



CONSERVATION
ON TAP

NEW BREWS RAISE AWARENESS
AND FUNDS FOR CONSERVATION



BY ALINA TUGEND

QUICK—what comes to mind when hearing the word BEER? Pretzels? Party? Football?

How about Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited facilities?

It may not be the typical combination most people think of, but it's becoming increasingly popular. Hellbender Hefeweizen, Penguin Hops, Silverspot India Pale Ale and Archie's Rhino Rye Pale Ale are just a few of the beers breweries have created to raise both money and community awareness about their local AZA-accredited zoo and aquarium's conservation efforts.

Many of the zoos and aquariums don't sell alcohol at their restaurants and concessions, but there are other creative ways to develop a partnership. For the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Ill., it began about five years when its horticulture manager, Christine Nye, decided to grow hops to hide a storage area on the grounds.

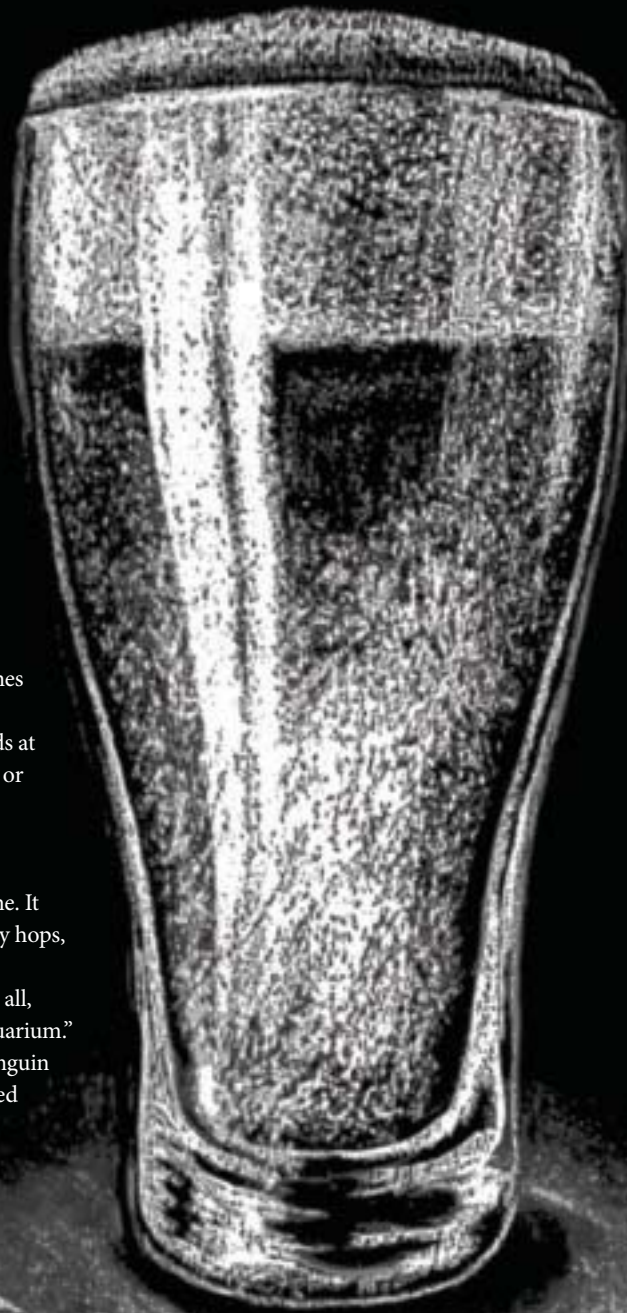
The hops, which "are beautiful—they look like pine cones but are soft and green," she said, grew lushly between the asphalt and concrete. She ended up with about eight pounds at the end of the season—enough to make about half a batch, or more than 15 barrels of beer.

Nye was just giving away the hops to friends when an Aquarium chef suggested that they collaborate with a local brewery. That's when Revolution Brewing came on the scene. It agreed to use Nye's harvest, along with some supplementary hops, to make a limited-run Penguin Hops pale ale.

The beer is a perfect symbol for Shedd, Nye said. "After all, besides hops, what goes into beer? Water! And we're an aquarium."

For the past three years, the Aquarium has hosted a Penguin Hops event in October, when the beer is released; it attracted 700 beer lovers in 2015, up from 100 the first year.

The Penguin Hops logo has expanded beyond beer—the Aquarium's gift shop sells the logo on T-shirts, mugs, coasters, bottle openers and hats. And the beer is sold on draft to 20 other restaurants and breweries, said Aimee Quinkert, brand development manager for Revolution Brewing.





Through donating \$1 from every pint of Penguin Hops sold, Revolution Brewing has contributed \$12,500 to Shedd's global and local conservation efforts over the past three years, Quinkert said.

Partnering with a brewery isn't just a fun way to raise some money—it can also attract guests who don't typically frequent zoos or aquariums.

"We're trying to connect with a younger demographic," said Lucas Meers, events and public relations coordinator for the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens in Jacksonville, Fla. "We usually get young families, grandparents and students on school trips. We don't usually get millennials."

The fact that microbreweries are flourishing in Jacksonville—Meers estimated there are at least seven of them—means a specially brewed beer that benefits the Zoo offers a perfect way to appeal to those in their 20s and 30s.

Brew at the Zoo—the first Friday in October—is in its 9th year and is one of the most popular events at the Zoo. About 2,700 people attended in 2015 at \$55 a ticket; the affair is so popular that tickets have even been scalped for up to \$200, said Meers. The event includes a number of microbreweries and restaurants and in 2015 raised \$160,000 for the Zoo.

About four years ago, the Zoo and one of its partners, Bold City Brewery got together to introduce Archie's Rhino Rye Pale Ale, named in honor of Archie, who lives at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens and is the second oldest white rhinoceros in the country.

In February, more than 300 people attended a release party at the Zoo to celebrate the tapping of the season's first keg of Archie's Rhino Rye Pale Ale, "a medium body pale ale with a touch of rye malt," with the proceeds going to the International Rhino Foundation, Meers said. All the food—including the bratwurst, the salad dressing and even the chocolate cake—was made with beer from Bold City Brewery.

The beer has become so popular—it's even sold at the Jacksonville Jaguars football stadium—that next year it is going to be available year-round, said Kevin Miller, a spokesman for Bold City Brewery.

"We're proud of our Zoo here in Jacksonville, and we're big animal lovers," Miller said.

The brewery donated nearly \$2,500 in the first two years of sales of the ale but now donates the beer to events instead, Meers said.

And sometimes an animal's name just seems like a natural fit. The Chattanooga Zoo in Chattanooga, Tenn., teamed up with a local brewery, The Terminal BrewHouse, to create the Hellbender Hefeweizen to raise funds for the hellbender, a giant salamander indigenous to Tennessee. A percentage of the beer sales support the Zoo.

The Chattanooga Zoo, along with partners, including the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the Nashville Zoo in Nashville, Tenn., are involved in field research, head start and release projects and conservation breeding programs for the hellbender, which is rapidly disappearing, said Hannah Hammon, the Chattanooga Zoo's director of marketing and communications.

Although rhinos, penguins and even a salamander may seem an obvious choice to be honored by a beer, an oyster, on the other hand, may seem a surprising choice. But when Karina Briceno, a lagoon restoration specialist with the Brevard Zoo in Melbourne, Fla., heard that a local business, Intracoastal Brewery Company, was making a beer with oysters, she was intrigued.

Guests enjoy their beverages in collectible glasses.





Collectible glasses for Brew at the Zoo guests





... FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS,
THE ZOO HAS HELD A TWO-DAY

ZOO BREW;

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The Zoo is involved in a project to bring back oysters—which filter water—to the Indian River Lagoon, which is polluted by, among other things, lawn clippings, fertilizer and dog waste.

“I spoke to the owner and gave him a brochure and information about us and told him I thought it would be a great idea to work together,” she said. Sure enough, Intracoastal let Briceno and her colleagues hold a night at the brewery with 15 percent of oyster beer sales going to the oyster restoration project. Briceno had a table full of information and held an oyster trivia contest.

In fact, if customers didn’t like the oyster beer, Shellfish Warning Saison, they could order another beer and the brewery would still donate 15 percent to the Zoo. However, it generally got positive reviews and “it was actually very good—it tasted a little salty,” Briceno said.

Although they only raised about \$200, Briceno considered the event a success and is hoping to do it again in 2016.

“It was more than we expected, it was a night out for our volunteers and it raised awareness,” she said.

Brew at the Zoo

Not all partnerships necessarily work. A local brewery was interested in creating a beer for the Chicago Zoological Society – Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield, Ill., but wanted the restaurant—which does serve alcohol—to commit to selling a specific amount of beer, said Linda Crouchelli, director of partnership marketing. “We felt it was too much risk to take on.”

However, for the past five years, the Zoo has held a two-day Zoo Brew; for \$45 a ticket, guests get a tasting cup and can sample a variety of beers. A few people complained the first year the event was held, Crouchelli said, but it has become increasingly popular; about 2,500 people attended in 2015.

“Proceeds from the event allowed us to channel over \$39,000 into the Chicago Zoological Society’s Conservation Fund,” she said. Like Meers, she sees it as a great way to attract young adults who may not typically think of a zoo as a go-to place.

Sunset Zoo in Manhattan, Kan., has had so much success with its Brew at the Zoo that it had to expand. It began five years ago with one local business, Tallgrass Brewing Company, supplying the beer, and each year more people came.

“The past two years, we sold out within a couple of weeks, with about 500 people attending,” said Ella Casey, the assistant zoo director. So they invited other breweries in from around the state; the Zoo has raised between \$10,000 and \$15,000 from the event.

Eventually, Casey said, she hopes to invite breweries from other parts of the country to participate.

Nye, of Shedd Aquarium, has been bitten by the beer bug.

“Next year I’m going to grow more hops as part of a redoing of a perennial food garden on the grounds,” she said.

Asked why the concept has been so successful, Nye believes it is because it’s just fun.

“People are tired of hearing everyone talk about the environment,” she said. “If we get together in some other way, maybe people will be more amenable to hearing about it.”

Alina Tugend is a writer based in Larchmont, N.Y.

