

Sensory-Friendly Tip Sheet for Earth Optimism & Easter Monday Celebrations at the Smithsonian's National Zoo

About this event:

- The Earth Optimism and Easter Monday celebration is a free, family-friendly hands-on learning experience with a focus on conservation and positivity for the planet.
- This event will occur Zoo-wide, with traditional Easter Monday festivities taking place on Lion/Tiger Hill and tented education stations and special animal demonstrations occurring throughout the Zoo.
 - Earth Optimism tented stations will operate from 10:00AM until 2:00PM.
 - Easter egg hunts will occur approximately every 10-15 minutes between 10:00AM and 2:00PM.
 - The Zoo will be open from 8:00AM until 7:00PM.
- Sensory-friendly kits are available to be checked out free of charge on a first-come, first-served basis. Kits will be located at the Visitor Center, Lion/Tiger Hill, and Panda Plaza Info Desks, and can be checked out with a valid ID.

Crowds & Lines:

- This is traditionally one of the busiest days of the year at the Zoo. Large crowds are expected, especially if the weather is pleasant.
- Due to increased visitation during spring break, security screening measures will be implemented at all Zoo entry points. Bags, backpacks, personal items, and strollers may be searched before entering the Zoo.
 - Because of this, there may be a line to enter the Zoo.
- Parking lots may fill early in the day. To guarantee a parking space, we recommend using ParkingWhiz to reserve parking ahead of your visit.

Visual Stimuli:

- *Earth Conservation Corps* will have live birds throughout the day at their station. Visitors can get up close with the birds and take photos, but cannot touch the animals.
- The *National Zoo Sustainability Committee* station will have a large plastic bag jellyfish on display. They may also have live bees at the table, which will be contained and not able to be touched.
- The *Cornell Sustainability* station will have a large, inflatable elephant on display.
- Several stations may have animal skulls, pelts, or feathers on display.
- Several stations have iPads or screens where you can see photos and videos relating to that station's content.

Auditory Stimuli:

- The event space may be loud.
- Live music will be played throughout the day on two stages: one in front of the Great Cats gift shop, and one in the band shell on Lion/Tiger Hill.
- The *Eyes & Ears in the Forest* station will have the chance to put on headphones and listen to the sounds of the Peruvian Amazon.

Tactile Experiences:

- Each station or table will host a different hands-on activity, craft, or demonstration for you to enjoy. All activities are free.

Movement Opportunities:

- The event space may be crowded throughout the day.
- Crawl through tunnels and duck beneath a predator as you go through Black-Footed Ferret Boot Camp at that species' station.
- Take part in an Easter egg roll on Lion/Tiger Hill.

Restrooms:

- The closest restrooms to Lion/Tiger Hill are underneath the Conservation Pavilion, directly across from the Hill.

Quiet spaces nearby:

Generally speaking, the following nearby areas tend to see smaller crowds throughout the day and can be a good place to take a break (directions from Lion/Tiger Hill):

- Behind Reptile Discovery Center
 - Directions: Head up the path until you reach the entrance to the Think Tank exhibit. Instead of going in the exhibit, bear left to follow the path behind the Reptile building. This is where our Komodo dragon, Murphy, lives, and is also home to some of our crocodylian species!
- Think Tank
 - Directions: Head up the path, past the Carousel and Lemur Island. Think Tank is the first exhibit building on your right, when walking uphill from the bottom of the Zoo. The inside of this building is often quieter and has many interactive components and puzzles inside!
- Small Mammal House boardwalk
 - Directions: Head up the path until you reach the Small Mammal House (the building with the anteater statue in front of it). Instead of going into the House, turn left at the anteater statue and walk down the boardwalk to the back of the exhibit. This space is often quiet, and is home to our coatis!