Sausage trees and condors and mollusks, oh my!
These and thousands of other species of plants and animals are both on display and are the objects of research and conservation at notable regional assets. These institutions not only exhibit and educate, they are also actively engaged in research to advance science and technology. By conducting research, scientists at these institutions are contributing to our understanding of ecological balance and biodiversity, which is central for the sustainability of all life forms.

Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Scientific research has been an integral part of the mission of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History since its inception more than a century ago. Now under the umbrellas of the Museum’s Center for Biodiversity and Ecosystems and the Center for Evolutionary Studies, scientists at the Museum collaborate with partners around the globe to conduct research through collections and field-based research.

From anthropology to vertebrate paleontology, the Museum’s scientists curate an extraordinary collection of 22 million objects and scientific specimens, and engage in a wide variety of research explorations, such as invasive harmful insects, the evolution of Cretaceous-era dinosaurs, and the impact of climate change on land snails.

As a leading research institution, the Museum also maintains a molecular lab, created the Geographic Information System (GIS) Laboratory for cross-discipline research, and makes its research available to others through the Library of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, which houses institutional archives, electronic journals, and approximately 132,000 volumes.

To learn more: carnegiemnh.org

Phipps Conservatory & Botanical Gardens
A world leader in sustainable innovation, Phipps has achieved the Living Building Challenge™ for its Center for Sustainable Landscapes (CSL), a facility that houses groundbreaking sustainability research and science education programs, and is one of the earth’s “greenest” buildings. Producing all of its own renewable energy, the CSL will continue to be a site for building performance research.

Phipps also supports emerging plant-focused scientists through research grants and science communication training. Current fellows are studying a variety of topics, including the role of green roofs in urban biodiversity. Since its inception, this program has enabled 40 doctoral-level students to work in 22 countries.

Recently opened, the Tropical Forest Congo exhibit at Phipps reflects years of research on the biodiversity of Africa and includes botanical specimens never before showcased at Phipps, as well as education stations, and cultural artifacts such as ceremonial elephant masks.

To learn more: phipps.conservatory.org

Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium
Modern zoos focus on promoting animal welfare and conservation, presenting animals in normal social groups and settings. To do this, zoos conduct critical research and conservation efforts to understand many aspects of animals, including habitat and genetics. Just take a walk from the Asian Forest to the Water’s Edge and through Kids Kingdom at the Pittsburgh Zoo, and you’ll witness research and conservation in action.

On exhibit since 2013, the red panda is an example of the Zoo’s collaboration with partners around the globe. The Zoo funded a research project in Nepal to determine the status and distribution of red pandas in the region, which helped to increase local stewardship and habitat conservation. There are currently only 2,500 red pandas left in the wild.

The Zoo has a long-standing relationship with the Alaska Sea Life Center, which researches, rehabilitates and provides education about Alaska’s marine ecosystems. Zoo staff have helped to recover injured and stranded marine mammals, such as a sea otter, which was orphaned as a pup, deemed unreleasable back into the wild, and has found a home at the Zoo.

To learn more: pittsburghzoo.org

National Aviary
From condors in the Andean forests, to...
IN THE SPOTLIGHT: PHIPPS CONSERVATORY

Reflecting years of research, Tropical Forest Congo shows off the biodiversity of Africa with unusual species like the sausage tree and Napolean hat.

LIBRARIES: RESEARCH HUBS FOR ALL

Libraries in Allegheny County are the go-to place for answering research questions by individuals or institutions. You can conduct the research in person, through your own computer or portable device. You can also call on the expertise of reference librarians in person, by live chat, e-mail, postal mail or phone.

Since 1995, RAD has provided grants of nearly $500 million to regional libraries: the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and suburban libraries through the Allegheny County Library Association. Nearly $20 million has funded the Electronic Information Network, the digital system that links all of the regional libraries, and makes possible shared resources including the Catalog and databases. Libraries subscribe to databases so that you don’t have to – with up to date, accurate information from encyclopedias, journals, reference books and more.

From sculpture critique to geneology to brand research, each year there are typically hundreds of thousands of inquiries by researchers that come to the attention of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP), according to Richard Kaplan, Manager of Reference Services for CLP.

To learn more: carnegielibrary.org or connect to your suburban library at aclalibraries.org

RESEARCH SUPPORTS ASSETS’ WORK

Northern Cardinals in Pittsburgh’s backyards, the National Aviary is engaged in ongoing research to conserve and to protect a variety of avian species. Studying the impact of human population and resource consumption on birds and the environment, National Aviary scientists target their research on select programs to maximize their impact on protection of biodiversity and to fill the gaps of conservation research not being performed by others.

According to Dr. Steven Latta, Director of Conservation and Field Research at the Aviary, it is estimated that the Andean Condor population in Ecuador has dwindled to no more than 50 birds. Through a partnership with an Ecuadorian zoo, Dr. Latta has analyzed the impact of roads on the birds and shared methods of monitoring Andean condor populations and the use of nest cams to build public support for conservation efforts. Phase 2 construction of the newly redesigned Condor Court is now underway at the Aviary, and is expected to be completed this summer.

Here in Pittsburgh, the Aviary’s Neighborhood Nestwatch is an example of a citizen science project. Begun in 2013 by National Aviary Ornithologist Bob Mulvihill, the study focuses on eight common backyard birds. These birds are caught and uniquely color-banded by researchers. This information is being used to used to estimate survival rates and to analyze nesting success for birds living in areas with different amounts of developed land.

To learn more: avairy.org

Photo courtesy Annie O’Neill

Andean condor at the National Aviary. Photo courtesy Bob Mulvihill.

Photo courtesy Annie O’Neill

Photo courtesy Annie O’Neill

(from front page)

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(brief)

Reflecting years of research, Tropical Forest Congo shows off the biodiversity of Africa with unusual species like the sausage tree and Napolean hat.

Photo courtesy Annie O’Neill

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