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Conservationist who transformed public education at the world-famous Bronx Zoo shares the wonder of wildlife in fascinating new book

Annette Libeskind Berkovits releasing ‘Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator’

NEW YORK – A champion and expert on conservation education, Annette Libeskind Berkovits is taking readers behind the scenes of one of America’s most renowned zoos in her new book, “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator” (April 22, 2017).

Filled with fun anecdotes about a variety of animals from pumas to king cobras, “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator” is the perfect book for animal lovers everywhere that have ever wondered about what goes on behind the scenes at a zoo. Berkovits pulls back the curtain on fascinating, little-known facts about the Bronx Zoo, including a secret classroom with gorillas, employees who live at the zoo, unpublicized animal escapes and controversial exhibits.

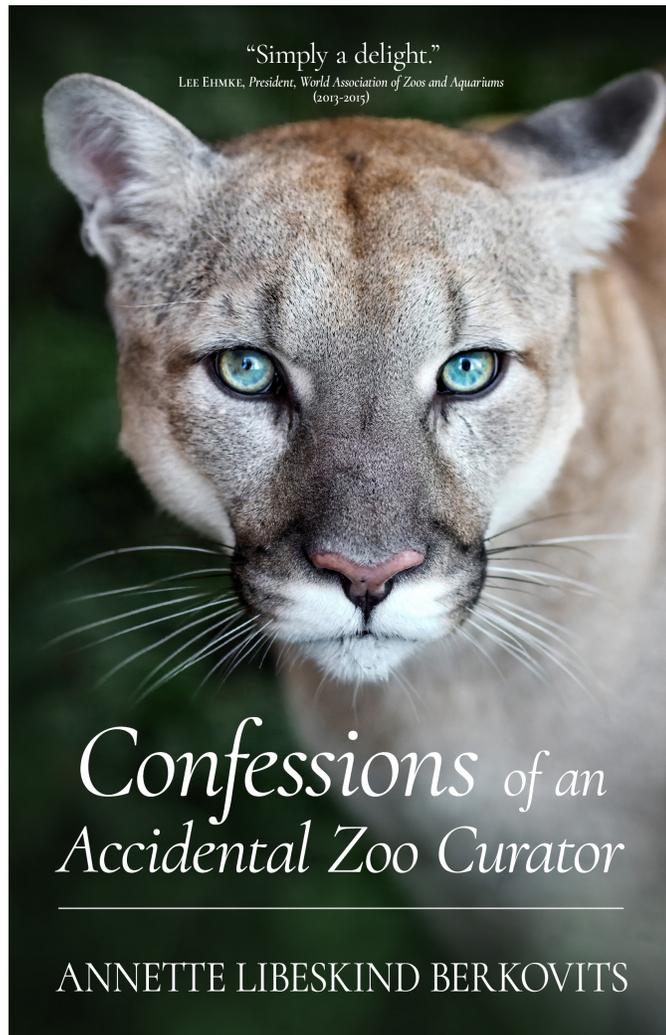
When Berkovits started working at the Bronx Zoo in New York in 1972, she trod a nearly virgin territory. Public education had not yet found its way into the zoo’s philosophy or strategies, and very few women worked in zoos. True, the Bronx Zoo was the first in the world to launch an education department, but its activities were limited to a bevy of young women clad in miniskirts who roamed the park providing tidbits of information that may have been entertaining but hardly educational. Nevertheless, Berkovits was the right woman for the job. She took the zoo’s public education initiatives to the next level not only at her zoo but nationwide and worldwide.

A pioneer for women in the field of conservation and the creator of award-winning conservation education programs recognized for excellence by the National Science Foundation, Berkovits shares a unique and insightful perspective on everything from the zoo’s inner workings to the dilemma of preserving nature for the next generation. From giraffes to supersize snakes and fugitive pigs, “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator” takes readers on a fascinating journey told with the charming wit of a woman who worked her way up to serve as senior vice president at the Wildlife Conservation Society, which today conserves the world’s largest wild places in 15 priority regions, home to more than 50 percent of the world’s biodiversity.

Annette Libeskind Berkovits was born in Kyrgyzstan and grew up in postwar Poland and the fledgling state of Israel before coming to America at age 16. In her three-decade career with the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York, she spearheaded the institution’s nationwide and worldwide science education programs. Her achievements include the first-ever agreement to bring environmental education to China’s schools. The National Science Foundation has recognized her outstanding leadership in the field. Now retired, she is pursuing her life-long love of writing. She is the author of “In the Unlikeliest of Places” and “Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator.”

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About the Book



“Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator”

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Advance Praise

“Berkovits tells a remarkable story, fascinating and unique. With a deft blend of personal insight and eloquent story-telling, she takes us from a remote village in Kyrgyzstan to the Bronx Zoo, from accidental zoology to innovative environmental education and describes her adventures as she evolved from neophyte to international leader in her field.”

*—William Conway, Senior Conservationist with the Wildlife Conservation Society;
former President of the Society and Director of the Bronx Zoo*

“‘Confessions of an Accidental Zoo Curator’ is a story that goes far beyond its title. While I am not a fan of reading people’s life stories, the trajectory of the life of Annette Berkovits as she develops through a difficult childhood devoid of any real animal connections, to become one of the world’s foremost leaders in zoo-based wildlife conservation education is both fascinating and inspiring. This is a story that shows how love and passion for the natural world can grow and blossom out of experience and a desire to inspire others. Annette’s career and her accomplishments were no accident, but instead arose out of a willingness to take on opportunities and experience life to its fullest.”

—Alan Rabinowitz PhD, zoologist, author and CEO of Panthera, a conservation organization working to protect the world's wild cats and their ecosystems

“Reading this book, I’m pleased to discover anew the passion, curiosity and humorous sensibility that have always characterized Annette’s work and her life. ‘Confessions of the Accidental Zoo Curator’ is simply a delight.”

*—Lee Ehmke, Houston Zoo Director and CEO;
President, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (2013-2015)*

“...As one of the most creative and innovative educators in the zoo community, Annette faced the challenge of educating, rather than entertaining young zoo visitors to return to their homes with a greater appreciation for the importance and value of wildlife and wild places. To be successful in getting her messages to the students required that the work be interesting, stimulating, and fun too. Go behind the scenes in a major zoo and see it through her eyes.”

*—James Doherty, retired general curator at the Bronx Zoo; Carter Chair in Mammology;
species coordinator for the AZA Sumatran Rhinoceros Species Survival Plan*