

# The Pride



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## Our New Stars Have Stripes

Our new Bengal tiger cubs had their public debut Memorial Day, and were received with a spontaneous and unanimous "Aaaww" from the crowd. There's no doubt that people like baby animals, and tiger cubs seem to be especially endearing, so that we're happy to be able to let people have the rare opportunity to see the tigers so close up.

Bali and Khan were born May 8th, to Natasha and Nikolai. It was Natasha's first litter, and, as is not unusual among cats for a first birth, she turned out to be not particularly interested in motherhood. She didn't show the cubs the attention and care they needed, so the decision was made to raise them by hand.

Hand-raising the cubs also makes it possible to show them off, and *Lynn Songdahl* and *Patty Leon* did that for the first time on Saturday, May 29th, in the amphitheatre, right after the regular bird show. These informal presentations are continuing now, while our animal management team decides what future would be best for Metrozoo's Bengal tiger program, as well as for the species in general. Reuniting them with their mother is still a possibility, but, in all likelihood, finding a home for them at another zoo will prove to be the best solution.

In the meantime, we're lucky to have the tiger cubs as a very popular and very informative addition to Metrozoo's schedule of entertainment.



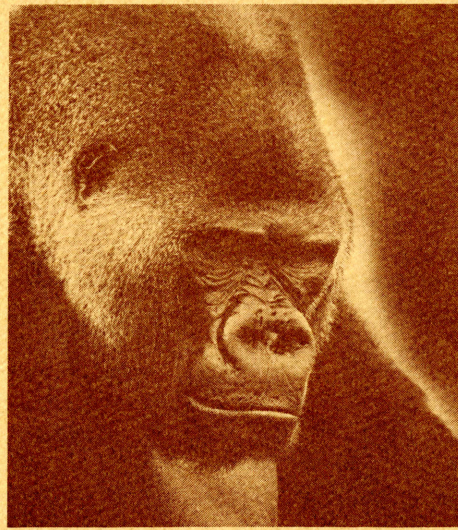


photo by Al Matracht

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## *RAMAR: A Study in the Survival of a Species*

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Even among other gorillas, Ramar stands out. His imposing size, compelling manner and intelligent glance have made him the zoo's star attraction. He likes to sit by the viewing cave at one corner of his half-acre home, where only two inches of glass separate him from the people who stand fascinated on the other side.

Watching a gorilla is an awesome experience, eliciting feelings that one just doesn't get from most other animals, but it is an endangered experience. Gorillas in captivity number less than 200 in this country and they are fast disappearing in the wild. If they cannot be encouraged to breed in zoos, they will disappear altogether from the face of the earth.

But breeding gorillas is no easy matter, and Ramar is a good example of the problems zoos are currently dealing with and hoping to find solutions for in an effort to keep this species alive. Obstacles to breeding can include the gorilla's high selectivity in choosing mates or one animal's social incompatibility with a group, which can be caused, as in Ramar's case, by an unnatural upbringing among humans that deprived him of the opportunity to learn gorilla behavior.

Captured in the wild as an infant, Ramar spent the first five years of his life as part of a touring nightclub act, riding a tricycle and doing handstands on top of a ten-foot bamboo pole. How this experience affected his social skills among other gorillas can only be guessed at. Certainly, he was incompatible with a breeding group of gorillas at the Philadelphia Zoo,

where he was on loan for three years from the North Carolina Zoo.

Beyond these social factors, though, there is a physiological obstacle to breeding gorillas—infertility. An abnormally high number of captive male gorillas, Ramar among them, are found to have low sperm counts. What scientists want to know is whether this may be psychological in origin, caused by captivity and all that goes with it—removal from the natural environment, contact with humans, the stress of public display, boredom or loneliness.

Ramar was sent to Metrozoo from Philadelphia last November, again on loan, with the hope that the change in environment might improve his mental state and therefore, possibly, his physical condition as well.

Dr. Stephen Seager, Exotic Animal Reproductive Specialist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), came to Miami in March to test Ramar's sperm count after a few months in his new home. This testing is done by electro-ejaculation, which is used both to assess the fertility of a particular animal, as with Ramar, or to collect sperm that can then be frozen and banked for use in artificial insemination.

Electro-ejaculation involves the insertion of a probe into the animal's rectum and stimulation occurs with a small, painless electrical charge, barely enough to power a flashlight. The ejaculate is collected and then studied under a microscope for the existence and number of sperm. Twice

before, in Philadelphia, Ramar had been tested by Seager and his sperm count was consistently low. This third time, in March at Metrozoo, the procedure went perfectly smoothly, but the results were disappointing. Ramar was again found to be functionally sterile.

"We were hoping the Florida sun would alleviate Ramar's problem," said Seager, "but it doesn't seem to have done so—at least not yet. Yes, we're disappointed, but we can't give up hope." Ramar will be tested again some time in the future, as soon as Metrozoo acquires female gorillas to join him. Seager explained, "It is possible that motivation must precede the production of sperm, and perhaps the mere presence of female gorillas could affect Ramar's fertility. There is still a lot to be learned about gorillas and about reproductive physiology."

The day after he was tested for sperm count, Ramar was back out on his island, sitting in his favorite spot at the viewing cave window, an object of mystery and even a little fear to the human beings on the other side. He seemed oblivious to the contribution he had made the day before to a field of human knowledge that may be the only hope left for the survival of his and all other endangered species.

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# ZOO VIEWS...ZOO VIEWS...ZOO VIEWS...ZOO VIEWS...

Due to some circumstances beyond our control (the zoo's grand opening, that is), *The Pride* has been out of circulation for a few months, and we're sorry for that. But now we're back, and we want to start really meeting the needs of all the people we're meant to serve.

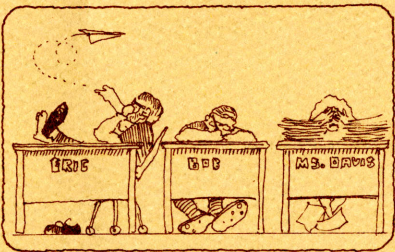
This new section, "Zoo Views," is being inaugurated in this issue to provide every department with the opportunity to report on what they're currently doing—projects they're involved in, new people in the department, ideas and announcements, etc. There's a lot of diverse activity at the zoo, and sometimes we lose sight of how complex and interesting this whole project is. Here's one way we can keep each other informed on what we're doing.

## ADMINISTRATION

*Bob Solomon* started working in the first week of May as an account clerk, handling all invoices and small purchase orders, and also assisting with the warehouse operation.

*Marianne Davis* is a new temporary clerk typist, handling the payroll until the return in the end of September of *Peggy Quinones*. *Peggy's* on maternity leave—she had a baby girl, named *Patricia*, on April 3rd.

And congratulations to *Eric Stephens*, who received a well-deserved promotion to Administrative Officer II.



## ADMISSIONS AND CONCESSIONS

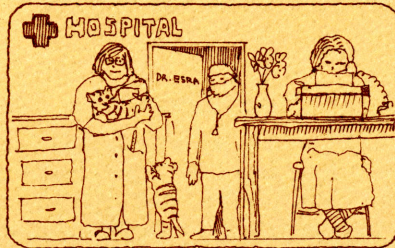
We certainly can't be accused of being asleep—our entry in the Coconut Grove Bed Race was quite successful. Even though we didn't win, we raised \$300 for a very worthy cause, and all the participants had a great time.

Year to date has put our customer attendance over 581,000, most of them very well satisfied with what they see here. Even the rain hasn't put a damper on our spirits, and we still expect to top our annual projections during these very unpredictable next four months.

## VETERINARY SERVICES

*Susan Babinski* joined the department in April, in the capacity of Veterinary Technician. Her duties include all lab work, including worm checks and blood tests, as well as assisting *Dr. Esra* on the grounds and in surgery.

*Liane Berger* is our newest member, and as Veterinary Secretary, she is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the department.



## MAINTENANCE & LANDSCAPE

We have a new employee—*Rene Lieurance*, who has been at the zoo for several years, working for an outside contractor, just joined the zoo staff as a carpenter on May 4th.

*Lloyd Turnham* is retiring July 31st, after 17 years with the County. We'll all miss him, and wish him the very best.

## MARKETING

In conjunction with the Division of Tourism, the marketing department has been hosting groups of travel writers and conference planners who are in Miami in the month of June for the New World Festival of the Arts.

*René Jimenez* was away for a week at the annual COTAL conference. About 2,000 representatives of travel agencies and tourism organizations from throughout the Americas attend these conferences, and it was the first time Metrozoo was represented at an event of this magnitude.

We hope you all saw Metrozoo's part in the Newsweek article on zoos. We're told by a reliable source that the photo of *Nikolai* in front of the tiger temple would have been the cover of the issue, if the British hadn't invaded the Falklands that week. Oh, well, that's show biz...

## SECURITY

We are currently working on plans to have the American Red Cross come to Metrozoo to conduct classes in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In order to determine the

length of the classes and the number of instructors we'll need, we'd like to get an idea of how many people would be interested in taking the course. Please contact *Chuck Harvey* or *Julio Mesa* if you'd like to attend.

## ANIMAL SCIENCE

Slowly but surely the animals at Crandon are being transferred down to the new zoo. We hope to have everyone (including five keepers) happily relocated here by the end of the summer, with major moves to include giraffes, elands and several species of birds.

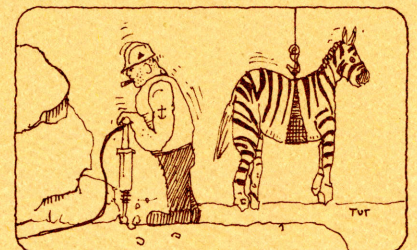
We want to welcome our new bird keeper *Susan Priess*, who is beginning work here June 15th. She has a B.S. degree in wildlife ecology from the University of Florida and has worked on numerous wildlife projects in the state, including alligator tagging and deer population studies.

## GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

With the winds of Hurricane Alberto reaching a hurricane warning red alert, the design department began removing all 43 paddock signs and graphic panels...very quickly. After four hours, the studio looked as if we were at Sotheby Parke and Bernet, frantically planning an art auction. Needless to say, the hurricane fizzled out overnight, and the next day we had to do a repeat performance. We sure hope there are no more *Altetos* this year!

## CONSTRUCTION

Tropical breezes alternating with tropical downpours have made our untamed construction team restless in the African dustbowl. The recently completed multi-species exhibit is a cool green oasis in an otherwise barren terrain. Across the walkway, we are converting what was to be a lion exhibit into a display for exotic hoofstock, which, combined with duiker and impala exhibits, will constitute our African Plains area.





## Curator of Mammals Comes on Board

A new position in the Animal Science Division has been filled—*Rick Barongi* is now our Curator of Mammals. His experience includes animal management work over the last seven years at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, Lion Country Safari in California, Warner Brother's Jungle Habitat in New Jersey, and veterinary experience that includes working as Veterinarian Assistant at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. He holds a B.S. in biology from Cornell University and an M.S. in zoology from Rutgers.

As Curator of Mammals, Rick will be working directly for General Curator *Bill Zeigler*, and his responsibilities include supervising the day-to-day work of the zoological staff in the field and assisting in the establishment and implementation of breeding programs at Metrozoo.

It's an important new position because of the emphasis on mammals in our display collection, and Rick's wide experience and initiative are sure to be great assets in the continued growth and development of the zoo.

## Metrozoo Wins Planning Award

The Gold Coast Section of the American Planning Association recently honored Metrozoo as one of five outstanding land use plans in the area. The design and plan of Metrozoo were hailed by the judges for their "extremely careful attention to natural habitat."



## Baby Boom

There's been a springtime baby boom at the zoo. The tiger cubs may be the best known, but they're certainly not the only newborns around.

A Grevy's zebra was born May 13th and a pygmy hippo—not commonly born in captivity—followed soon after. Two defassa waterbuck, from two separate mothers, were born within five minutes of each other on May 31st. All of these animals are under the expert care of *George Sharp*, who thinks he deserves a little recognition for these amazing accomplishments. Let's hear it for George!

Elsewhere in the zoo, there are two baby blackbucks and a sitatunga in the Malayan Village, and right across the walkway is Spike, our Asian elephant, who is still very much a baby if playfulness counts. He'll be a year old July 2nd. There's also a new ibex, fallow deer, and Maxwell's duiker.

## Metrozoo Sweeps Addy Awards

Metrozoo's grand opening advertising campaign won awards for Best Campaign and Best in Show at the State of Florida Addy Awards, which are the Oscars of the advertising field. At the local Addy Awards earlier in the year, the zoo swept the event by winning Best Television, Best Radio, Best Outdoor, Best Campaign and Best in Show.

The judges were all members of the national advertising community, and thus were able to view the hundreds of local and state entries with total objectivity. One judge remarked, "I don't know what Metrozoo is like, but if it's anything like the advertising, it's better than San Diego."

## Not another softball season!

Oh, yes, and this time they're *serious!* So if you can take it, come cheer on the Metrozoo softball team. They're playing at Coral Way Ballfields at S.W. 24th Street and 72nd Ave., field #4. Here's the summer schedule:

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT
7/6	7:45	Jackson Memorial Hospital
7/13	9:00	H.U.D.
7/20	6:30	Data Processing
7/27	7:45	Jackson Memorial Hospital
8/3	9:00	Metro Police
8/10	7:45	Management & Budget

