

Pepper Family Wildlife Center Experts

Maureen Leahy, Vice President of Animal Care and Horticulture

Maureen Leahy has been pivotal in the transformation process of the lion house, as she serves as project lead on the design and construction of the new Pepper Family Wildlife Center. She has more than 25 years of experience working at zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As the Vice President of Animal Care and Horticulture, Leahy oversees strategic, operational, and programmatic initiatives for these teams, including the Animal Welfare Science Program. Leahy's dedication to advancing animal care practices, as well as horticulture initiatives, is apparent in the state-of-the-art design of Pepper Family Wildlife Center, which focuses on animal needs and welfare.

Mike Murray, Curator of Mammals

As the Curator of Mammals, Mike Murray oversees the animals and keepers at Pepper Family Wildlife Center, Regenstein African Journey, Walter Family Arctic Tundra, Kovler Seal Pool, and Farm-in-the-Zoo. Murray's areas of expertise include mammal husbandry, reproduction, and behavior management. He has worked with a wide variety of species, including African lions, polar bears, and African painted dogs. His commitment to advancing animal care and conservation is apparent in his work with other Association of Zoos and Aquariums' departments and organizations to maintain optimal animal welfare and sustainable populations.

Katie Cronin, Ph.D., Director of Animal Welfare Science Program

Being the Director of the Animal Welfare Science Program, Katie Cronin, Ph.D., strives to understand the experience of animals living in non-wild settings and learn what people can do to enhance the welfare of animals in human care. Her research integrates the study of behavioral, hormonal, and emotional changes that occur in animals and focuses on actionable insights. Cronin's team oversees the development of ZooMonitor and the volunteer-based program that uses this app to monitor the behavior of the animals. For the last few years, Cronin and her team monitored the former lion prides' behavior, habitat use, and preferences. The collected data drove the design of Pepper Family Wildlife Center, transforming the former lion house into a scientifically driven habitat with animal welfare at the forefront.

Lara Foley, Research Coordinator, Tanzania Conservation Research Program and Charles Foley, Ph.D., Senior Conservation Scientist, Tanzania Conservation Research Program

Lara and Charles Foley, Ph.D., have dedicated their lives to understanding and protecting Tanzanian wildlife. After moving to the United States in 2019, both Charles and Lara joined Lincoln Park Zoo, where they lead the zoo's wildlife conservation efforts in Tanzania. Together they run the Tanzania Conservation Research Program that protects threatened wildlife and helps people and wildlife coexist. Charles and Lara work with partners in the greater Tarangire ecosystem to identify and protect land that is critical to both wildlife and local communities, as well as manage a national mammal database for Tanzania. Both Charles and Lara collaborate with the KopeLion Project to strengthen the protection of lions in northern Tanzania.