



BACKGROUND

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“GREEN” OPTIONS AT NEW EXPLORE STORE

The new Explore Store is part of the Zoo's commitment to becoming more “green” and to telling the story about particular regions we are helping to conserve, including one in our Santa Barbara's own backyard. Ross Beardsley, Director of Retail Operations, reveals the story behind the store.

What is the Explore Store?

We carry some sustainable products in the Zoo Store, but this new shop makes the link between endangered animals and conservation. Guests can see how buying “green” directly helps protect the habitats of these creatures, both internationally and right here in California.

How do these products help conservation?

Baskets made out of telephone wire from Africa, home of endangered gorillas, are made by Free Trade Organization workers who are paid a decent wage – so they don't have to poach, farm, or use resources the local animals need to survive. Hats and other products made out of camel hair from the Himalayans benefit the Snow Leopard Trust, and knit wool animals and jewelry are from Peru, home to the Humboldt penguins. Guests see these animals while visiting the Zoo and then make the connection to the conservation of their native habitats.

You'll also have items relating to California?

Absolutely. We're unveiling two new plush toys made just for us: Channel Island fox and California condor. The Zoo is directly involved in conservation programs for these species. We've also got a large selection of local hiking guides, books on how to identify birds and other western species and wildflowers, and even hiking sticks.

What is “green” merchandise?

We look for products that are recycled, organic, reusable, made from sustainable resources, or that raise environmental awareness. Bamboo, for example, grows about a foot a day, so buying a toy made of bamboo is a good alternative one made of wood. There are a lot more green items available now than when we started planning the store two years ago. The marketplace is responding to a desire by consumers to buy green. This is right in there with the Zoo's mission of conservation.

What product are you most excited about?

We have this entire section I like to call “the plastic bag replacement section.” All kinds of bags from the cloth grocery store type to chic Coach-like bags. They are all made of recycled or sustainable elements of course. We'll encourage guests to buy these bags to use to take home their purchases. Even though our current paper bags are made of recycled materials, I really like this simple step as a way to start getting “green.”

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On Earth Day, April 22, 2009, the Santa Barbara Zoo opened California Trails, a new exhibit complex showcasing threatened or endangered California natives including critically endangered California condors plus Channel Island foxes, bald eagles, desert tortoises, and local raptors, reptiles and amphibians. With this exhibit, the Santa Barbara Zoo becomes one of only three zoos in the world to display California condors, a species which has rebounded from the brink of extinction. But there is still much work to be done to "save" all these species. For more information, visit www.sbzoo.org.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$11 for adults, \$9 for children 2-12 and seniors 60+, and children under 2 are free . Parking is \$4.

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