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Kids walk on the wild side at World Animal Day

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Cere, a 13-year-old lanner falcon, gets up-close-and-personal with some kids during World Animal Day festivities at the Toronto Zoo. The zoo celebrated its second World Animal Day, which falls on Oct. 4, with a weekend-long celebration Oct. 2–3. Started in Italy in 1931, World Animal Day

Little Cameron Carter was ecstatic at getting some face time with Cere, a 13-year-old lanner falcon at the [Toronto Zoo](#).

For his mom, Linda Carter, [World Animal Day](#) was summed up in Cameron's interaction with Cere.

“World Animal Day should be about teaching children to be responsible for the environment, care for the animals and become a member of the community,” she said.

Connecting with animals was only one of the many events the Toronto Zoo hosted on the Oct. 2–3 weekend as part of its second celebration of World Animal Day, which takes place annually on Oct. 4.

“We’ve been really busy,” said Paul Harpley, duty director at the Toronto Zoo. “The weather is a little chilly, but I’m still seeing a lot of smiling faces and that’s usually a good sign.”

The zoo partnered with [National Geographic Kids](#) for the event, which focused on promoting kids’ awareness of the environment and animals.

“We’re trying to talk about conservation, changes that are happening in our ecosystem and how people can get involved and active and therefore influence the future of the environment,” Harpley said.

Kids got to meet some of the animals and keepers, go on a family “photo safari” with Emmy Award-winning National Geographic photographer [Greg Marshall](#) and watch screenings of some popular children’s shows, all at no cost to their parents.

Harpley believes that giving kids this kind of experience at an early age will stick with them and hopes it will have a lasting impact on their lives, he said. He also believes the zoo will look to expand on the event next year.

World Animal Day originated in Italy in 1931 as a day to celebrate animal life. It’s grown steadily since then and now features events at zoos, shelters, pet stores and other spots around the globe.