice presses her nose to the glass, coming eye to eye with a small western pond turtle. Grandma points out the patterned shell as the turtle climbs out of the water onto a sunny log to munch on lettuce. Alice paddles her arms like a turtle as they turn, spotting a set of lily pads embedded in the concrete.

“Hop. Ribbit. Hop. Ribbit. Hop. Ribbit.”

A giant northern leopard frog is a perfect spot for a photo to send to Mom and Dad before heading into the Conservation Education Centre. The lily pads lead the way to the frog tanks. Grandpa helps read the sign with Alice- “Your zoo is helping save these frogs!” A furry puppet taps on Alice’s shoulder. A staff member kneels to show Alice a her small badger friend.

“Would you like to come explore the badger burrow?”

Alice follows the badger puppet to a small burrow opening. She scampers into a small cave where a pair of tiny owls have a clutch of eggs. She spots a group of prairie dogs, digging towards the surface, black tails wagging, and pops up into a bubble. Alice rounds the corner where a tiny prairie-rattlesnake snoozes. She wriggles out of the tunnel.

“I found so many animals living in the burrow!”

The badger puppet and its helpful Education friend tell Alice and her family about how the animals on the prairies that share the burrows dug by badgers and prairie dogs as they shape the land. They tell her the story of the ferrets and prairie dogs and how the zoo is helping both species.

Ready to find more animals, the trio head back outside. Alice climbs up on a small tree stump. “Look at me!” Behind her, Grandpa spots a prickly, round critter on a similar climbing structure. Alice turns, spots the porcupine and giggles. When it climbs up, so does she, and when it jumps, she mirrors it. The porcupine stops to nibble, and Alice turns.

“Is it my snack time?”



Legend

Site Infrastructure

- Animal Outdoor Habitat
- Visitor Building/Animal Indoor Habitats
- Operational Buildings
- Service/Parking
- Public Pathway
- Landscaped Area



ENLARGED SITE PLAN
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NOT TO SCALE

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WESTERN PAINTED TURTLE

FUNCTIONAL PROGRAM

The complete functional program including: sizes, components, levels of service requirements, critical asset identification and risk is included in Appendix B.

The functional program largely reflects new or modified infrastructure. Existing infrastructure to be maintained is discussed on page 127, with modifications and removals to current infrastructure further described in Appendix C.

PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

- Conservation education centre
- Enhanced wetland
- Connect outpost & carousel
- Current North American river otter habitat
- Northern leopard frog conservation breeding program and habitat with parallel play element
- North American porcupine habitat with parallel play element
- American badger habitat with parallel play element
- Burrowing owl indoor and outdoor habitat with parallel play element
- Black-tailed prairie dog habitat with parallel play element
- Viewing shelters , public plaza and event seating area
- General components - group entry; public areas (pathways, landscaping & fencing); signage (interpretive & wayfinding); trees; utilities; zone lighting

POTENTIAL SPECIES

North American river otter / *Lontra canadensis*
Burrowing owl / *Athene cunicularia*
Northern leopard frog / *Lithobates pipiens*
North American porcupine* / *Erethizon dorsatum*
American badger* / *Taxidea taxus*
Black-tailed prairie dog* / *Cynomys ludovicianus*
Western painted turtle* / *Chrysemys picta*
Various small ambassador animals in Conservation Education Centre and EdVenture Lodge

* Indicates new species



CONCEPTUAL RENDER
CONSERVATION EDUCATION CENTRE