

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SECU Foundation

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N.C. Zoological Society Awarded \$2 Million Gift from SECU Foundation for Asia Habitat Addition
Contribution will expand education and outreach for virtual and in-person learning experiences

ASHEBORO, N.C. – The world’s largest natural habitat zoological park, the North Carolina Zoo, will soon undergo an expansion and the addition of a new Asia habitat complex with the help of a \$2 million gift from the member-funded [SECU Foundation](#). The announcement was made yesterday in Asheboro to highlight the Foundation’s gift to the [North Carolina Zoological Society](#).

Funding from the Foundation will enable the Zoo to expand its capacity for education and outreach for both virtual and in-person visits through the SECU Visitor View Pavilion and Classroom in Asia, the centerpiece of the new 10-acre complex. The Pavilion and Classroom will offer a formal venue for interactive learning and a glass observation wall overlooking an indoor primate habitat. It will also provide a closer look at Komodo dragons, gibbons, giant salamanders, king cobras, and other animal species.



Left to right holding check is Pat Simmons, director and CEO, North Carolina Zoo; John Ruffin, board chair, NC Zoo Society; Jama Campbell, executive director, SECU Foundation; Cheryl Armstrong, executive director, NC Zoo Society; Bob Brinson, board chair, SECU Foundation; and Smedes York, a campaign cabinet leader, NC Zoo Society.

“North Carolina is most fortunate to have a world-class facility that is dedicated to protecting wildlife populations and their living habitats while educating the community about conserving the natural world,” said Bob Brinson, SECU Foundation board chair. “Education is one of the Foundation’s core areas for giving, and we are pleased to support the Zoo’s expansion project to further enrich experiences for visitors of all ages.”

The [North Carolina Zoo](#) welcomes nearly 1,000,000 guests annually, including 100,000 school children through field trips. Virtual education programs have been offered by the Zoo since 2020 with a viewership of over six million from 63 North Carolina counties, 42 other states, and 18 foreign countries. This will be the Zoo’s first opening of a new habitat region since 1994.

“The NC Zoo Society is honored to have been selected as an SECU Foundation grant recipient. Partnerships like this will help us build the new Asia Habitat expansion and continue our goal of securing a safe and enduring future for the Zoo and its programs,” said NC Zoo Society Board Chair John Ruffin.

“Bringing the world’s continents to the North Carolina Zoo has always been our goal, and this generous gift brings us closer to our mission and celebrates the uniqueness of the animals and culture of Asia,” said Director and CEO Pat Simmons of the North Carolina Zoo.

About SECU and SECU Foundation

A not-for-profit financial cooperative owned by its members, and federally insured by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), SECU has been providing employees of the state of North Carolina and their families with consumer financial services for over 85 years. SECU is the second largest credit union in the United States with \$50 billion in assets. It serves over 2.7 million members through 274 branch offices, over 1,100 ATMs, Member Services Support via phone, www.ncsecu.org, and a Mobile App. The SECU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization funded by the contributions of SECU members, promotes local community development in North Carolina primarily through high-impact projects in the areas of housing, education, healthcare, and human services. Since 2004, [SECU Foundation](#) has made a collective financial commitment of over \$235 million for initiatives to benefit North Carolinians statewide.

About the North Carolina Zoological Society

The North Carolina Zoo Society is a private, 501(c)(3), nonprofit organization that supports the conservation, education, research, and recreation missions of the North Carolina Zoo. The Society funds Zoo programs that conserve wildlife, protect wild environments, conduct research, and offer recreational experiences that strengthen the bonds between people and animals. The Society also funds Zoo programs that protect the well-being of animals that live in zoos or in the wild.