

TIGER'S TALE



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THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF FLORIDA
WINTER 73/74

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TIGER'S TALE

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CALENDAR

Society meetings are held the first Wednesday of the month, September through May.

January 2: Museum - 8 p.m.

“An Expedition to the Galapagos Islands.” Slides will be shown by attorney Ron Stillman whose avocation is nature study-photography, with commentary by Ann Stillman.

February 6: Museum - 8 p.m.

Wildlife Photo Contest winners to be announced. Presentation of awards and showing of selected slides.

Program: “Inside the Society - It’s your Business.”

March 6: Museum - 8 p.m.

“Seals and Sea Lions off the Southern Coast of California.” Slides and commentary by marine mammalogist Dr. Daniel O’Dell, Assistant Professor, University of Miami’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

April 3: Museum - 8 p.m.

“India’s Wild Life Sanctuaries with a Visit to Tiger Tops.” Photographs of birds and animals of India shown and narrated by Floyd M. Foor, recently a guest of the India Government Tourist Board.



The Zoological Society of Florida

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ZOOLOGICALLY SPEAKING.....

Here in balmy Miami, it is difficult to strike the right climate, as it were, for our Winter Issue of TIGER'S TALE. To provide the "brrrrr" we needed, Dr. Peter Rona's article, The Yak and the Yeti, was written especially for TIGER'S TALE and was inspired by a trek he made recently to the snow covered Himalaya Mountains. Page 6.

Other travelers featured in this issue are Crandon Park Zoo Director Gordon Hubbell and his son, Steve--with Steve rating the centerfold. They were among ten other wild animal enthusiasts who enjoyed the Zoological Society-sponsored East Africa Photo Safari, 1973. Globetrotter readers should see the advertisement on page 11 for other exciting trips the Society is sponsoring.

Our thanks to B. J. Beach and her young helpers, Amber Goodman and Kim and Nancy Douglas, for taking "The Zoo Society" posters to the Coconut Grove highways and by-ways during the Christmas holidays. Orders for this colorful T. A. Strawser painting have spread much joy through this country and several are brightening walls in East Africa! Safari-goer Izzy Hankin was forethoughtful enough to stash several posters under his arm and fistfuls of "I'm Frances - Move Me" balloons in his pocket shortly before take-off. East Africa will never be the same!

The aardvark factory is still producing aardvarks--"Clark" was born December 29, the last birth of 1973. Other recent Zoo-type productions are a dromedary, two jaguar cubs, a reticulated giraffe and a mandrill.

For an interesting contrast in the new and the old, read Vernon Kisling's article about Corky, a Crandon Park Zoo black bear holding something of a longevity record. Page 12.

Two of our newest acquisitions from East Africa are now on exhibit --a pair of Cape buffalo. Other new arrivals are a Grant's gazelle, a bush buck, two elands and eight zebra. Until the Richmond property is transferred from federal to county ownership, these beautiful animals will be kept in "holding pens" on Crandon Park Zoo property, off limits to the public. Society members, however, can make arrangements to see them. Just one more reason why your friends should become members!

Cordially,

Editor

The Yak and The Yeti

by Peter A. Rona

The yak and the yeti are the most distinctive animals of the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas of central Asia. The yak (*Bos grunniens*), a sort of mountain cattle, is still the most important domestic animal in the Himalayas. The yeti, translated literally as "rock animal," is the legendary "abominable snowman."

The yak is encountered in mountain pastures or along trails at elevations exceeding 11,000 feet. Its appearance is fearsome—resembling a bull with the shaggy hair of a bison. Despite its massive build, the yak is nimble and generally will do anything short of climbing a vertical wall to scramble out of your way along a trail. Occasionally a yak becomes angry—in which case it is you who must scramble up a vertical wall.

The yak can provide nearly everything its owner needs. The milk of naks, as female yaks are called, is made into butter and cheese. Yak meat tastes very good. Like the Masai of East Africa, the Sherpa mountain people of Nepal gain nourishment from yaks without slaughter by draining blood from the carotid artery and incorporating the blood into succulent sausages. The yak can carry up to 300 pounds in even the roughest terrain—in contrast to horses and mules

which cannot negotiate the high mountain passes and to sheep and goats which can carry loads only up to about 50 pounds.

From time immemorial the Nepalese side of the Mount Everest area has been called Mahalangur-Himan, "the snowy mountains of the great ape." The yeti plays a persistent role in the oral tradition of the people of that area. Sometimes it is given semi-human characteristics; sometimes it is said to carry people off; but most often it is said to look like a bear or some sort of simian. No reliable Western observer has ever seen a yeti, although some of the Sherpas will give accounts of their encounters—as seen through the eyes of someone who is not available for comment.

If the yeti is unseen, how is it known? The yeti leaves a trail. Yeti tracks have been found in the central and eastern Himalayas and were documented when a British mountaineer, Eric Shipton, photographed distinct five-toed footprints about nine inches long and six inches wide, spaced like a human stride in soft snow on a 20,000 foot mountain pass. Similar footprints have been found in damp earth. Associated excrement has shown that the creature lives on plants and small animals. The creature apparently lives below the snowline and is no



This yak refuses to go to market with this Sherpa owner. A female yak, or "nak," stands behind the yak. Moments after this photograph was taken the yak charged and the man scrambled over the rock wall.

more of a "snowman" than the mountaineers who observed its footprints.

In the 1950's the yeti became big business. All the Himalayan peaks of 25,000 feet and more had been climbed, but substantial funding was forthcoming for the yeti, or rather for the yeti hunters. Nepal nationalized the yeti so that it became

illegal to kill one or to smuggle one out of the country and a tax of about \$600 was levied on all yeti expeditions. Sir Edmund Hillary of Mount Everest fame borrowed an alleged yeti scalp from the monastery in the Sherpa village of Khumjung for examination at the Royal Zoological Society in London. The scalp turned out to be that of a bear.

(continued on page 14)



Baboons were Steven Hubbell's favorite animal. He saw a pack of about 25 of them and judged their average weight to be about 75 pounds and their height approximately three feet. He observed that they are organized within their group, complete with leader, and that they sleep in trees so they will not be prey for hungry lions.



Steve was impressed with the size and powerfulness of these Cape buffalo. Their horns give credence to the danger they might inflict upon some hapless prey. Two young female Cape buffalo have recently arrived from East Africa and are now on display at Crandon Park Zoo.

Credits this page: Robert Lesnick



"Since we have had only one or two zebra at a time at our Zoo, it was really a sight to see them running around in herds. And from a distance they look brown," says Steve. Actually, young zebra are brownish and darken to black and white as they mature.

Steve, Dr. Hubbell and African guide at the Mary Leaky marker (right).

Steve Hubbell Goes to Africa

“Did you see elephants?” was the most persistent question Steve Hubbell was asked by his junior high school classmates upon his return from the 1973 Zoological Society-sponsored East African photo safari. Steve saw great numbers of elephants and 49 other species of animals - by actual count. It all totaled up to no less than 10,175 mammal specimens with no attempt being made to keep track of the numbers of birds.

Being the son of Zoo Director, Dr. Gordon Hubbell, Steve has had a life-long association with many of these exotic animals through the Crandon Park Zoo. His familiarity with the names and appearance of the wildlife he saw in Africa was a decided advantage on game drives. However, seeing these animals in their natural surroundings was a thrilling experience and one he will never forget.

Steve's advice to anyone interested in or contemplating a similar trip: “Go as soon as you can, while there are still animals to be seen in the wild!”

Will he take his own advice and go again? You bet he will! With his paper route and a couple of other enterprises, 1977 ought to be a good year . . .



Robert Lesnick

Let's Hear It For The Conservationists

by Gordon Hubbell

There are two different theories on how our wildlife can be saved for future generations to enjoy. One is the "Preservationist Theory" which dictates that animals and their environments should be left alone and the "balance of nature" will control the wildlife populations. The second theory is the "Conservationist Theory" which suggests that when animals are confined within the boundaries of conservation areas, their populations have to be carefully studied and regulated. This means that when scientific study has determined that there is an overpopulation of a particular species, then that species has to be cropped.

Tsavo National Park, the largest National Park in Kenya and covering an area of 8,034 square miles, is a classic example of conflict between these two theories. At the center of the conflict is the magnificent African Elephant population of Tsavo.

The Park Manager at Tsavo is a preservationist. In recent years there has been an elephant population explosion at this park. A research team was sent in to determine the extent of overpopulation and declared it seriously over-run with elephants. They recommended that the elephant population be reduced in Tsavo but the Park Manager would not accept these recommendations even though the

same research team had made studies of the elephant and hippo populations at Murchison Falls National Park in Uganda which resulted in the cropping of thousands of elephants and hippos and the restoration of the delicate balance between plant and beast.

Even an amateur naturalist would be struck by the appalling sight of Tsavo National Park: the only large plants which the elephants haven't destroyed are the Euphorbias. The magnificent Baobab trees - many were hundreds of years old - which are so common to the north and to the south of this park, are practically non-existent at Tsavo.

The destruction that an overpopulation of elephants can cause could not only eliminate all of the elephants, but most of the other animals too, including antelope and their predators.

Tsavo National Park is dying!

Dr. Gordon Hubbell, Director of Crandon Park Zoo, graduated as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Ohio State University. He came to Crandon Park Zoo as veterinarian in 1961 and became Director in 1962.



Hungry elephants feast on—and destroy—another giant baobab tree in Tsavo National Park, Kenya, East Africa.

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Corky — A Very Special Black Bear

by Vernon N. Kisling, Jr.

“Corky,” an American black bear (*Ursus americanus*), along with another American black bear, three monkeys and a goat, formed the original animal collection of what was to become the Crandon Park Zoo. The year was 1948 and Corky was six and a half years old. As it turned out, Corky not only outlived the other original animals at the Zoo, he outlasted many of the Zoo’s employees and established what is believed to be a longevity record for the American black bear. Corky died in January, 1973. He was 31 years and three months old.

The American black bear is a native of North America but its range now includes only the least disturbed forests of the continent. Its diet is more omnivorous than carnivorous, consisting of fruits, nuts, roots, leaves, fish and small to medium sized mammals. Mating season occurs in the summer and the young are born seven months later in the winter while the mother is still dormant. The young usually stay with the mother until the second spring so that reproduction occurs only in alternate years. At birth the American black bear weighs only about ten ounces but reaches 200-300 pounds at maturity. Although this species breeds readily in captivity, few zoos provide the proper facilities for rearing the cubs.

There are seven species of bear in the world and all but the sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*) from southern India are expected to be exhibited zoogeographically in the new Zoo:

Asia

Himalayan black bear
(*Selenarctos thibetanus*)
Malayan sun bear
(*Helarctos malayanus*)

Europe

European brown bear
(*Ursus arctos arctos*)

South America

Spectacled bear

North America

American black bear
(*Ursus americanus*)
American brown bear
(*Ursus arctos ssp.*)

Polar Region

Polar bear
(*Ursus [Thalarctos] maritimus*)

Of these seven species the polar bear, spectacled bear and some sub-species of the brown and black bears are considered endangered or vulnerable.

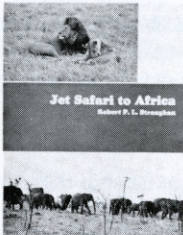


T. A. Strawser

Perhaps in the new Zoo's environment, these species will breed and provide longevity records even surpassing that of Corky, that very special black bear.

This, of course, will be just one of the new Zoo's many functions and purposes.

Vernon N. Kisling, Jr. is Curator of Mammals at Crandon Park Zoo. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Zoology at the University of South Florida and is working toward his Master of Science Degree in Wildlife Ecology through the University of Georgia. Mr. Kisling was Curator at the Atlanta Zoological Park from 1968-1972 at which time he joined the Crandon Park Zoo staff. He is planning the invertebrate section of the new Dade County Zoological Park.

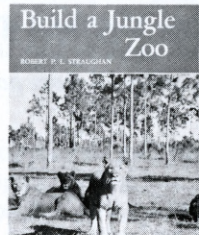


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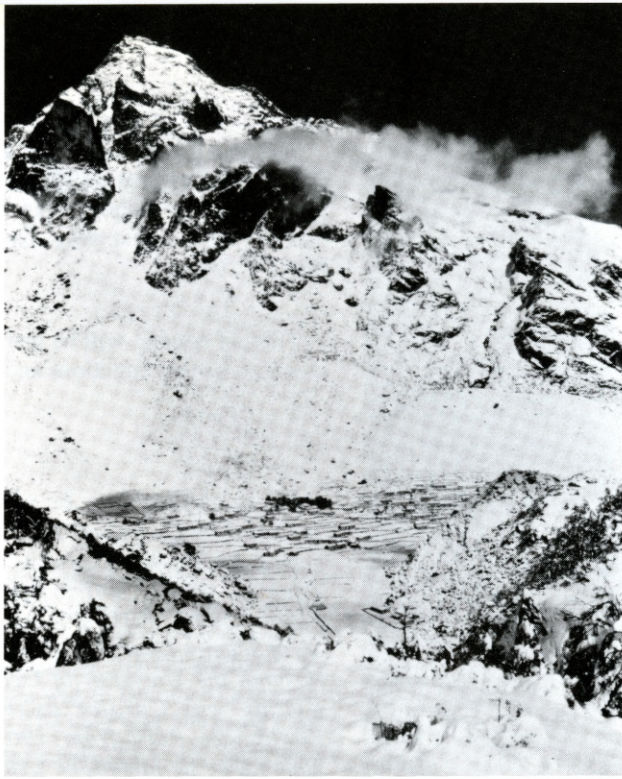
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Peter A. Rona

The yeti is believed to frequent the sacred mountain of Khambila (19,000 feet elevation) shown here towering over the Sherpa village of Khumjung blanketed with snow in the Himalayas of Nepal.

The Yak and The Yeti

(continued from page 7)

The legend of the yeti remains alive in the Himalayas because of the impenetrability that has kept that region remote from development with the rest of the world. The changeless character of the Himalayas may provide a sanctuary for some prehistoric creature in the same way that the ginko tree survived for millions of years in a remote valley in China and an ancient fish, the coelecanth, survived in the deep ocean off southwest Africa.

Are the Himalayas serving as a biological sanctuary for a man-like creature that actually exists or as a psychological sanctuary for a persistent human myth?

We know the yak exists but there is no proof that the yeti does **not**.

Peter A. Rona, received his Ph.D. degree from Yale University and is Research Geophysicist at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratories on Virginia Key. This article was mailed to us from the United Nations Office for Ocean Economics and Technology where he is assisting in the preparation of a report on the present state of knowledge of sea-floor geology in the Pacific. The expedition to the Himalayas - the setting for this article - was made with other members of the Sierra Club in 1972.

Volunteer Activities

by Virginia Kevorkian, Chairman

The Zoological Society encourages its members to "do their own thing" as volunteers within the Society. Because their time for volunteer activities, their interests and the depth of these interests are so varied, we recognize the necessity of having a very flexible policy to accommodate these men and women.

We have now branched out into three categories:

Patrons of the Zoological Society are patrons whose substantial monetary contributions are used for the purchase of animals for the Zoo, for other uses by the Society as stipulated by the contributor or for Society needs as determined by the Board of Governors.

Friends of the Zoological Society is a designation that embraces the majority of our volunteers. They can perform such invaluable services as telephoning, typing, addressing envelopes by hand at home, secretarial work at the Society office, assisting in planning appropriate monthly programs, contributing articles

to TIGER'S TALE, procuring advertisements for TIGER'S TALE, helping with numerous fund-raising projects in any number of ways, and actively becoming involved in Society efforts to bring in new members. There is a great need for idea-members who can not only suggest projects but who have the willingness and ability to carry out those projects.

The Docents were organized in June 1973 and members of this first class were, admittedly, the "guinea pigs" for the Zoo guide program which has been so successful. Three classes later, this organization-within-the-organization has grown in depth of interest to where its members will, after proper training and continuing education, have considerable expertise in things zoological and their guided tours of the Zoo will be a real educational experience to the Zoo visitor who avails himself of a tour. One of the goals for the Docents is the real possibility that this training course may become so well structured that college credits may be earned.

Volunteer opportunities are rapidly growing and it is important for you, as a member of the Society, to know that if you are interested in becoming involved in work within the Society, there is a place for you and that a warm welcome awaits you. Telephone the Society office - 361-1266 - and tell us about your interests.

Mrs. Virginia Kevorkian has held numerous offices in the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs. They include Past President of North East Miami Junior and Senior Women's Clubs. She is presently the District Director of the Federation.

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