



TOUCAN TALK

A View Of The Zoo That Comes To You!



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eculiar, strange and, according to some, even ugly... but never "boaring." All that and more can be said about "Charlotte" and "Wilbur," our new wart hogs.

Back in December, they arrived with two older friends, "Harley" and "Sue-ee", who will stay long enough to help our younger couple (Charlotte was born June 6 and Wilbur May 28, 1993) throw a housewarming party and give us an idea of how wart hogs look and act when fully grown.

After a short period in quarantine, they moved to Metrozoo's former kangaroo exhibit. They were given "hog warmers" – special heating pads – to help them feel cozy (a lack of thick hair and subcutaneous fat makes this species sensitive to cold) and a place to enjoy every hog's favorite hot weather pastime: mud baths.

Their keepers at the zoo are Paul Bermúdez and Daniella Wooddell, who handle their daily care, including their diet. In the wild, wart hogs feed on grass, berries and the bark of trees. Metrozoo's kitchen carefully covers their dietary requirements with a mixture of ground corn hog feed, monkey chow, apples, carrots, cabbage or lettuce and a mixture of grass, alfalfa and hay.

The natural habitat of wart hogs is the steppes and savannahs south of the Sahara. When not wandering about the land, they use natural holes in the ground – or ones made by armadillos and porcupines – to sleep, raise their piglets and protect themselves from danger (their main predator being the leopard).

Wart hogs are unusually passive animals. They prefer to flee and retreat into their holes rather than fight. However, when threatened, wart hogs can inflict painful wounds with their lower tusks, which are much sharper than the upper ones. Their teeth are more worn on one side than the other, because they prefer to use only one side to chew tree bark, (continued on page 2)

1994 Jazz Under The Stars At Metrozoo

Metrozoo is pleased to host the **Seventh Annual Jazz Under The Stars** on Saturday, March 19 from 6-10:30 p.m. The concert features **Richard Elliot** with **George Tandy** and **Bobby Ramirez** and their bands. Admission is \$12.50 in advance or \$15 at the gate. Children five and under are admitted free of charge. Tickets may be purchased in advance at locations throughout Greater Miami including Metrozoo. Call 305-238-0703 for the location nearest you.

Tickets will be available at the gate on March 19, 1994 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. only.

Jazz Under the Stars is presented by **The Cultural Council Inc.** and sponsored by **The Greater South Dade/South Miami/Kendall Chamber of Commerce**. Proceeds to benefit the Cultural Council's Scholarship Fund and Metrozoo hurricane restoration.

Special thanks to **First National Bank of South Miami, Channel 10, American Bankers Insurance Group, Budweiser, PIP Printing, Barnett Bank, The Miami Herald, Outback Steakhouse, Miami Dadeland Marriott, John Alden Financial Corporation, Storer Cable Communications, South Dade Lighting, USAir, The First National Bank of Homestead, Love 94 FM, Esserman Automotive Group, Sun Bank, Community Bank, South Dade Realty, Burdines, and Adelpia Cable Communications** for their support of Jazz Under The Stars at Metrozoo! ■

Dwarf caimans are the smallest crocodylian species. They're on display in the South American River exhibit.

Illustration by Damien Kong

Wart Hog Heaven At Metrozoo

(continued from page 1)
turn stones and accomplish other tasks.

The wart-like growths that give them their name are no more than cartilaginous tissue (skin growths with no bony core). Fortunately, for the coquettish female, the warts are larger on the male. He also sports large warts on the side of his head to protect him from the blows he will probably receive during the ritual male-to-male battles that occur throughout the mating season – from May to June. A litter of piglets – usually two or three grayish pink cuties – is born after 171 to 175 days of gestation. They remain protected in ground nests up to 50 more days. Once they start to discover the world, male piglets will stay with their mom a little over a year, while the females may stay permanently.

In the wild, young males and females organize themselves into clans, which stay together for a long time. Adult males are not permanent members of clans, but join them briefly during the breeding season.



At six months old, our new wart hogs still haven't developed their characteristic tusks. But they're part of Metrozoo's permanent collection so you'll be able to watch them grow up here. Come and meet them in what used to be our kangaroo exhibit. – photo by Rick McCauley

Fully-grown, male wart hogs have an average height of 29 in. and weigh around 200 lbs. The female is smaller at 28 in. and 132 lbs. One characteristic that both males and females share is a strong body, with legs that are a little longer than those of other species of hogs. In fact, they must bend their front legs at the wrist in order to graze. This grazing posture is so important that wart hogs develop strong calluses on the front of the wrist joint as embryos. Their eyesight (as is the case for many other animal species) is not as good as their magnificent senses of hearing and smell. They communicate with each other – and other animals – through a series of grunts, snorts and squeals, which they use as greetings or as warnings.

Grunts, snorts and all, Charlotte and Wilbur are charming creatures. They make Metrozoo's collection even more interesting and varied. Don't miss them! They are great...and that's no hogwash. ■

Mayra González Rey, Community Relations Assistant

“...After a while, (tiny) crocodile...”

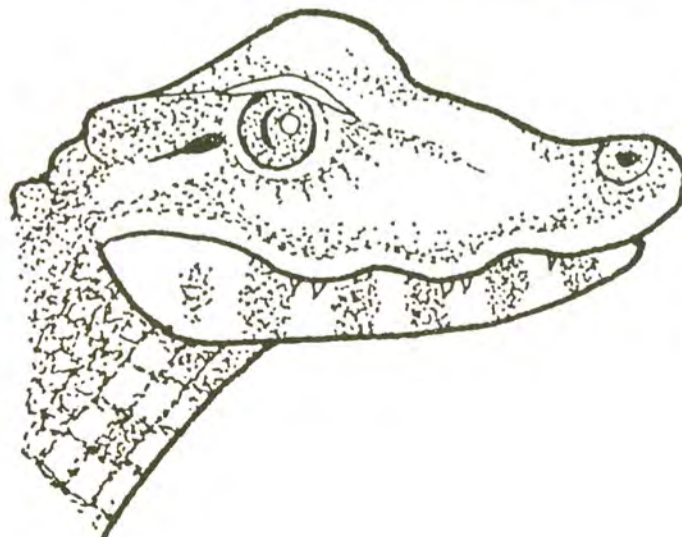
They look like baby crocodiles wearing little red bonnets. But the four dwarf caimans who moved into the zoo in December will only grow to about 54 inches. They originally come from South America (where, in Guyana, they are affectionately called “red alligators” after that rust-colored spot of armor on their heads), but our four came from the

Bronx Zoo.

Dwarf caimans, the smallest crocodiles in the world, have learned to take their size in stride. They have adapted their living habits for slow-moving streams or ponds, allowing them to stay free from the competitive larger caimans who dwell in big rivers. With their broad snouts, they “fish” by grabbing deliberately at those prey that look tasty.

Dwarf caimans are not just small versions of the crocodiles we know. In fact, they share many characteristics with their cousins, the alligators. They have the same heavy armor (dermal ossification), with bone actually embedded in each of the scales. Like the alligator, their bottom teeth are hidden under their top teeth (an orthodontist's dream).

They look cute, but don't try tickling their tummies. Their bellies have the same bony-scaled armor you see on their backs. ■



A Mythical Beast Materializes

What's it like to meet a creature you thought was extinct? Education Specialist Damien Kong tells us.

As a child in Jamaica, I fell in love with the wonderful wildlife. With help from my father, I learned to observe and respect nature, eventually studying zoology in college.

I grew up with stories of an elusive creature called the Jamaican iguana, a mythical dragon that had not been positively sighted since 1948, and was declared extinct 14 years before I was born. But when I was eight or nine years old, my dad showed me a newspaper article about the possible survival of the Jamaican iguana in the cacti- and agave-covered Hellshire hills. My family often went to the beaches in that area. So I would scan the hills in hopes of seeing one. At over five feet long, this iguana would be the largest land animal on the island, if found. I left Jamaica in 1975, never having spotted one, and never dreaming that someday I would see this creature that had filled my youthful imagination.

Then, in 1990, a local hunter dragged the Jamaican iguana out of the thorny scrub, back into the realm of reality. **Edwin Duffus**, a Jamaican who'd spent many years hunting in the Hellshire hills, had never seen such a creature before his dogs attacked one during a boar hunt. He rescued it from the dogs and brought the badly bitten reptile to the **Hope Zoo** (Jamaica's national zoo). **Rhema Kerr**, the zoo director, called **Peter Vogel**, a lecturer at the **University of the West Indies** and together they identified it as a Jamaican iguana and embarked on a survey of the habitat. They have found fewer than ninety adults in the wild, making the Jamaican iguana one of the most endangered lizards in the world.

Last year, at the national conference of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA), I heard **Rick Hudson** of

Fort Worth Zoo and **Dr. Allison Alberts** of San Diego Zoo talk about AAZPA involvement in the Jamaican Iguana Project. When they asked for assistance with the education and public awareness aspects of the project. I realized I was in a unique position to help. I explained to Dr. Alberts the reasons why I could be an asset to the project. After all, I am an educator, a zoologist and a Jamaican. But I was afraid to tell her that this meant a lot more than that to me. How do you explain a childhood dream and still appear professional?

In December my chance to help the project arrived. The ZSF sent me to Jamaica to meet with Rhema Kerr. My main purpose was to look into the prospect of sponsoring ecotours and to offer assistance with the iguana project. As a favor to Rhema, I delivered 40 plastic containers with snap-on lids, a gift from the Everglades Herpetological Society in Miami for Hope Zoo's Jamaican boa breeding project.

Upon arrival, my one thought

was "when will I get to see the dragons?" As of December, they had 41 two-year old and 43 one-year old Jamaican iguanas in a "head start" program for . They collect eggs from wild nests then incubate and hatch them at the zoo. The young are zoo-raised to a size and age where they are no longer susceptible to predators such as pigs and mongooses.

Rhema and I talked for what seemed like hours before we went to the enclosures that house the two-year olds. To be surrounded by the dragons of my childhood imagination was a dream come true. In my opinion, that alone made the trip a success. But I accomplished other goals as well. As a result of my trip, we will be offering the Hope Zoo assistance with some of their iguana education projects. I also hope I will be able to take tour groups to Jamaica to share with Metrozoo supporters the natural wonders that mesmerized me as a child. Especially the Jamaican iguana: a marvelous creature, and, now, no longer only a myth. ■



Damien Kong



Dr. Chriss Miller, Metrozoo's Veterinarian, and her staff are hand rearing a dama gazelle born December 28, 1993.

—photo by Rick McCauley

BIRTHS & HATCHINGS

November 15 - December 31, 1993

Sable antelope <i>Hippotragus niger</i> Female	Nov. 15
Thomson's gazelle <i>Gazella thomsoni</i> Male	Nov. 21
Nile lechwe <i>Kobus megaceros</i> Male	Dec. 18
Defassa waterbuck <i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa</i> Male	Dec. 19
Reticulated giraffe <i>Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata</i> Male	Dec. 25
Dama gazelle <i>Gazella dama ruficollis</i> Female	Dec. 28

ACQUISITIONS

Dwarf caiman <i>Paleosuchus palpebrosus</i> 2 Females, 1 Male, 1 unknown	
Wart hog <i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i> 1 Female, 1 Male	
Grants gazelle 2 Females 1 Male,	Dec. 2
Greater Kudu 1 Female	Dec. 2

Jamaica's largest lizard is also the world's most highly endangered lizard. Declared extinct in 1948 they were rediscovered in 1990. Your zoo is working cooperatively with many zoos, including the Hope Zoo, Jamaica, to assure their survival.

**Find Fine Fare At Our
Feast With The Beasts Restaurants:**

Afternoon Tea Gourmet Bake Shop
12727 So. Dixie Hwy. • Miami • 238-6696

A Mano
1440 Ocean Dr. • Miami Beach • 531-6266

Barnie's Coffee and Tea
7501-19 N. Kendall Dr. • Miami • 284-9946

Beverly Hills Cafe
17850 W. Dixie Hwy. • No. Miami Beach • 931-8767

Bijan's Restaurant on the Miami River
64 SE 4th St. • Miami • 381-7778

The Bistro
2611 Ponce de Leon Blvd. • Coral Gables • 442-9671

Gaviña Coffee Company/ Café La Llave
8240 NW 68 St. • Miami • 477-4070

Captain's Tavern Seafood Restaurant
9621 So. Dixie Hwy. • Miami • 666-5979

Casa Juancho
2436 SW 8 St. • Miami • 642-2452

Casa Rolandi
1930 Ponce de Leon Blvd. • Miami • 444-2187

Chef Allen's
19088 NE 29 Ave. • Aventura • 935-2900

Christy's
3101 Ponce de Leon Blvd. • Coral Gables • 446-1400

Cisco's Cafe
5911 NW 36 St. • Miami • 871-2764

Creative Tastes Catering
7118 SW 117 Ave. • Miami • 598-1575

El Novillo
6830 Bird Rd. • Miami • 284-8417
1255 W. 46 St. • Hialeah • 556-6888

Florencia Restaurante
100 SE 4th St. • Miami • 579-8651

Godiva Chocolatier
Dadeland Mall • Miami • 662-2429

Hard Rock Cafe
Bayside • Miami • 377-3110

Hooligan's Liquor Locker
13135 SW 89 Place • Miami • 251-8282

Hooligan's Pub and Oyster Bar
9555 So. Dixie Hwy. • Miami • 667-9673

Island Oasis of Miami Inc.
4538 SW 71 Ave. • Miami • 665-9796

Janjo's
3131 Commodore Plaza • Coconut Grove • 445-5030

JoAnna's Marketplace
8247 So. Dixie Hwy. • Miami • 661-5777

JohnMartin's
253 Miracle Mile • Coral Gables • 445-3777

Mike Gordon's Seafood Restaurant
1201 NE 79th St. Causeway • Miami • 751-4429

The Olive Garden Italian Restaurants
8201 W. Flagler St. • Miami • 266-5000

Outback Steakhouse
13145 SW 89 Place • Miami • 254-4456

Parrot Cafe: Parrot Jungle and Gardens
11000 SW 57 Ave. • Miami • 666-4931

Prezzo
8888 SW 136 St., Suite 380 • Miami • 234-1010

Los Ranchos Restaurants
Sweetwater • Kendall • Bayside • 221-9367

Restaurant St. Michel
162 Alcazar Ave. • Coral Gables • 444-1666

Ristorante La Bussola
270 Giralda Ave. • Coral Gables • 445-8783

Roasters 'N Toasters
11293 So. Dixie Hwy. • Miami • 251-4848

Tutti's
1342 SW 160 Ave. • Sunrise • 389-5200

Scala Miami Scala Grill
905 S. Bayshore Dr. • Miami • 371-5604

Valenti's
5757 Sunset Dr. South • Miami • 667-0421

Victor's Cafe
2340 SW 36 Ave. • Miami • 445-1313

Spring Programs

Time Out with Mommy or Daddy

Spend an afternoon with us! Each session includes a classroom visit from some gentle creatures and a stop off at a special zoo exhibit just for you.

TOT-A: Ages 3-5

Wednesday, May 4
1 - 2:30 p.m.

TOT-B: Ages 6-7

Saturday, May 17
1 - 2:30 p.m.

Fee per parent-child pair: Member \$8; non-Member \$13.

Animal Mothers and Fathers

Take your parents to the zoo for Mother's and Father's Day! Participants in this free class may drop by the classrooms to receive a special Zoofari Search Card with puzzles and games for families to do as they tour the zoo. You can also learn about expanding their family through our Adopt-An-Animal Program.

For Families

Mother's Day,
Sunday,
May 8, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Father's Day,
Sunday,
June 19, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

FREE for Members

Breakfast with the Beasts

The early bird gets the worm... so what do zoo members get? The return of an old favorite - Breakfast with the Beasts. A continental breakfast is followed by a special, behind-the-scenes look at animal diet preparation. A few animal guests may join us for breakfast. Finish off your morning adventure with a monorail ride over the zoo residents as they begin their day.

For Families

Session FAST-A:
Saturday, May 21, 7:30 a.m.

Session FAST-B:
Saturday, June 4, 7:30 a.m.

Fee per person:
Member adult \$10; non-Member adult \$15; child (12 and under) \$6

Pig Out!

Snuffle for truffles, and enjoy dessert with the wart hogs! Learn the truth about

these much-misunderstood animals, while rooting around in a banana split. A perfect Friday night date!

For adults (age 16 and up)

Friday, May 13,
7:30 - 9 p.m.

Fee per person:
Member \$8;
non-Member \$11.

Photo Safari

The early morning colors streaking the South Florida sky make Metrozoo a photographer's paradise. Come on this early morning photo tour and bring plenty of film. ZSF Executive Director Glenn Ekey will be your tour guide.

For adults (age 16 and up)

Saturday, May 7,
7:30 - 9 a.m.

Fee per person:
Member \$8;
non-Member \$13.

Pets and You

What type of pet is best for your family? Find out in this two part class. Children's Zoo Manager, Lisa Marshall, leads the discussion on care for the usual and not-so-usual pets. A must for any future or current pet owner.



Parents and children can learn together at the zoo!—photo by Barbara Brady



All zoo classes include visits with gentle creatures. —photo by Rick McCawley

For adults (age 16 and up)

Tuesdays, May 17 and
24, 7 - 9 p.m.

Fee per person:
Member \$16; non-Member \$20.

Educators Day at Metrozoo

Finish off the school year with a bang! Join us for this Saturday sampler of education programs for your school groups. Classroom educators will receive sample activity packets and special tips to make each field trip to Metrozoo the best ever. Plan ahead for the fall and make your reservations for zoo classes, tours and outreach programs.

For teachers

Saturday, June 18,
9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

FREE

Summer Zoofari Camps

Summer is almost here, and there's no better place to be than Metrozoo! Each Zoofari Camp includes activities, crafts, games and special animals to touch and visit. These programs fill up fast, so register early! Call 305-255-5551.

Ages 4 - 6 Kindercamp

Created for the youngest campers with lots of songs, crafts and games to build appreciation for wildlife. Two different programs are offered, register for one or both!

Program I

Animal Crackers: How are animals different from each other and how are they similar?

9:00 a.m. - noon
June 20 - 24, June 27 - July 1, July 11 - 15

Program II

What's for Dinner?
What do animals eat and how do they catch or find food?

9:00 a.m. - noon
July 18 - 22, July 25 - 29, August 1 - 5

Fee per child: Member \$80 per week; non-Member \$95 per week.

Ages 7 - 10 Zoofari Adventure Camp

Campers go behind the scenes

and get close to some of our furry (and scaly) residents. Crafts and games develop understanding of our fragile Earth. Two different programs are offered, register for one or both!

Zoofari I

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
June 27 - July 1, July 11 - 15, July 18 - 22

Zoofari II

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
July 25 - 29, August 1 - 5, August 8 - 12

Fee per child: Member \$125 per week; non-Member \$145 per week.

Ages 11 - 13 ZooLife

Campers discover the ins and outs of managing everything in the zoo from snakes to people. Zoo Keepers and our staff veterinarian demonstrate animal management techniques and share first-hand knowledge and experience. Two different programs are offered, register for one or both!

Program I

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
August 8 - 12

Program II

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
August 15 - 19

Fee per child: Member \$125 per week; non-Member \$145 per week.

Teens Teen Zoofari

Our teen volunteers can work in the Children's Zoo petting yard, assisting with summer programs and taking care of our classroom animals. This one-time training camp makes teens eligible to join the exclusive and wild team. Those who successfully complete Teen Zoofari training may apply as volunteers to assist in the summer of '94.

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
June 20 - 24

Fee per child: Member \$125 per week; non-Member \$145 per week.

Ages 10 years and up Flashlight Safaris

Just for campers... a special treat to cap off your camp experience. A special Zoo Camp overnight. We'll do an evening craft, plus dinner, snacks and breakfast. An evening adventure you won't forget!

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.
Fridays: July 1, July 15, July 29, August 12

Fee per child: Member \$20 per week; non-Member \$25 per week. ■



Here's one happy camper who participated in our summer camps last year. By popular demand Zoo Camp will run during June, July and August, 1994. Last year, we were completely sold out so we're encouraging you to register early. Call us at 305-255-5551.

- photo by Misty Romer

Education Program Registration Form

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____
 I am a Member Membership # _____ I am not a Member

Name of Session	Name of Participant	Child's Age/Grade	Fee
TOTAL:			\$

For children's programs, complete the following:
 Parent's or Guardian's Name: _____
 Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____
Method of Payment (Please do not send cash.)
 Check American Express MasterCard Visa
 Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____
 Customer Signature: _____

Mail this completed order form with your payment to
 Education Department,
 Zoological Society of Florida,
 12400 SW 152 Street,
 Miami, FL 33177-1499.



6

A Room With A Zoo

If your spring project includes redecorating a child's room, why not do something completely different? Take your imagination to the Toucan Trader, your zoo gift shop, and start your decor with the things that make a room special.

Move in some animal friends: monkeys, chimpanzees, gibbons and koalas. A Giraffe Growth Chart is a fun reminder that the ritual of replacing outgrown clothes just keeps on happening. Put a special touch to ordinary items by including carved Noah's Ark bookends, picture frames and lamps.

If the room you're decorating is for a completely new person in the family, it's never too early to bring animals into a small person's life. Put some soft, stuffed animals in the crib. Choose from a wide assortment of both illustrated and photographic posters: cats, fish, wolves, monkeys and other animal friends your baby can coo with in the wee hours of the morning.

The Toucan Trader Gift Shop is open 9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Monday - Thursday, and 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Friday - Sunday. Zoo members get a 10% discount on all purchases. If you're really keen on that decorating job, you can help us by working in the shop and help yourself by saving 20% on everything you purchase that day.

Sociable Plover

Once again we take quill in hand to ruminate over the latest developments at Metrozoo.

By the time you get this, our supporters will be right on the brink of Feasting with a capital F. I'm thrilled, of course, that the theme of Feast With The Beasts this year is The Aviary. Dear Mr. Yokel tells us that the design for the new *Wings of Asia* is just leaping off the drawing boards. ■

Perhaps you attended Ron Magill's popular "Sex and the Animals" lecture in February. We're too well-bred to mention any details here, but we can report that Ron did announce our 1994 Membership Drive - which he is chairing.

Our goal is 3,000 new memberships by the beginning of April. And, my dears, if you'd like to pitch in on this terribly worthy cause and help sell memberships - or, if you know a company (maybe yours?) that would like to subsidize memberships as a benefit for their employees - call 305-255-5551. ■

Those involved in the *Down to Earth* Environmental Summit on January 28 were "tickled pink" when International Place, Museum Tower, Brickell Bay Towers and One Brickell Square celebrated the event by bathing themselves in shimmering green light. The skyline of Miami never looked lovelier. Many thanks to the beautiful building managers (all are



The eyes and ears
of our Development
Department, our
inimitable "gossip"
columnist,
Sociable Plover.

Light Up Miami members, of course). ■

Kisses to the members of our Review Committee for their wisdom and advice: Jim Block, Lee Bynum and Betty Miller, Ray Dunleavy, Paul Faux, B.B. Goldstein, Lydia Harrison, Pat Kelly, Dan Licciardi, Buff March, Mary Jean Risi, Betsey Singer, John Sumberg, Howard Tendrich, and Margo Williams. ■

Thanks to Margo, for coordinating a simply charming evening at The Greater Miami Opera in January. Lucky zoo folks like Frank Hawkins, Michael and Damina Greif, Bobbie Ibarra and her husband Charles Scurr, were able to rub elbows with the Opera's General Manager, Robert Heuer. I was vacationing with the swallows in Capistrano that weekend, but I hear it was a simply smashing performance. ■

And last, but not least, we give an affectionate flutter of approval to the

Lyons Salon (that's right, salon - do you think I look this good without any help?) of Kendall, for their wonderful "Cut-a-Thon" in February. All proceeds went to the zoo, so we owe big hugs to owner Rocky Lyons and his able staffer, Michelle Dasent, for putting our feathers in place with style! ■

Gotta Fly!

Sociable Plover

Down To Earth Summit: A Peak Experience

Down To Earth, our environmental summit held in late January, brought together a wide variety of community members from board rooms, classrooms and living rooms to share thoughts and gather knowledge from environmental experts. It was an unprecedented event that stemmed from our desire - shared by many other local organizations including sponsors Environmental Salvage Team and Northern Trust Bank - to become leaders in the preservation of our valuable natural resources.

At Down To Earth, people from different walks of life came together with a common goal: to learn how to help our precious environment. The general public spent an evening with two of the world's most celebrated environmentalists Jean-Michel Cousteau and Dr. Richard Leakey. The South Florida business community participated in Down To Business, where nationally recognized companies such as Patagonia International and Ben & Jerry's Homemade, Inc. shared the arena with local

business leaders to discuss how environmentally-sound business principles can produce profitable and successful enterprises. South Florida youth enjoyed Earth Beat, a multi-media presentation sponsored by MTV Internacional. And families took mini-treks to unique South Florida ecosystems guided by experts from local colleges and universities and the zoo.

Down To Earth's bottom line was that we cannot leave it solely to governments to solve environmental problems. The private sector - businesses, special interest groups and individuals - must take action. At Down To Earth a new role for the Zoological Society of Florida was born: to become a true community resource for environmental learning. Down To Earth was the first of many new educational programs and volunteer services that will allow interested individuals, businesses and families to actively participate in the process. Our most sincere thanks to everyone who made Down To Earth possible. ■

by Frank N. Hawkins, Jr., ZSF President

Wild Florida:

Bats Beyond The Belfry

Bats are finally getting some good press. After years of being portrayed in assorted folk tales as eerie and sinister, their reputation is taking a positive turn. We now recognize their valuable contribution to our ecological system.

Did you know that the diversity and even survival of certain plants and trees are solely dependent upon bats? Bats that consume fruit, flowers and nectar actually pollinate plants like the night blooming cactus and giant Saguaro cactus of central and south Arizona. In the tropics, while the fruit-eating bats are keeping the flora abundant, insect-eating bats keep the insect population at bay.

Let's Set The Record Straight.

It is only fair that we look again at some of the myths that have unjustly followed bats through time.

If someone says, "You're blind as a bat!" you may need glasses, but you're not blind. All bats have eyes and see to various degrees, even in extremely low light situations. But, their eyesight is not often good enough for night foraging, and they must rely on "echolocation" or acoustic orientation. Hearing talents are especially important to bats that search in the dark for their prey.

Bats do not necessarily carry rabies. The frequency of rabid bats is about the same or less than rabid raccoons or other wild animals.

When bats see a human, they do not automatically dive for the hair. Like us, they try to avoid running into objects. If you find yourself caught in a small space with a bat, the confusion of both of you trying to get away from each other, might lead to a "hairy" encounter or two. But the bat is probably just as upset about the run-in as you are.

The idea that bats roost only in caves or attics is another misconception. There are a number of species that make their homes in trees, banana leaves and heliconias.

However, in our neighborhoods, caves and attics provide the best shelter for bats.

Unsung Heroes; Unknown Talents

Bats are the only mammals to master true flight. While the gliding squirrel and lemur may swirl through the air, they are really only gracefully falling from one place to the next. Only bats are able to sustain flight on their own.

The bat family is the second most varied on the planet (only the rodents have more species). More than 950 varieties inhabit just about every corner of Earth - the only exceptions being the Arctic Circle and Antarctica (plus a few scattered islands they have not yet discovered).

Florida has at least 14 species of bats, with one of the rarest types residing right here in the urban area of Coral Gables and Miami (Wagner's mastiff bat or *Europs glaucinus*). The majority of Florida bats are insect-eaters.

Some people have found that bats can be quite helpful in keeping the backyard relatively insect-free. They

have purchased "bat box" kits and assembled them in their backyards. What are the advantages of sharing your yard with bats? One look at their diet will give you the answer.

An insect-eating bat will consume from one-quarter to one-half its body weight in bugs a night. With the average bat weighing in at slightly less than one ounce, that is nearly 1/2 ounce of insects (or 5,750 based on the average of 184,000 insects to the pound.) Over a year, one bat will take care of 9.64 pounds of insects. A large bat box easily accommodates a colony of 200 bats (remember, bats are very small), which, together, will consume 1,928 pounds of insects. The bug zapper you buy at your local hardware store can't come close to those kind of statistics!

If you're interested in learning more about bats, visit our Children's Zoo where our staff and volunteers will introduce you personally to the little guys pictured below. Or contact Bat Conservation International, P.O. Box 162603, Austin, TX. BCI can get you started on a backyard bat box project. ■

by Bill Zeigler, General Curator



Arren't they cute? And they're worth their weight in bug zappers! A colony of 200 bats can eat almost 200 million (yes, two hundred million) mosquitoes a year. - photo by Rick McCawley



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Toucan Talk
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Published six times each year as a benefit to the members and supporters of Miami Metrozoo.

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Zoo Visitor Information
305-251-0400



Calendar Of Zoo Events

Friday, March 4

Feast With The Beasts

Sponsored by American Express

8 p.m. at the zoo

\$150 per person/ General admission

\$500 per person/ Beastkeepers

Guests will wing their way through a transformed, nighttime zoo, enjoying foods from over 45 fine dining establishments (see page 4). Beastkeepers are invited to an exclusive champagne reception where they will receive special gifts to acknowledge their commitment to the zoo. This year's chairwomen, **Mercedes Ferré** and **Jean Kislak**, are working with their committees to create the most spectacular setting yet for our biggest annual fund raiser. For more information call Lisa Amaro at 305-255-5551.

Wednesday, April 20

Birds & Beasts:

Animals As Depicted In Music

6:30 p.m. at the

Hotel Inter-Continental Miami

Admission: \$20. Proceeds benefit the zoo.

Willie Waters, Principal Conductor of the Greater Miami Opera, presents a look at how composers have been inspired by the animal kingdom. Admission includes refreshments and a

wine and cheese reception following the performance. For information about this and other events in the **Hotel Inter-Continental 1993-1994 Cultural Series**, call 305-577-1000.

Zoo Travel Program

June 25-July 10: African Safari

July 28-August 17: Expedition To China



The Temple of Heaven, Beijing. Just one stop on the Zoo Travel Program itinerary. Call 305-255-5551 for details. - photo by Barbara Brady

This summer we introduce a new travel program with journeys to Africa and China. Each trip will be led by an expert from the zoo, and a portion of the fare from every travel package will benefit the zoo. If you have itchy feet, call Janet Perales at 305-255-5551 and she'll keep you informed.

Any Time You Want!

The Zoo Speakers Bureau

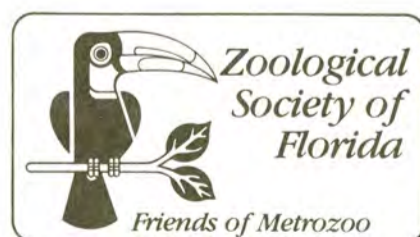
Does your civic, business or social organization need a program or speaker?

If you do, why not invite a speaker from our Speakers Bureau? Our 30-minute presentation "Metrozoo - Past, Present and Future" tells the story from Crandon Park to Metrozoo. It is illustrated with slides that show the beginnings of the zoo, its growth and development, the effects of Hurricane Andrew, and restoration since then.

The Speakers Bureau is a free service to the community. The presentation is geared to adults and is ideal for clubs, professional organizations or churches. Scheduling is very flexible, with speakers available seven days a week and almost any time of day. Call 305-255-5551 for booking information. If possible, please call at least two weeks in advance of your meeting. ■

Membership Drive Moving Full Speed Ahead

Our goal to welcome 3,000 new members by April, 1994 is well ahead of schedule as of this printing of *Toucan Talk*. Maybe it's because we have so many choices and categories for joining! Please tell your friends and family who haven't yet joined what great adventures are in store for them at Metrozoo, one of the most beautiful places in Florida! For complete information about rates and membership choices, call us at 305-255-5551.



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