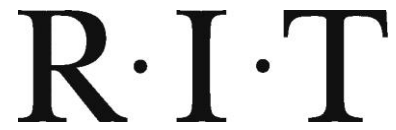


Seneca Park Zoo Society
2222 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14621
senecaparkzoo.org
Contact: Ceci Menchetti, Communications Coordinator
(585) 336-7202 or cmenchetti@senecazoo.org

Rochester Institute of Technology
One Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester, NY 14623
rit.edu
Contact: Michelle Cometa, Senior Communication Specialist
585-475-4954 or macuns@rit.edu



Seneca Park Zoo Society and RIT to bring “Black Birder” Dr. Drew Lanham to Rochester for conservation talk

Rochester, NY—September 6, 2016—The Seneca Park Zoo Society and Rochester Institute of Technology Office for Diversity and Inclusion are proud to present a talk by professor, author, zoologist, and activist Dr. J. Drew Lanham titled **“The Uncomfortable Elephant Bird of Color in the Room—Addressing the Coming Changes in Conservation.”**

The talk will take place at **7 p.m. on September 27** in the COLA Auditorium located in the College of Liberal Arts at Rochester Institute of Technology and will focus on the need for equal access and inclusion in conservation science as well as ideas for connecting African-American youth to nature.

The lack of diversity in the field of conservation has been drawing increasing awareness in recent years, with topics such as “Nature Deficit Disorder” and environmental inequality entering the national conversation. “Conservation organizations have begun to seek methods of delivering their crucial environmental messages to more expansive audiences, and especially to underserved communities,” says Pamela Reed Sanchez, Executive Director of the Seneca Park Zoo Society. “But there is still an enormous amount of work to be done to make the field and its goals accessible to all. We are proud to host Dr. Lanham and join him in this effort.”

Dr. Lanham has delivered talks on this subject internationally and advocates for a more democratic and artistic approach to environmentalism, especially in activities such as bird watching. In his video manifesto “Rules for the Black Birdwatcher,” Lanham laments the dearth of black birdwatchers: “When I meet another black birder, it’s like encountering an ivory-billed wood-pecker—an endangered species. Extinction looms.” His advocacy work, research, and writing are about finding solutions to this inequity through open conversation.

Lanham holds a BA and MS in Zoology and a PhD in Forest Resources and is an Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology at Clemson University.

The September 27 talk is free and open to the public. Directly after the discussion, Lanham will sign copies of his newest autobiography, *The Home Place: A Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature* and his latest book of poetry, *Sparrow Envy*.

HELPFUL LINKS:

Event listing: www.senecaparkzoo.org/event/lanham-talk

9 Rules for the Black Bird Watcher: youtube.com/watch?v=4thb2zGuOnU

2013 NPR Interview: npr.org/2013/11/03/242829100/staving-off-confrontation-while-watching-birds

SENECA PARK ZOO

Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Rochester Institute of Technology is home to leading creators, entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers. Founded in 1829, RIT enrolls 18,600 students in more than 200 career-oriented and professional programs, making it among the largest private universities in the U.S. The university is internationally [recognized and ranked](#) for [academic leadership](#) in business, computing, engineering, imaging science, liberal arts, sustainability, and fine and applied arts. RIT also offers unparalleled support services for [deaf and hard-of-hearing students](#). The [cooperative education program](#) is one of the oldest and largest in the nation. [Global partnerships](#) include campuses in Croatia, Dubai and Kosovo. For news, photos and videos, go to www.rit.edu/news.

DR. J. DREW LANHAM

J. Drew Lanham (B.A. Zoology 1988; M.S. Zoology 1990; PhD Forest Resources 1997) is a native of Edgefield and Aiken, South Carolina. In his twenty years as Clemson University faculty, he's worked to understand how forest management impacts wildlife and how human beings think about nature. Dr. Lanham holds an endowed chair as an Alumni Distinguished Professor and was named an Alumni Master Teacher in 2012. In his teaching, research, and outreach roles, Drew seeks to translate conservation science to make it relevant to others in ways that are evocative and understandable. As a Black American, he's intrigued with how culture and ethnic prisms can bend perceptions of nature and its care. His "Connecting the Conservation Dots" and "Coloring the Conservation Conversation" messages have been delivered internationally, as calls for increased focus on inclusion, diversity and passion in the environmental movement.

Drew espouses that conservation must be a blending of head and heart; rigorous science and evocative art. He is an avid birder and hunter whose active membership on a diverse array of conservation boards reflects a desire to link conservation agendas towards greater purpose. Dr. Lanham's board memberships include the SC Wildlife Federation, South Carolina Audubon, Aldo Leopold Foundation, BirdNote and the American Birding Association. He is also member of the inaugural fellow of the Audubon-Toyota Together Green initiative, a 2016 National Science Teachers Association Brandwein Fellow and a member of the advisory council for the North American Association of Environmental Education. He is a member of the Leica Birding Team and has led birding tours across the nation at some of the world's largest festivals. Dr. Lanham is a widely published author and award-nominated poet, writing about his experiences as a birder, hunter and wild, wandering soul. His first solo works, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* (Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis MN) and a book of poetry, *Sparrow Envy* (Holocene Press, Spartanburg, SC), will be published in 2016-17.