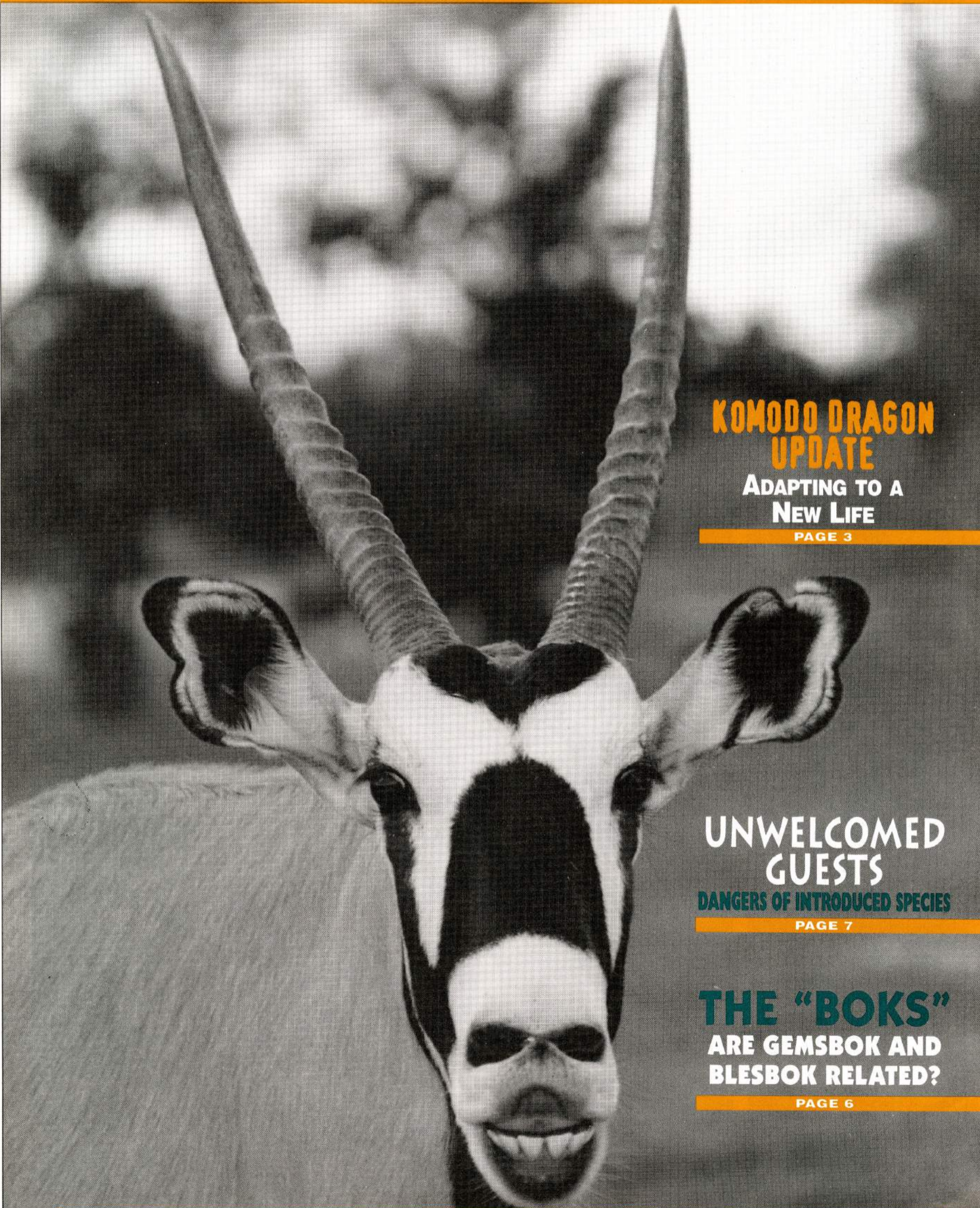


# TOUCAN TALK

A TRIP TO THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU!



## KOMODO DRAGON UPDATE

ADAPTING TO A  
NEW LIFE

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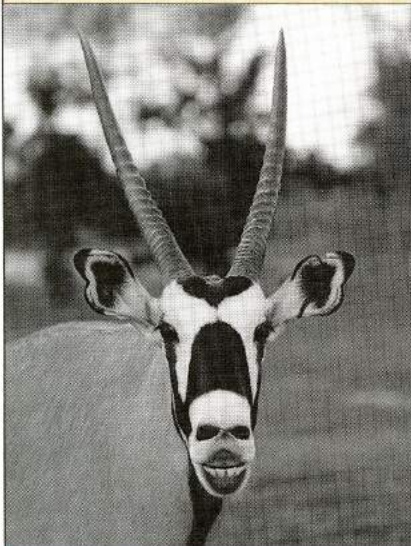
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by Dolora Batchelor

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Toucan Talk  
Volume 21, Number 5  
September/October, 1995

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

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# INDONESIAN JOURNAL

*Metrozoo's General Curator Bill Zeigler and Zoological Society of Florida's Education Director Nancy Hotchkiss traveled to Indonesia in early June to pick up our Komodo dragons. They were based at Taman Safari Indonesia, a large zoological park and reserve in western Java. During their two-week stay they worked with the local staff to perform medical exams on their animals and help map out training programs and daily husbandry practices. Below are excerpts from Nancy's journal...*

## MAY 31

**F**inally arrived in Jakarta! Flight path took us from Miami to Los Angeles on American Airlines to Honolulu through Bali to arrive in Jakarta on Garuda Indonesia Airlines. Think I could do that "safety and seatbelt" film in my sleep! Our party of travelers includes the staff and media representatives from the Minnesota Zoo, which also is receiving a pair of dragons. The drive to Taman Safari Indonesia took us out of Jakarta into the hills outside Bogor, past roadside fruit stands with colorful kites strung in front.

## JUNE 1

**A**woke to the sounds of prayers being sung and roosters crowing outside the lodge window. The air is active with voices and dragonflies circling by. School children in uniforms are running in and out of each other's homes, while an older gentleman performs his morning tai chi routine. We are halfway around the globe from Miami. While the sun is just coming up over the mountains here, it's slowly sinking into the Everglades. The climates are similar, as are many of the plants.

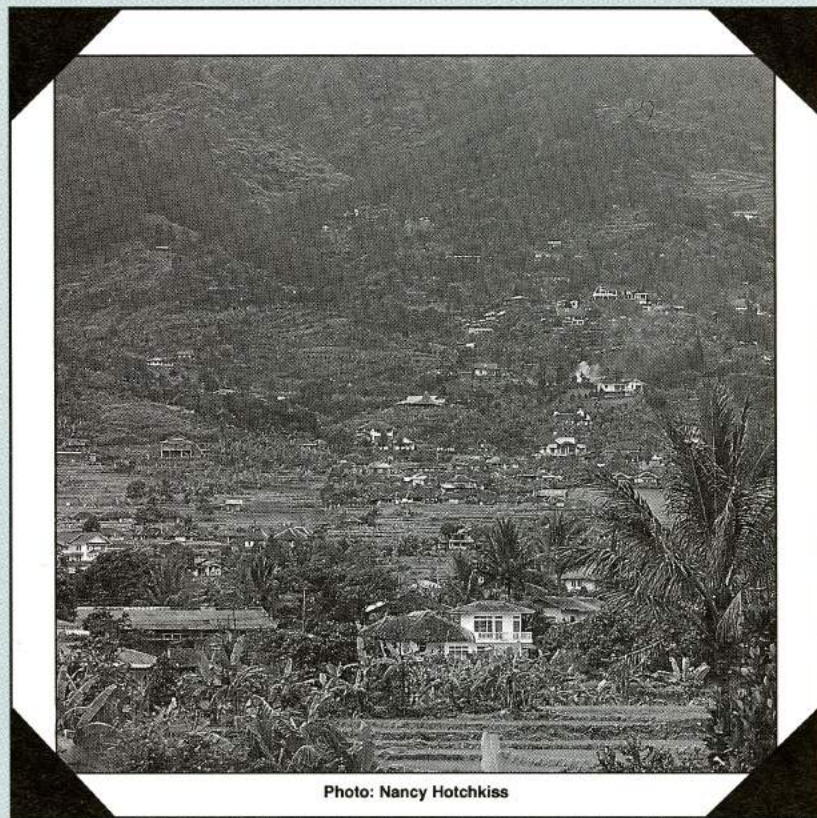


Photo: Nancy Hotchkiss



Photo: Ron Magill

## JUNE 3

**S**pent much of today on staff development activities. Bill met with their curatorial and veterinary staff to map out a keeper training course, as well as discuss exhibitry and diets. I conducted a workshop for the program staff on presentation techniques and educational programming styles. The cultural differences and attitudes towards animals needed to be taken into account when giving them "teaching tips." The workshop followed an interesting rhythm—I'd talk for three to four sentences, then stop for translation. The staff are eager to learn and very open to new ideas and approaches.

## JUNE 4

**D**ay off from zoo work to go hiking in the National Park. Caught glimpses of small birds flitting among the branches, as well as colorful spiders and small lizards. Highlight was seeing a troop of silver-leaf langurs way up in the trees. They stared at us, then quickly moved on.

## JUNE 7

**T**oday Bill worked with Dr. Peri Wolff from the Minnesota Zoo to capture, crate and radiograph the Komodo

dragons. We need to confirm their sex by X-raying them. My job was to photograph and videotape all the procedures for our records. The keepers are very familiar with these animals and hop in and out of the exhibit with ease. All four animals were crated and driven over to the animal hospital, where we had set up the portable radiograph machine. We confirmed that we have two males and two females! All in good condition, a bit overweight and covered with ticks! Need to start treating them to get rid of these unwanted guests! The keeper and veterinary staff of Taman Safari Indonesia were wonderfully helpful and happy to learn easier and safer ways to capture and restrain these large animals.

## JUNE 8

**I**t's decided that "Jack" and "Lubier" will be coming to Miami. They are the bigger pair and really impressive animals. What a great addition to the Metrozoo family. They will be crated up and will arrive in Miami on June 15, after about 36 hours en route. At least they get to do the entire trip lying down in their spacious crates!

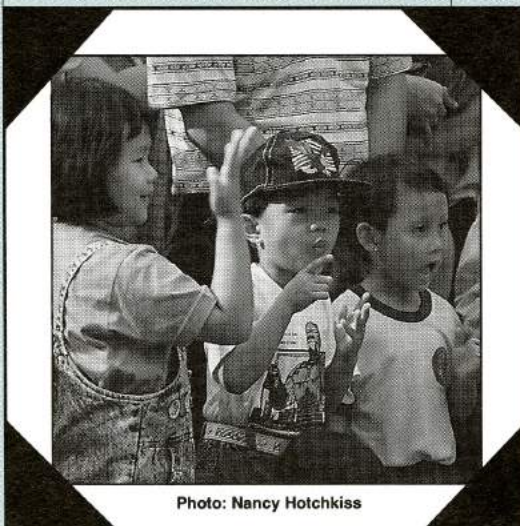


Photo: Nancy Hotchkiss

# KOMODO UPDATE

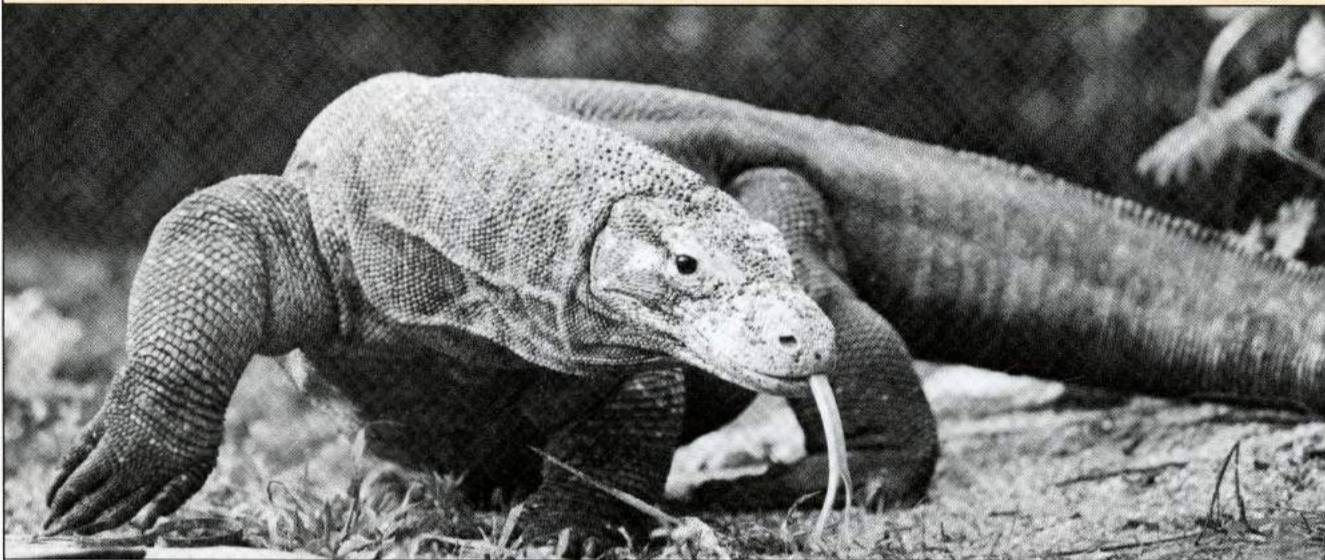


Photo: Ron Magill

The long-awaited Komodo dragons made their first media debut June 15, when they arrived at Metrozoo. Since then, the Zoo's staff has been keeping a watchful eye, monitoring our newest Zoo residents, Jack and Lubier, at their behind-the-scenes quarantine headquarters. The following observations were obtained from an interview with Martha Thaden, Quarantine Supervisor.

## TOUCAN TALK: HOW ARE THE KOMODO DRAGONS ADAPTING TO THEIR NEW HOME?

**MARTHA THADEN:** In the beginning, Lubier, our female Komodo, didn't want to eat. We waited a week before taking any steps to correct the problem to allow our new arrivals to settle in and have a chance to recover from the trip. We offered them their regular diet items of rats and rabbits, but because of Jack's aggressive behavior about food, Lubier wouldn't eat. We even tried using the same method they use back home in Indonesia, which is putting the food hanging from a bamboo pole of about 8 feet. Jack would eat off the stick, but Lubier seemed intimidated; she would stand perfectly still, almost pretending to be invisible. We had to do something, but we couldn't leave food in the pen since Jack is overweight and probably would eat it all.

## TT: HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

**MT:** Two weeks after the Komodos arrived, we decided to move two crocodiles to another enclosure so the pen next to theirs would be empty. Then, we used the bamboo stick method to lure Jack into the empty pen. We left some food for Lubier. Forty-five minutes later it was gone!

## TT: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

**MT:** We decided to keep doing it. Every Wednesday, we move Jack so Lubier can eat. Right now, she gets as many rats as she wants.

## TT: AND HOW DO THEY BEHAVE IN THEIR PEN? WHAT ARE THEIR "PERSONALITIES"?

**MT:** Jack is an outgoing kind of Komodo. He'll look at you and strike a pose (something he does well). He also wanders around the pen more than Lubier. However, they both have been seen in the pool often. Apparently, they didn't have a pool back in Indonesia, and here they enjoy daily baths. Sometimes they go to the bottom of the pool and stay there for some time (by the way, they can stay submerged for up to 15 minutes), and then come up to the surface for air.

## TT: SO, IT SEEMS THEY ARE ENJOYING EACH OTHER'S COMPANY...

**MT:** This hasn't always been the case. When they first arrived, Lubier would spend most of her time in a shelter built for them. And a couple of times I couldn't see her anywhere in the pen.

## TT: WHY?

**MT:** She had been excavating tunnels underneath the shelter, and only some 8 inches of her tail would show.

## TT: WAS THERE A CHANCE THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE ESCAPED?

**MT:** Don't worry; the ground is coral rock and it won't allow her to escape.

## TT: WHY WAS SHE BEHAVING LIKE THAT?

**MT:** Probably she was "hiding" because of all the attention she first received. Fortunately, she has stopped and this has allowed us to observe some other behaviors. For

example, at least once a day, Jack approaches Lubier to see if she's "in the mood." This probably is happening because in Indonesia their mating season takes place in the next couple of months. Jack, in spite of the Komodo's fierce reputation, is a very tender companion. He uses his nose to nudge the tip of her tail or her back legs; no response, and he nudges again. Up to now, Lubier hasn't responded because she is not ready to mate. Jack, however, has been very good about it and just walks away.

## TT: DO THEY INTERACT IN ANY OTHER WAY?

**MT:** They have spent some time closer than usual because of special circumstances. Back in June, during a series of rainy days when the temperature dropped, we decided to turn on the "hog warmer" under their shelter. This heating device, which is a 1/4-inch thick, 4x6-foot, fiberglass sheet covered with sand and dirt, has worked wonders. Everytime it rains, they go into the shelter and, as soon as the rain goes away, they come back out. They like to be out in the sun. First thing in the morning they go to the west side of the fence that surrounds their pen. You can be sure that's where the rays hit first and they'll be basking in the sun for hours.

## TT: ANY FINAL COMMENTS?

**MT:** We believe that Jack and Lubier will have healthy lives here at Metrozoo. After all, the climate is similar to theirs and, as far as we can tell, they get along just fine. We'll be waiting for some little Komodos after January '96, once they're in the new exhibit!

## BIRTHS & HATCHINGS

### May 7 - July 3

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>Eastern leopard tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone pardalis babcocki</i> |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 15  |
| <b>Blesbok</b><br><i>Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi</i>                   |         |
| 1 female   | May 15  |
| <b>Gerenuk</b><br><i>Litocranius walleri</i>                           |         |
| 1 male   | May 15  |
| <b>Gemsbok</b><br><i>Oryx gazella</i>                                  |         |
| 1 female   | May 15  |
| <b>Radiated tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone radiata</i>                  |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 17  |
| <b>Addax</b><br><i>Addax Nasomaculatus</i>                             |         |
| 1 male   | May 18  |
| <b>Blesbok</b><br><i>Damaliscus dorcas phillipsi</i>                   |         |
| 1 female   | May 1   |
| <b>White-bellied stork</b><br><i>Ciconia abdimii</i>                   |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 20  |
| <b>Grevy's zebra</b><br><i>Equus grevyi</i>                            |         |
| 1 female   | May 21  |
| <b>Gemsbok</b><br><i>Oryx gazella</i>                                  |         |
| 1 male   | May 23  |
| <b>African spurred tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone sulcata</i>           |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 24  |
| <b>Wattled crane</b><br><i>Bugeranus carunculatus</i>                  |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 25  |
| <b>African spurred tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone sulcata</i>           |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | May 30  |
| <b>Impala</b><br><i>Aepyceros melampus</i>                             |         |
| 1 male/1 female  | June 1  |
| <b>Impala</b><br><i>Aepyceros melampus</i>                             |         |
| 1 female   | June 3  |
| <b>American flamingo</b><br><i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>                |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 3  |
| <b>Sacred ibis</b><br><i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>                  |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 7  |
| <b>Sacred ibis</b><br><i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>                  |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 8  |
| <b>Sacred ibis</b><br><i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>                  |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 10 |
| <b>African spurred tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone sulcata</i>           |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 13 |
| <b>Reticulated giraffe</b><br><i>Giraffa Camelopardalis reticulata</i> |         |
| 1 male   | June 15 |
| <b>Indian muntjac</b><br><i>Muntiacus muntjak vaginalis</i>            |         |
| 1 female   | June 16 |
| <b>African spurred tortoise</b><br><i>Geochelone sulcata</i>           |         |
| 1 sex unknown  | June 17 |
| <b>Arabian camel</b><br><i>Camelus dromedarius</i>                     |         |
| 1 female   | July 3  |

**T**he Zoo went mobile this summer, as the Zoological Society of Florida (ZSF) presented "Zoo on Wheels," an educational program about endangered species, at several branches of the Miami-Dade Public Library System throughout Dade County. The "wheels" were generously provided by Kendall Toyota in the form of a new minivan.

This program was created to increase awareness of wildlife and to teach youngsters about the importance of endangered species and the reasons for the decline in their populations. The program was presented by members of the staff and volunteers of ZSF. With audiences ranging from 40 to 100, the presenters used games and biofacts to draw the children into a lively discussion about why animals become endangered. Initially, the little ones often named "hunting" and "poaching" as causes for endangerment. But the presenters led the group to focus on habitat destruction as the primary cause. In addition to learning what makes up a habitat and what happens when it is disturbed or destroyed, the kids learned about the steps that can be taken to curb habitat destruction and to preserve life.

But the real stars of the show were the live animals. In addition to their pure entertainment value, each one provided an opportunity for the children to learn a fascinating characteristic or adaptation. Eyes widened in amazement as little fingers touched the cool, dry scales of "Fred," a boa constrictor, and discovered that a snake is not slimy and "gross" after all. Kids also were delighted when "Voltaire," a sulfur-crested cockatoo, greeted them by saying hello, and they learned how he used his beak and feet to eat when he is handed a grape or a sunflower seed. And when kids saw how flexible "Godiva" the ferret was, they understood that her body is that way to adapt to her habitat of underground tunnels. All of the animal friends came from the Children's Zoo, and they were luxuriously transported to the libraries in the new minivan.



Photo: Frank Davis

# BACK TO SCHOOL

**D**id you know that the Zoological Society of Florida conducts the education programs for Metrozoo? Our offerings are year-round, from summer camp for tiny tots to evening lectures for "lifetime learners." Some of our most important programs are our classroom presentations, which are designed for school groups that come on field trips to Metrozoo. Unlike typical classes, our programs use feathers, eggs, hides, skulls and live animals to get the ideas across. The information taught in these classes helps students better appreciate their visit to the Zoo by giving them concrete examples.

For the past six years, Education Specialist Damien Kong has led thousands of students on these classroom adventures. For the youngest kids, grades K through second, he teaches "Myths, Extinction, and Reality." With computers, television, and "animatronics" around, many of our young people get confused about what's real and what's not. In this program he tries to unravel this confusion. By the end of the presentation, young students will know that dragons are myths, dinosaurs are extinct and elephants are real and are not extinct.

For grades third through fifth,



Classes offer a chance to get "Up close and personal."

Damien teaches students about how to classify animals. This program covers the three major groups of vertebrates (backboned animals) found at the Zoo. Students learn that birds have feathers, mammals have hair, and reptiles have scales. They are encouraged to classify all the animals that they see as they walk around Metrozoo that day.

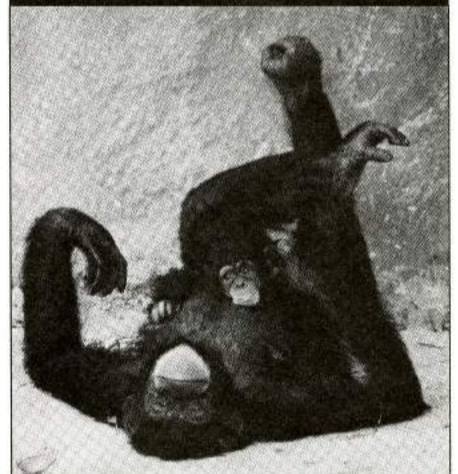
With our middle school program, Damien talks about more earth-shattering matters like conservation, covering topics such as habitat destruction, hunting, and the trade in endangered species. To emphasize the subject we show the students goods such as purses, shoes, necklaces, and medicines made from these species.

For high school groups, Damien works with the teachers to develop

a program that ties in with their individual curriculum. Topics and subject matters can range from conservation and careers to zoo design and breeding programs. This allows the teachers and students to maximize the impact of a field trip to the Zoo.

Throughout the years, the ZSF Education Department has offered these programs free of charge to any school that has requested one. This has been made possible through a generous grant from the Dade County Public Schools (DCPS). This partnership with DCPS has enabled us to reach thousands of students and enhance their field trip experience.

## CORRECTION



In our May/June issue, this photo was incorrectly credited. The photographer is Linda Weitzman.

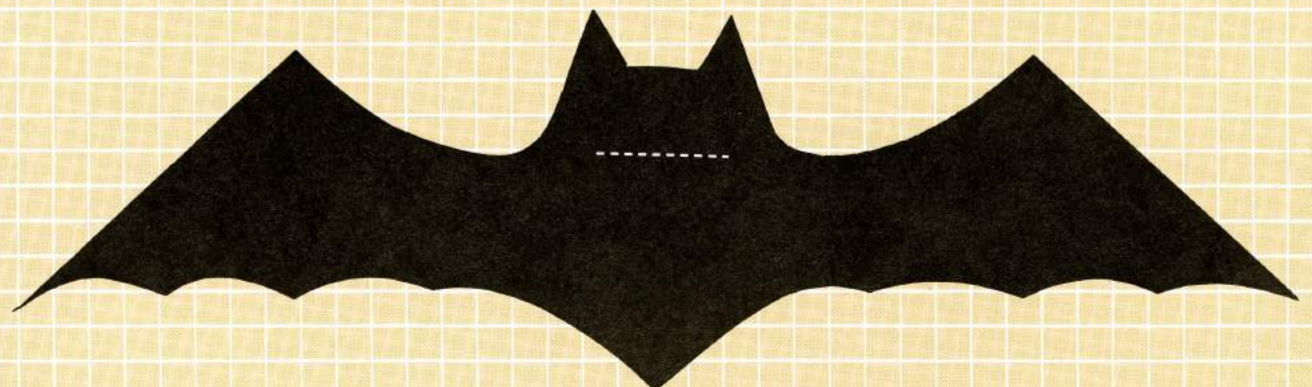
## HALLOWEEN CORNER

**B**ats have become synonymous with Halloween. But not many people know much about bats and usually identify them with scary things. In China, bats or "flying mice" are looked upon as good omens and are depicted as an emblem of happiness. Though written with a different character, the name of bat in Chinese has exactly the same sound as the character for happiness. Bats can be found in artwork on several objects. Many of the objects have the symbol of five bats in a circle

symbolizing the five blessings of life: longevity, riches, peacefulness, love of virtue and a happy death.

### MAKE A "FINGER BAT" OF YOUR OWN!

**C**ut out the bat outline below. Cut a slit along the dotted line in the middle of the bat. Slip your bat onto your finger and wiggle in the air to see your bat fly! You can make more bats by tracing the form on black construction paper.



# A LONG-LASTING GIFT

**Y**ou might say some of our Zoo Friends are "strong-willed."

That's because they're special friends who have provided for the Zoological Society and the Zoo in their estate plans. (Known in the charitable world as "deferred giving," providing for a charity in your will can help make sure that the causes you care about will continue after your lifetime.)

And the Zoological Society and the Zoo recently have benefited from generous supporters who cared enough to do just that.

The late **Beatrice Goodman, Bette Bergstrom** and **William Katzenstein** all provided for the Zoological Society in their wills, and the Development Department is working with their families and estate representatives to ensure proper recognition of their gifts.

For example, you'll find Beatrice and Moses Goodman's names on the Siamang paddock, while Bill Katzenstein will be memorialized on the Clouded Leopard exhibit in Asian River Life. Both of these generous bequests will help support Zoological Society education programs at Metrozoo.

But that's not all: the Development staff also is creating a deferred giving club for the 1995-96 fiscal year, for those Zoo supporters currently living who want to emulate these fine examples.

"We'd like to recognize deferred gift donors while they're still with us," said Deferred Giving



Lee Bynum and Betty Miller with Glenn Ekey, Zoological Society of Florida's Executive Director (left) and Al Fontana, Metrozoo's Director (right). Photo: Sergio Alsina

Subcommittee Chair **Richard Mahmarian**, "not just because we like to know who they are, but also to honor them for their support of the Zoological Society and their devotion to Metrozoo."

For example, just about everyone in the Metrozoo family knows about **Lee Bynum** and **Betty Miller's** generous pledge to leave their entire estate to the Zoological Society to build a reptile house. Betty and Lee now are participating in the long-range planning process, to share their vision for a Metrozoo attraction that will endure long after their lifetimes.

"In that spirit, we'd like to invite

everyone who either has made a provision for the Zoo in their will—or who is thinking about it—to contact us," said Richard Mahmarian. "We not only want to know about your plans, we'd also like to hear about your wishes and dreams for Metrozoo. Because we believe that anyone who cares to help Metrozoo after they're gone deserves to have a say on their vision for the Zoo in the future."

To find out more about deferred gifts that benefit the Zoological Society of Florida and Metrozoo, call the Zoological Society's Development Department at 305-255-5551.

## RAZERS OF THE OLD ARC

**D**onors who provide for Metrozoo in their wills frequently are active givers throughout their lifetimes. That's certainly the case with Lee Bynum and Betty Miller. As two of the Zoological Society of Florida's biggest contributors, Betty and Lee have added to their long history of support with a generous gift to upgrade the Animal Resource Center (ARC) in the Children's Zoo.

The refurbished ARC will be completed in the fall, but to celebrate the announcement of their gift Betty and Lee attended a "destruction party" on June 30 with Zoological Society Executive Director Glenn Ekey and Metrozoo Director Al Fontana (see photo, left).

Just a swing or two of the sledgehammer gave them each a souvenir bottle of rubble from the old ARC, something we'll all look back on fondly when the upgraded facility is finished!

## "WILD" FASHION

**I**n August, St. John Boutique of Bal Harbour generously underwrote and sponsored a cocktail reception featuring their 1995 Animal Print Fall Collection. Ten percent of all sales that evening were given to the Adopt-An-Animal Program at Metrozoo. We are pleased to see continuing community involvement at all levels.

## THANK YOU

**T**he valuable support of the following foundations has helped the Zoological Society of Florida fulfill its mission through its education programs, the Zoo Rebuilding Fund, the annual fund, and other important projects.

Bastien Foundation  
George T. Baker Foundation  
Blank Family Foundation  
The Chingos Foundation  
Dade County Public Schools  
Dunspaugh-Dalton Foundation  
The Goldsmith Family Foundation  
Graham Foundation  
Janet A. Hooker Charitable Trust  
The Jacarlene Foundation  
George W. Jenkins Foundation  
Alma Jennings Foundation  
Kelly Foundation  
The Lewis Family Foundation  
Robert McCormick Tribune Fund  
McIntosh Foundation  
Folke Peterson Charitable Foundation  
George B. Storer Foundation

## A SPLENDIFEROUS AFRICAN NIGHT!

**T**he "Splendor of African Nights" came to One Biscayne Tower—namely, the showroom of artist and sculptor **Marcie Ziv**—on July 12, to raffle an envy-inspiring African safari and other fabulous prizes in support of the Zoological Society of Florida's Adopt-an-Animal program at Metrozoo.

(Friends of Metrozoo will instantly recognize Marcie's work. Her distinctive art graced the invitation—and was displayed in the Zoo—for 1995's *Feast With The Beasts*.)

More than 150 attendees sampled **Best Cellar Wines**, enjoyed hors d'oeuvres from the **Mayfair Grill**, and vied for the Grand Raffle



Dawn Humphreys of African World Safaris and artist Marcie Ziv. Photo: Sergio Alsina

Prize of two round-trip, business-class tickets on **British Airways** for an all-inclusive, five-night stay at a private game lodge near Kruger Park, South Africa (compliments of **African World Safaris, Inc.**).

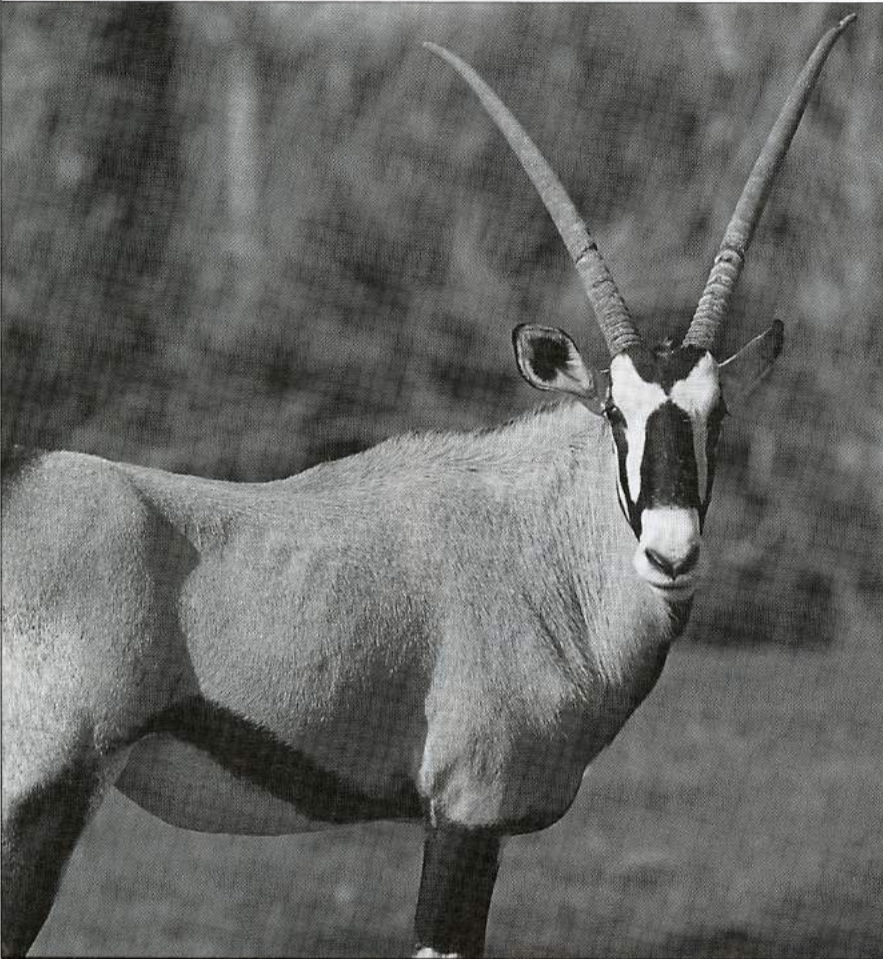
The African trip went to lucky winner **Wayne Ranoski**, while **José Alvarez-Alfonso** and **Jean Kislak** won dinner for two at **Dominique's** and a gourmet food basket from **Gardner's Markets**, respectively. But with a safari-sized amount of money raised for the evening, everyone went home happy.

"We're very grateful to Marcie, **Dawn Humphreys** of African World Safaris, and **Louise Gross** of **The Smart Traveller** for coordinating this terrific evening," said Executive Director Glenn Ekey.

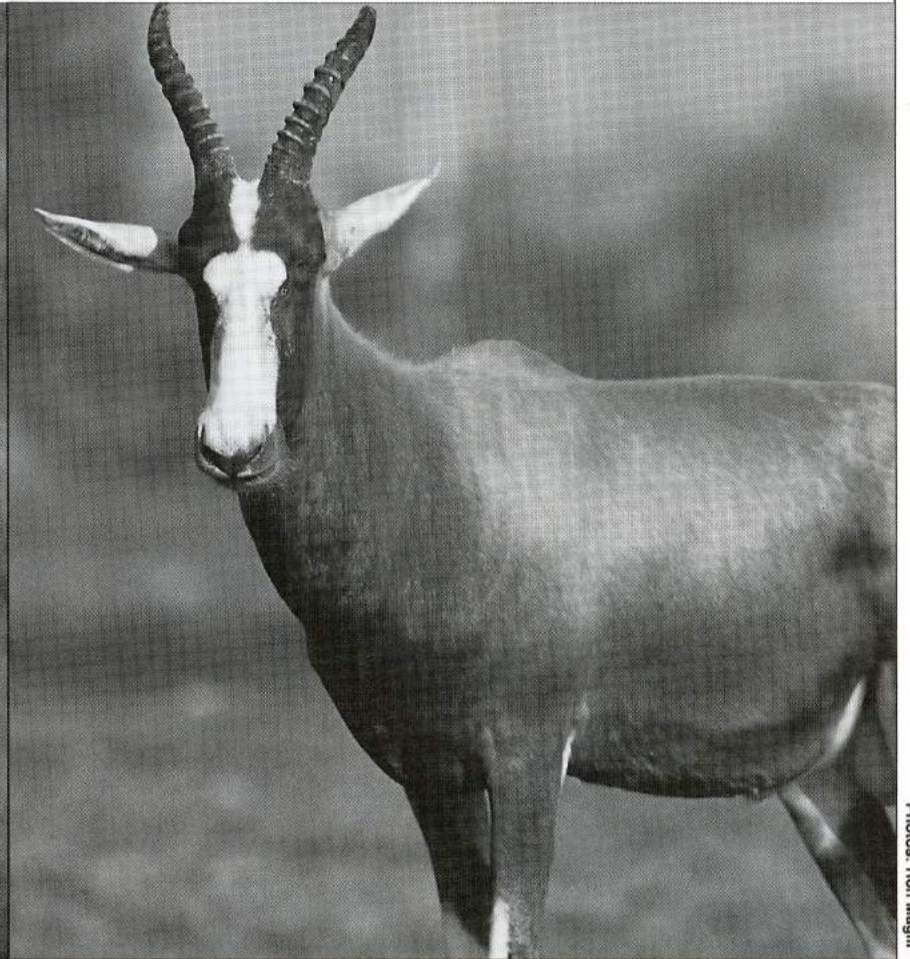
The Zoological Society also thanks **World Printing, Inc.** for contributing the invitation and raffle books for the event.

# THE "BOK" STOPS HERE

## ARE GEMSBOK AND BLESBOK TRULY RELATED?



Gemsbok



Blesbok

Photos: Ron Magill

**Y**ou might think, as it often happens in the human world, that the "bok" in the gemsbok's and blesbok's names makes them at least cousins, but that is not necessarily the case. "Bok" is an Afrikaners word and only refers to male goats or antelopes, and does not imply that the animals are closely related. In fact, besides gemsbok and blesbok (the two species we have here at Metrozoo), there are steenbok, springbok and bontebok. The only ones that are closely related are the blesbok and the bontebok. In some antelopes, the ending "bok" is interchangeable with "buck," but not with the species mentioned above.

In the case of gemsbok, they are in the tribe *Hippotragini*, which includes all the *oryx*, which is what gemsbok are. Blesbok are in the tribe *Alcelaphini*, which include wildebeest, topi and the like.

Gemsbok are one of the more striking and stately of the antelope, as well as one of the largest ones (shoulder height: 1.22 m, weight: 205 kg). Blesbok are medium-sized

(shoulder height: 95 cm, weight: 100 kg) and, unfortunately for them, are popular with predators. Actually, all blesbok are now managed on game reserves where there are no predators (except jackals which will take the young, but represent no threat to the adults). They both have horns carried by both sexes, but the gemsbok's are straight, V-shaped and measure 1.2 m when fully grown. The blesbok's horns, also in both sexes, are lyre-shaped and measure 47 cm.

They both are native to Africa and, although they are found in different areas of Botswana and South Africa, blesbok also are found in some isolated pockets in Namibia and gemsbok in southwestern Angola.

In terms of diet, gemsbok and blesbok both feed on grass. Gemsbok prefer green grass, but will eat dry. Gemsbok need limited amounts of water, only 3 l per 100 kg of body weight, and obtain most of their requirement from roots, bulbs and tubers. They have developed some unique adaptations in the wild to deal with water shortages. During times when water is scarce, they raise their body temper-

ature from about 101°F (35.7°C) to 113°F (45°C), thus starting to perspire and allowing their body to cool off naturally. Gemsbok also will feed mainly at night or early morning when more moisture is in the food source. Blesbok, as mentioned before, are grazers, and prefer open grasslands. In contrast to gemsbok, blesbok need to drink water daily, if possible two or three times a day. Their selective grazing patterns allow them to survive in territories where other grazers would die. Here at Metrozoo, gemsbok and blesbok feed on hay and ADF, a special grain for herbivores.

### **BABY TIME**

In the case of blesbok, their breeding season takes place during the spring, and commonly a single calf is born after a gestation period of about eight months. Blesbok mothers give birth, or "calve," in small herds. The calf can stand in five to ten minutes, and is ready to walk following the mother in 15 to 20 minutes after birth. Gemsbok, on the other hand, breed any time of the year. Their gestation period

takes eight-and-a-half months, resulting also in a single calf. The gemsbok mother, however, isolates (common behavior for a so-called "hider" species as theirs) before calving and remains within a short distance from the concealed newborn. It is common for calves to hide for up to six weeks. Baby gemsbok can stand and walk in 15 to 20 minutes after birth.

At Metrozoo, there is no shortage of babies. Just recently, back in May, two blesbok females and two gemsbok, a female and a male, were born. They have joined their respective families in their paddocks.

### **WHO'S WHO?**

In your next visit to the Zoo you may want to visit our "boks." (The gemsbok family is made up of five females and two males. The blesbok family members are four females and three males.) If you are ready to do some close observation, you may get to know some by their particular characteristics as keepers do.

Now that you know more about them, come say Hi! to our "bok" families.

# UNWELCOMED GUESTS

## THE DANGERS OF INTRODUCED SPECIES

By Bill Zeigler

General Curator

**B**almly breezes off the ocean, year-long comfortable temperatures and lush greenery... Sounds like a tropical paradise? It is! And these conditions draw thousands of tourists here, but they also bring a unique problem for South Florida.

South Florida offers pet lovers what other parts of the United States do not: the ideal conditions for keeping a wider variety of unusual pets. The convenience of being able to keep pets outdoors year-round and the accessibility to a bigger variety of animals has made South Florida the "exotic animal capital of North America."

### YOU DON'T LOVE ME ANYMORE!

The human being is an interesting animal and one of its more unusual characteristics among the animal world is its need to bestow love and affection towards other creatures. But while people generally love pets, they also easily

were escapees from exotic animal dealers while waiting to be shipped elsewhere. All one has to do today is step outside one's house and, within a few minutes, a casual look about will reveal the existence of an introduced or non-indigenous species.

For many people such critters seem like a plus (or accent, if you will) that adds to the tropical setting around us. Unfortunately, what most people do not realize is that, for many native species, such introductions can mean a dramatic change to their world and sometimes a life-or-death struggle.

### WHEN REALITY STRIKES

Ecosystems, when properly functioning, are a complex, delicately balanced system. Each species that is a part of the system fits into the equation to keep the balance. They have evolved relationships with other species to reduce competition for food and shelter. Populations have controls that help keep them in check. When those controls are tampered with or altered, or when a new species that has not evolved with the system is added, the potential for disaster exists.

This is especially true on islands

been pushed out of their territories by the brown anolis and five other species of anolis from Cuba and the Bahamas, the largest one being the Cuban night anolis, or *Anolis equestris*. This anolis was actually first noticed in the '60s, and probably came over as a pet; it is now found over most of central and southern Dade County.

Another example of an introduced animal is the giant marine toad, *Bufo marinus*. First introduced in the late 1950s, the marine toad has spread to all of Dade County and parts of Broward. It will eat anything it can catch, including insects, small snakes, cat and dog food and, more importantly, other toads. This fact has created a problem to two native toads, the southern toad, *Bufo terrestris*, and the oak toad, *Bufo quercicus*. Just 20 years ago, the beautiful chorus of southern toads after a good summer night's rain could be heard throughout Dade; now the chorus has been replaced by the low, thudding vibration of the marine toad who has pushed and eaten its way out to the Everglades.

All together there are over 24 introduced amphibians and reptiles in South Florida that are breeding and expanding their populations. If you include the occasional pythons, boas, tortoises, and iguanas that are found, the list would go over 40 species. But not all of the introduced animals are ground-dwelling.

Today there are over 13 species of parrots in South Florida which are breeding in large numbers. This, of course, does not include a number of other exotic birds, including hornbills, mynahs and other parrots living in Dade County (which is host to at least 30 species of parrots).

Although the parrots and other exotic birds have not created a hardship on other species in regards to territories and food, they do pose a threat to their health. Diseases like Newcastle, a viral disease that affects birds, can literally wipe out whole populations. Such was the case involving chickens in the '60s, when millions of them died because of Newcastle disease from parrots.

The overall message here is that pet owners need to be aware of the dangers and of the required responsibilities of owning exotic pets. When buying an exotic pet first find out how big the animal will get, what it eats, how dangerous it can be and how long it will live. Parrots, for example, will easily live as long as humans, while pythons can grow up to 20 feet and do require large whole food like rabbits.

You also need to be aware of the state laws that govern exotic animals. The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has three basic cate-

gories for exotic animals. Class III includes small animals like parakeets, ferrets, and mice, which do not require a permit. Class II species require a permit before actually acquiring the animal and, in order to obtain it, you must have a proven 1000 hours of experience with that particular species or one very closely related to it. Class II animals consist of small to



Tokay gecko

medium primates, small wild felids (cats) and canids or wolves, jackals, and other dog-related species. Class I animals cannot be kept by private people as pets, unless you already had one as of 1980. They can held for breeding, research and exhibition, and only after obtaining a permit. This class includes tigers, bears, crocodiles, jaguars, rhinos, elephants, and even Komodo dragons, as well as all the large primates. The state also requires that exotic or non-domestic animals be held in cages that meet minimum requirements. Be aware that releasing exotic pets or animals into the state is illegal.

Finally, the responsibility of taking care of a pet, whether it is an exotic animal or a domestic one, is very important. Many people still take their unwanted dog or cat out on country roads, or even into other neighborhoods, and let them go. The results can be as devastating as that produced by any exotic being released. Just remember: A number of times over the past six years, Metrozoo has suffered terribly because of dogs who were turned loose, formed packs and attacked and killed antelopes and other rare animals housed here.

So please be a responsible pet owner!

To find out more about state regulations on exotic and non-domestic animals contact the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission at 620 S. Meridian St., Ferris Bryant Building, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600. Or call 904-488-6253.



Blue-fronted Amazon

lose interest in them. Sometimes it is because they purchased a new, more unusual pet or simply because their pet bit them, the food was too expensive, the pet became too big as an adult, or because they dreaded feeding their pets other animals. The end result is that most exotic pet owners want to eventually get rid of their pets. Unfortunately, the easiest way to do that is to let it go. This is how many exotic or non-native animals now are calling South Florida home.

Of course, there are other ways in which this can happen. Some come in on boats filled with produce and plants—like the small Brahminy blind snake from Southeast Asia—or they

where creatures like rats and goats were introduced, and have devastated populations of plants and caused numerous extinctions. A very well-documented example here in South Florida is the introduction of the brown anolis, *Anolis sagrei*.

Prior to this little animal's appearance in the 1890s, the native green anolis, *Anolis carolinensis*, was everywhere in Dade County. Most people refer to these small lizards as chameleons. True chameleons, however, are of Old World origins. The brown anolis is much more aggressive than the green variety, and today it is rare to see green anolis in Dade. Although they are still here, they have

SEPTEMBER

**9, 11 & 16**  
**saturday, monday & saturday**

**VOLUNTEER SPECIALIST PROGRAM**

Saturdays: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
 Monday: 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
 This is your chance to familiarize yourself with the opportunities available to volunteers. The program consists of a Get-Acquainted Class and two Orientation classes which give an overview of the Zoological Society of Florida and Metrozoo. All those wishing to volunteer must participate in the program. For information call 305-255-5551.

**17** **sunday**

**ANIMAL-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB CELEBRATION**

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 Get ready for school with one of the smartest animals in the jungle: the lowland gorilla. The all-day celebration will honor this magnificent creature at its exhibit. If you are a Member of the Club you can work on a fun project, participate in games and special activities or simply enjoy watching the gorillas. For information call 305-255-5551.

OCTOBER

**14** **saturday (through november)**

**VOLUNTEER DOCENT TRAINING PROGRAM**

The Docent Training is continuing education for volunteers who have gone through the Specialist Program. It consists of eight classes with presentations on general zoology, ecology, and taxonomy focusing on Metrozoo's animal collection, conservation, the environment and other relevant topics. For more details call 305-255-5551.

**15** **sunday**

**ANIMAL-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB CELEBRATION**

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. — Members of the Animal-of-the-Month Club will start celebrating an early Halloween with the blesbok, nature's own masked animal (see article on p. 6). As part of the celebration at its exhibit, Club Members enjoy exciting games and activities, and receive a fun computer puzzle as a gift! For information call 305-255-5551.

**28 & 29** **saturday & sunday**

**THIRD ANNUAL METROBOO!**

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. — The Third Annual MetroBoo! is here once again to delight the young visitors 12 and under. MetroBooers! will have a fun day of costume contests with fabulous prizes, safe trick-or-treating throughout the Zoo, and even a treasure hunt. Don't miss South Florida's wildest Halloween party! And remember: MetroBoo! is FREE for Zoo members! For information call 305-251-0401.

**A MESSAGE FROM...**

**ZOO NOTES**

The Zoological Society of Florida (ZSF), the Metro-Dade Park and Recreation Department and the Metrozoo Division have forged an increasingly positive working relationship. The mutual respect and "partnership spirit" between all entities involved is a huge step forward and augurs well for the eventual formalizing of a mutually advantageous public-private partnership agreement. Board members continue to strongly express their respect for and appreciation of Dr. Chuck Pezoldt and all of the team at the Park and Recreation Department, as well as Al Fontana's new leadership at Metrozoo.

The ZSF Board, and various committees, have discussed at length what is now referred to as a "joint venture" agreement (in spirit, a "partnership," in legal structure, a "joint venture," as no merger of entities is envisioned). It is the desire of the Board of Directors to continue discussions on a joint-venture type of cooperative management for the betterment of the Zoo; to offer continued support to Park's and Metrozoo's executives and staff; and to concentrate our efforts on doing a superb job in all aspects of ZSF activities and programs.

There have been ups and downs this year, but I am confident that the Zoological Society of Florida will enter the new fiscal year in good shape and ready to address the challenges of the future.

Sue M. Cobb  
 President  
 Zoological Society of Florida

- ▶ If you are a wildlife artist and want to participate in the Second Annual Wildlife Art & Awareness Weekend at Metrozoo (sponsored by the South Florida Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers) contact Patty Leon-Singer at 305-253-6151.
- ▶ It's time to go back to school, and kids may be in search of those much-needed supplies. Why not stop by the Toucan Trader or the Elephant Walk, our two gift shops? Remember, they offer an excellent selection, and members get a ten percent discount all year long.
- ▶ You can become a volunteer of the Zoological Society of Florida for Metrozoo! There is a wide range of opportunities waiting for you. For information call the Volunteer Services Department at 305-255-5551. (For class schedule see Calendar of Events above.)
- ▶ Thinking about experiencing the Zoo from a different perspective? Try the guided Tram Tour. This is a comfortable way to get a behind-the-scenes look and learn about our facilities and animals. For information call Metrozoo's Sales Office at 305-251-0401.

TOUCAN TALK



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