

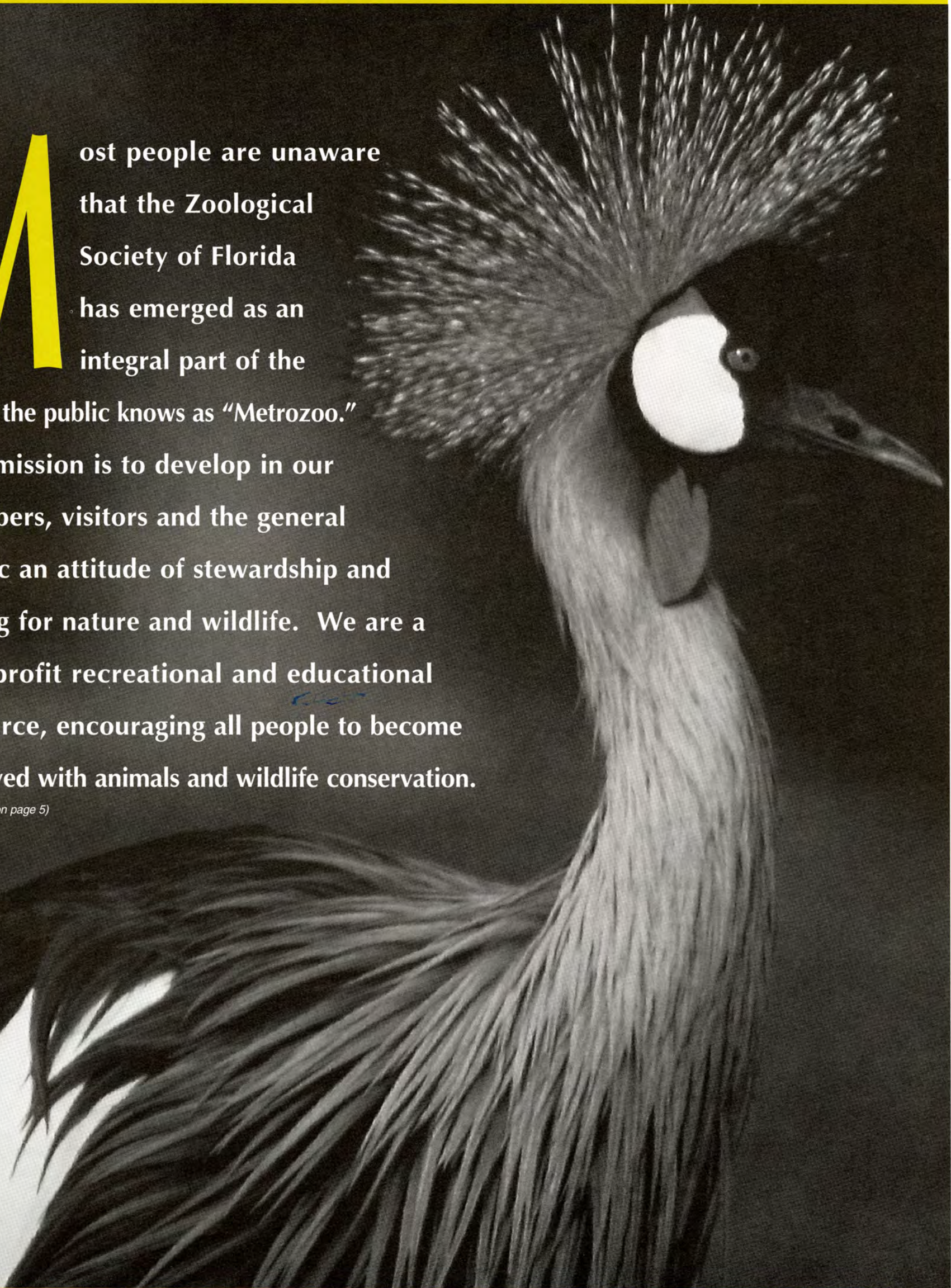
# TOUCAN TALK

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AMERICAN EXPRESS

A TRIP TO THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU!

**M**ost people are unaware that the Zoological Society of Florida has emerged as an integral part of the entity the public knows as "Metrozoo." Our mission is to develop in our members, visitors and the general public an attitude of stewardship and caring for nature and wildlife. We are a non-profit recreational and educational resource, encouraging all people to become involved with animals and wildlife conservation.

*(Continued on page 5)*





Cover Photo: East African crowned crane  
by Steve Walker

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Miami, FL 33177-1499  
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**Zoo Visitor Information**  
305-251-0401

# CROWNED CRANES

## CROWNED BEAUTIES OF METROZOO

By Ricardo Stanoss, DVM  
ZSF Education Specialist  
With assistance from Susan Kong,  
Metrozoo Lead Bird Keeper,  
and *Cranes of the World*,  
by Paul A. Johnsgard,  
Indiana University Press.

In general, cranes are known for their loud calls, spectacular courtship dances, confirmed monogamy, and the care they lavish on their young. And crowned cranes (*Balearica pavonina*), with their distinctive shave brush-like crest and habit of frequently roosting in trees, are among the most spectacular birds in the world.

The open country over most of Africa south of the Sahara (except the Congo Basin) and the driest portions of southwestern Africa are home for this species. Crowned cranes are considered closely related to the ancestral stock that subsequently gave rise to the 14 other species of cranes.

There are four subspecies or races of crowned cranes; Metrozoo houses two of them, the East-African crowned crane and the West-African crowned crane. How to tell them apart? By the skin of their cheek patches! The East-African subspecies has white cheek patches, while the West-African subspecies presents red and white cheek patches. Metrozoo has four pairs of cranes, three East African and one West African; at present only the East African cranes are on display.

Two of the East African pairs and the West African cranes have been actively breeding and have produced six honey-colored babies this year.

Adult males and females look alike. A large, yellow crown covers the top of the head. There are black velvety feathers around the cheek patches, which are bounded below with reddish skin areas. The neck feathers are gray, becoming elongated and pointed toward the base of the neck. The wings have black flight feathers contrasting with the distinctive white upper and under wing coverts (small feathers covering the base of large feathers.) The tail feathers are black. Their eyes are grayish white to pale blue. The bill, legs and toes are black.

Crowned cranes have sharp, fish-hook-like inner toenails used for preening and grooming their feathers – keepers must be wary of these sharp digits when handling the birds!

The crowned cranes' calls are honking and hollow-sounding,

of generally low pitch and with considerable harmonic development. When in distress, their call sounds like "help." The birds forage in grasslands, but require swamps for breeding. Wherever available, crowned cranes use large trees for roosting. They can, however, roost on smaller trees or even shallow water.

*Continued on p. 3*

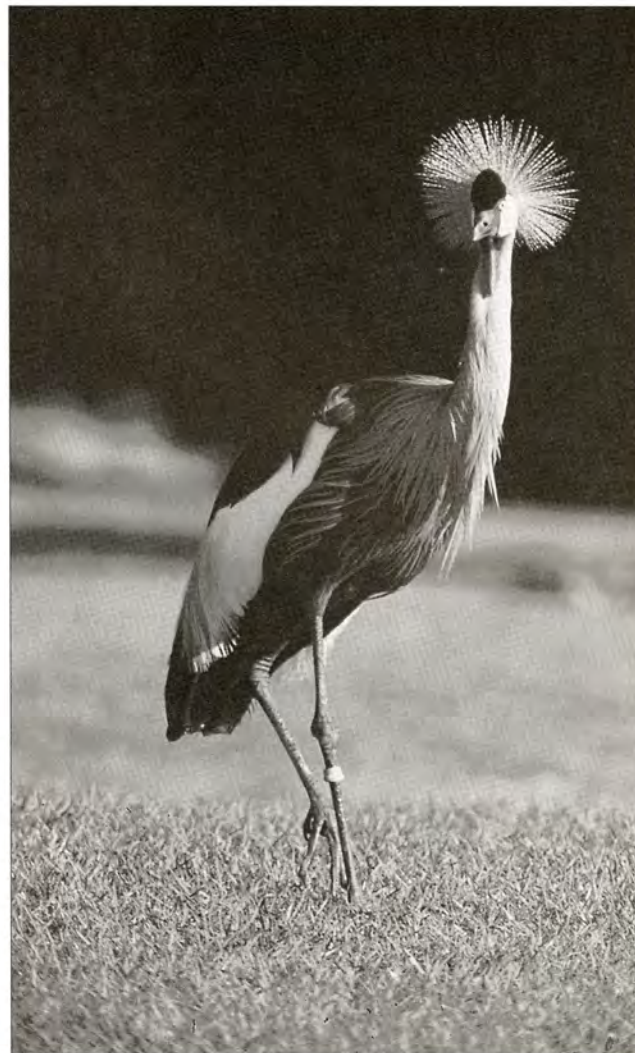


Photo: Steve Walker

Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

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Crowned cranes have a diverse diet composed of not only vegetable material, like seeds, but also animal life such as lizards, grasshoppers, millipedes, earthworms, etc. The birds stamp their feet while walking to disturb and expose insects. They also walk among cattle, just like cattle egrets do, catching the insects disturbed by the moving cattle. It is easier for them to feed in short grass, rather than in long grassy cover.

Crowned cranes don't migrate, but they fly away from the nesting areas during the nonbreeding season. In the wild, the breeding season has two distinctive peaks, November to February and May to July.

Their courtship dance is spectacular, starting with them bobbing their

heads up and down without moving their body. Then, spreading their wings, they jump 6 to 8 feet into the air with legs drooping motionless beneath them. Sometimes, they pick up objects from the ground and toss them into the air. Other times the dancing crane goes completely around his or her mate doing all this, and it is possible to observe both birds dance opposite each other, or one doing the dancing and then the other.

Crowned cranes lay two to four eggs that hatch after being incubated for about a month. The hatchlings wander with their parents looking for food already on their second day of life. Pairs that raise their young successfully retain their family group for 9 to 10 months, then the parents drive the young away and prepare



Photo: Ricardo Stanos

the nest for the next brood. Juveniles attain the adult plumage at about 12 months and reach sexual maturity after 2 years of age.

If humans, cattle or snakes approach the nest, distraction display is typical. This includes dancing on the part of one or both birds. During actual attack, the two members of the pair approach side by side, with

their wings spread, neck arched and head lowered. Fighting behavior includes jumping, wing flapping, kicking, and stabbing with the beak.

Unfortunately there are no good estimates of population numbers for any of the races. Despite its apparently broad distribution, the West-African variety may be the most likely to become endangered.

## K E E P E R P R O F I L E S

# SUSAN KONG

## A KEEPER WHO FLIES HIGH

**S**usan Kong has always been an animal lover, and before getting a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the University of Florida, she dreamed of becoming a national park ranger. But her dreams would take a different turn.

Once Susan graduated she was ready to apply for her much-desired park ranger position. These positions, however, could only be applied for every six months and, because of timing, she had to obtain a temporary job for three months: Metrozoo hired her, and her "temporary job" at the zoo is now in its 15th year!

It was the summer of 1982 when Susan first started working at Metrozoo as a bird keeper, and in 1986 she was promoted to lead bird keeper, the position she still holds. Susan is responsible for all the birds at the Zoo, which includes caring for the paddock birds, the birds at the flamingo lake, the brooder/hatchery, and all off-exhibit breeding pens.

The most challenging part of Susan's job is the incubation and hand raising of baby birds. She remembers fondly the hand raising of an Andean condor ("my favorite birds," she admits) named Ozzy. Metrozoo's pair of breeding Andean condors have had nine babies released into the wild in Colombia and Peru. Their release was part of the California condor Project to prepare the way to reintroduce California condors back into the wild. Andean condors were used as a model to study the feasibility of releasing California condors back into their California and Arizona habitats.

According to Susan, one of the most rewarding parts of her job is when the birds get to raise their own babies. Before that can occur it must be determined whether the pair will be successful in incu-

bating and raising their babies. A lot of factors go into figuring this out: the pair's past history and whether or not there is a possible threat by predators or from other disturbances. If there is a question that the birds might not be successful, the real eggs are pulled from the nest, taken to the hatchery and placed into an incubator, while dummy eggs are placed in the bird's nest. A dummy egg is an egg that is filled with plaster that looks and weighs about the same as the bird's real egg. The parent birds cannot tell the difference, so they will sit and incubate the dummy eggs until hatching time. It is at this point that the pair's real eggs can be given back to them if they have taken good care of their nest. Once the chicks hatch, keepers must monitor their development to make sure everything is normal.

As mentioned before, Susan also is responsible for caring for the birds residing on the paddocks. The care involves morning and evening rounds to ensure that they are feeding and behaving normally. "Birds don't show that they're sick, so subtle reactions can tell us about their condition," adds Susan. "We may occasionally have to return birds that may have flown off the paddock, even though our birds have been 'pinioned,' that is, the tip of one wing has been removed so they can only fly in circles or short distances. Pinioning is done to keep birds on the paddock where they can be admired by visitors."

Susan is a professional who keeps abreast of what is happening in her field. She recently attended The Third Annual International Environmental Enrichment Conference at Sea World in Orlando. The seminar was an opportunity to gather ideas on enriching the lives of our animals in captivity by varying their routine and activities. Susan also serves as treasurer of the South Florida Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, and is a



keeper guide for Zoo Inns, the Zoological Society's very popular overnight program.

But when asked what she is most proud of, she promptly responds "Devin," the 5-year-old son of Susan and her husband, Damien Kong. Damien is the Zoological

Society's senior education specialist.

"Devin loves animals as we do, and in our house we have a few reptiles, a dog and two cats," explains Susan. "I just have a slight problem: He believes everybody has rhinos to play with!," she adds laughing.

# "CARNIVAL KIDS"

The Zoological Society of Florida (ZSF) has joined forces with Carnival Cruise Lines to fund a new environmental educational effort called "Carnival Kids." The program, designed for fourth grade children in two Miami inner city schools (Miami Park Elementary and Carol City Elementary), will run during the 1997-98 school year and will expose participants to the world of wildlife, animal diversity, endangered species, habitat protection, and conservation issues. It also will introduce them to the idea of careers with wildlife and encourage participants to "give back" to their community by sharing their experiences with their school mates through writings, drawings and photography.

The "experiences" will include an outreach visit to the school by means of the ZSF Zoomobile—a customized van utilized for off-site visits bringing props and gentle animals to the kids—, two subsequent trips to Metrozoo for a full day of activities and observations, and finally a field trip to Everglades National Park to bring conservation issues "closer to home." As an important component of the program, there will be training for the teachers of the participating classes.

"The goal of the program is to bring conservation to life for kids in neighborhoods in which they might not be exposed to it," said Nancy Hotchkiss, ZSF director of education. "We will be involved with the students for months, not just a couple of hours, and we hope this will create better global citizens."



Back: Glenn Ekey (ZSF executive director), Nancy Hotchkiss (ZSF education director), Linda Coll (director, Carnival Foundation), Fernando Diaz (assistant principal, Carol City Elem.), E. Suppa (4th grade lead teacher, Carol City Elem.), Lawrence Crawford (principal, Carol City Elem.), and Ricardo Stanoss DVM (ZSF education specialist) with a group of students.

## BREAKFAST WITH THE KEEPERS

The South Florida Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers (SFAAZK) will hold its annual "Breakfast with The Keepers" at the Amphitheater. Participants will have a unique opportunity to enjoy the company of our zoo keepers and some animal friends such as the baby bactrian camel and a few of the "stars" of the Wildlife Show. A continental breakfast will be served. All proceeds benefit the South Florida Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers.

**Date:** Saturday, December 6  
**Time:** 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.  
**Cost:** Adult Members \$15  
 Adult Non-Members \$20  
 Child Members (12 and under) \$8  
 Child Non-Members \$10

## BREAKFAST WITH THE BEASTS-GIRAFFES

### Families

While food may be the last thing on your mind on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, we encourage you to join our tallest residents for a special morning—Breakfast with the Beasts at Metrozoo! A delicious (and light!) continental breakfast will be followed by a special behind-the-scenes look at these graceful residents of the African Plains. Learn who is who and just how much they eat each day! Spaces are limited, so register early.

**Date:** Saturday, November 29  
**Time:** 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.  
**Cost:** Adult Members \$20,  
 Trustees \$15  
 Adult Non-Members \$25  
 Child Members (12 and under) \$8  
 Child Non-Members \$10

## KIDS HOLIDAY CRAFT WORKSHOP

### Ages 5-12

What could be better than hand-made decorations for the holidays! Our youngest Zoo members are invited to bring their creative minds and busy hands to our Craft Workshop. Make seasonal decorations, crafts and gifts for family and friends. Imagine your tree decorated with koalas, geckos, lions and Komodo dragons! Or special holiday memory books decorated with paw prints! Don't miss this only chance to create your own "wild holiday." All supplies and a morning snack included.

**Date:** Saturday, December 13  
**Time:** 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.  
**Cost:** Child Members  
 (12 and under) \$15  
 Child Non-Members \$20

## BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

### Families

He's round, he's jolly and he's here! Although Santa isn't a year-round resident of Metrozoo, he's making a special appearance to greet his friends in South Florida. A "seasonal" continental breakfast will be followed by caroling and a chance to meet Santa himself. Your morning will be complete with a souvenir family photo in a specially decorated folder.

**Date:** Saturday, December 20  
**Time:** 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.  
**Cost:** Adult Members \$12  
 Adult Non-Members \$17  
 Child Members (12 and under) \$8  
 Child Non-Members \$10

## WINTER BREAK CAMP

### Ages 4-12

School is out for winter break, so why not spend your time off with us? Our mini Zoofari Camp is a full week of wildlife adventures that will take you to the wilds of Africa, Australia, Asia and our own backyard of Florida. Complete your experience with a special Zoo passport to document your travels and animal adventures.

**Date:** December 29-31  
**Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
**Cost:** Child Members \$75  
 Child Non-Member \$90

## PHOTO SAFARI IN THE EVERGLADES

### Adults

Get to know a bit of "wild south Florida" on this photo safari to the Everglades. ZSF Education Specialist and wildlife photographer Ricardo Stanoss will lead a one-day expedition to explore the familiar and not-so-familiar wilderness region that is in our own backyard. Photography techniques such as lighting, composition and equipment will be discussed as you capture your own "trophy." Whether you are a lifelong resident or recent migrant to this area, you'll see the "river of grass" with new eyes. Participants will meet at the Zoo parking lot to board the bus. It'll be a full day, so bring lunch and snacks in recyclable containers. We'll provide the beverages.

**Date:** Saturday, December 6  
**Time:** 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
**Cost:** Adult Members \$40  
 Adult Non-Members \$70

## REGISTRATION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 I'm a Member: Membership # \_\_\_\_\_ I'm not a Member \_\_\_\_\_  
**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):**  
 Credit cardholders may register by phone.  
 Check     American Express     MasterCard     Visa  
 Card \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Customer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Program/Session	Name of Participant	Age/Grade	Fee

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

TOTAL: \$

All program registrations subject to a \$10 cancellation fee.

(continued from cover page)

ZSF is the provider of on-going education programs, outreach programs, volunteer services, Children's Zoo management and other essential Zoo functions. Our organization pays for new exhibits and often supervises their construction.

We are dedicated fundraisers who attract and increase philanthropic support to underwrite programs serving Metrozoo's wildlife and Dade County's citizens.

In 1996, approximately one-third of the combined \$8.3 million in revenues supporting Metrozoo's programs was generated by ZSF activities—primarily philanthropic gifts and dues from our approximately 14,000 member households. Metrozoo visitors provided another one-third in admissions and concessions income, and Metropolitan Dade County provided one-third through community tax support.

All of ZSF's expenditures—including administrative overhead—are devoted to supporting Metrozoo, and the Zoo is the beneficiary of every aspect of our operations. ZSF provides cash for specific Metrozoo expenditures such as food for the koalas, emergency needs, the MetroBoo! event, and Zoo employee travel and training. But the majority of our expenditures help provide many of the public programs and capital improvements this community has come to identify with Metrozoo.

### ZSF Provides:

- Education programs such as school programs, Summer Camp, Zoo Inn overnights, Outreach to schools and libraries, and Zoo Clues
- Membership programs including the bimonthly newsletter Toucan Talk
- Children's Zoo operations
- Volunteer programs
- Development programs such as Feast With the Beasts, Adopt-an-Animal and Walls of the Wild
- Gift shop operations

ZSF's track record is one of increasing investment in the Zoo and its future. Our organization spent more than \$2.4 million in 1996 for Zoo programs and support services, a nearly 10-fold increase over 1982. During the 15-year period from shortly after the Zoo's relocation to its present site, ZSF's operating expenditures and other forms of financial support have exceeded \$30 million.

### Financial Support:

- ZSF's operating expenditures for programs and support services \$21,702,857
- Capital improvements \$8,796,752
- Endowments \$2,300,000
- TOTAL** \$32,799,609

ZSF has also helped generate unrealized bequests of \$7,975,000 which, if realized, will bring the total to over \$40 million.

Reprinted from 15 Year Retrospective, 1982-1997 published by The Zoological Society of Florida.

### MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am happy to report to our members and friends that Dade County Mayor Alex Penelas has moved the issues surrounding effective Metrozoo-ZSF collaboration to a front-burner discussion level. Through his personal participation in the dialogue, he has charged our two organizations to work creatively and constructively for the benefit of the wild and wonderful inhabitants of Metrozoo and for our community. The Zoological Society remains enthusiastically committed to the future of Metrozoo, and we will continue to serve as an educational and environmental resource for the fans and friends of our world's wildlife.

This is a most welcome opportunity for me to review the progress and the achievements of the past year.

**EDUCATION MATTERS:** The Zoological Society's public programs are now a year-round, seven-days-a-week operation, reaching Zoo visitors, schoolchildren and South Florida people everywhere. Through the initiative of Education Department staff, curriculum materials are now available in Spanish as well as English, and environmental education is provided in English, Spanish and Portuguese. Our talented Children's Zoo keepers run a petting Zoo which is responsive to the interests of families, respectful of the needs of animals, and inspiring for the wildlife enthusiasts and environmentalists of the future. Our Ecology Theater hosts three lively and informative shows each day, for which the audience topped 36,000 people this past year. Summer Zoofari Camp, with funding from BellSouth, provided

a summer full of activity for South Florida children. Overall, our education programs reached over 51,000 individuals throughout the year.

**NEW FRONTIERS:** Our popular overnight Zoo Inns were at capacity every weekend with 1,700 participants—a sellout through word-of-mouth publicity alone. We secured our new outreach van, "Zoo on Wheels"; thanks to support from American Express, it is being adapted to enable us to reach neighborhoods, libraries and festivals throughout South Florida. One hundred ninety (190!) trained and dedicated ZSF volunteers contribute 40,000 hours of time to the work of our organization and to the enrichment of Metrozoo visits. Our partnership with several "Zoo Neighbors" schools has contributed to the quality of their science curriculum and environmental education programs, and has attracted support from the Lennar Corporation



Jorge Arrizurieta, Huizenga Holdings, Inc., Harold Carter, Jr., All Service Refuse Company Inc., County commissioners Javier D. Souto, Gwen Margolis and James Burke, and Glenn Ekey, ZSF. Photo by Sergio Alsina

and the South Florida Annenberg Challenge. The new "Carnival Kids" program, funded by the Carnival Foundation, will help us apply what we have learned to an audience of inner city children. ZSF also obtained grant support from the National Science Foundation to devise strategies ensuring that Metrozoo visitors represent the diversity of the South

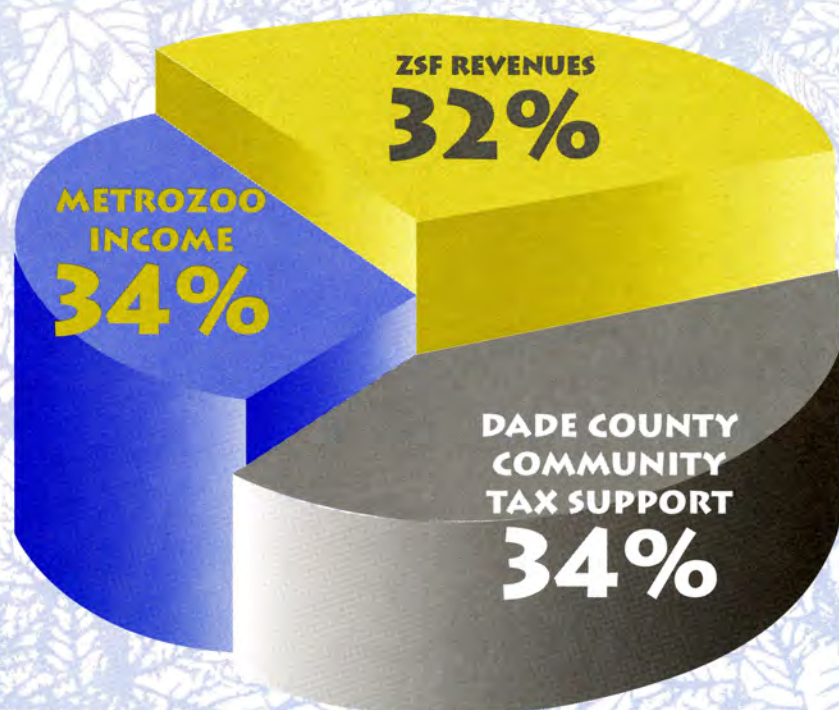
Florida community.

**FUNDRAISING MIRACLES:** Our Development Team succeeded in raising \$1.9 million over the course of the year, reaching their planned goal. ZSF membership now includes 14,000 households, representing some 45,000 individuals. Our Tenth Annual Feast With The Beasts, underwritten by American Express, grossed a record \$331,000. John Alden Life Insurance graciously provided ZSF employees with health insurance coverage through December 1997. Republic Industries, Inc., through its subsidiary, All-Service Refuse Company, donated a Mack sanitation truck and waste compactor which ZSF transferred to Metrozoo to support its waste management department. ZSF received renewed funding from the State of Florida Science Museum Program, from Dade County Public Schools, Capital Bank, Knight-Ridder, Inc. and a host of corporate and foundation supporters. In addition to our education programs, volunteer training and Children's Zoo operations, this funding supported professional development of Zoo staff, emergency needs, routine maintenance and the care and feeding of animals. The profits of ZSF's thriving gift shops made \$166,000 available for Zoo operations.

**WE TOUCHED THE FUTURE:** ZSF funded a public information campaign to help voters understand the benefits of the Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond issue in November 1996. The public responded and the bond issue passed with 67% of votes in favor. The proceeds will provide \$200 million to upgrade parks over 20 years, including \$12 million for the future of our beautiful Metrozoo. And speaking of the future, the Honorary Chair of ZSF's 1998 Feast With The Beasts will be none other than world-renowned anthropologist, Richard Leakey!

All of the above was made possible by the enthusiasm of Zoological Society of Florida members, who continue to be the key to this organization's success. I invite all of our members to visit Metrozoo often and continue to support it in every way possible.

ZSF wishes to acknowledge the generosity of the following benefactors whose financial or in-kind contributions made our work possible during the 1996-97 fiscal year. We are most grateful for all donations. Listed on the following pages are contributors of \$75 or more. We hope that the example set by our donors will inspire others to support the work of ZSF during the remainder of the 1997 tax year and in the future.



Illustrated above are the three sources of revenue supporting Metrozoo's current programs (FY 1996).

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The Cobb Family Fountain over Metrozoo's Flamingo Lake.

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Restaurant  
Carmen & Karl Bishopric  
Bloomingdale's  
William & Mary Bowden  
Bravo Musicians  
Mr. & Mrs. David Brayer\*  
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 Gloria Ziskal & Edward Price, III



Participants from the "Attracting New Neighbors" planning conference funded by the National Science Foundation.

Caroline & Beth Coffey  
 Albert N. Cohen  
 George & Romesa Cohen  
 Kathleen Conner  
 John & Grace Conover  
 Julia & Laverne Cooper  
 Marc & Ruth Cooper  
 Charles R. & Cinthia Corda  
 Ruth H. Crane  
 Elizabeth Crespo & Jesus Tello  
 Mary Cross  
 Patricia Crow  
 Mildred Crowder  
 Patricia Cugno  
 Brian & Carol Cullen  
 Karen Curtis  
 Guillermo Cutié  
 Gerhard & Lori Dahl  
 Gerry Dana  
 Philip Daum  
 Sybil Davenport  
 Kathryn W. & Hector Davila  
 David Debarge  
 Jean Denton & Thomas Schafer  
 Jeff Depalma  
 Charles & Catherine Depass  
 Anna Deppman  
 Richard & Janet Deutsch  
 Tomas Diaz  
 Marie Dillon  
 Walter D. Dixon, Jr.  
 Time & Debra Dorr  
 David & Mary Dumont  
 Tully Dunlap  
 Gerald & Beverly Enerfield  
 Anne M. Engle  
 Robert & Jane Erdman  
 Deborah & Paul Ewh  
 Angela D. Fagen  
 Cathy & Joe Fajardo  
 Richard J. & Daria Ann Feinstein  
 Carole Fenello

Brenda & Benjamin Gooden  
 Debra Goodstone  
 David & Lanna Gordich  
 Mitchell & Sandra Gordon  
 Raymond & Renee Graff  
 Bernard & Jackie Gran  
 Carol Griffin  
 Ken & Jo-Ann Gutermuth  
 Dolores Halliburton  
 Harold Hanel  
 Rick & Beryn Harty  
 Shirley Haverfield  
 Ken & Mary Heilman  
 Kurt C. Heinonen &  
 Charlotte Peterson  
 Rosemary E. Helsabeck  
 Weston F. Hempstead  
 Bob & Carol Henderson  
 Bary & Cynthia Hersh  
 James & Margaret Hobbs  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Hodges  
 R. Rodney Howell  
 William & Andrea Hutchinson  
 Mary J. Irwin  
 Bernard & Catherine Jacks  
 Adrienne Jacobson  
 Edna Jacobson  
 Lee Jenkins  
 Yamile Jimenez  
 Robert & Ruth Johnson  
 Terri Jourdain  
 Adam Karron  
 Gail & Andrew Katlin  
 P. J. Keagle  
 J. Mark Kemper  
 Rhoda Kent  
 Oral P. Kidder, Jr.  
 Jim Kirwan & Karin Zachow  
 Barry Kitzbrunner  
 Warren Klein  
 Richard H. Kline  
 Gary & Jeanette Kobialka



"Pets with Consequences" program at the Ecology Theater.



Summer Camp at Metrozoo.

\* Denotes contributors whose donations include Feast ticket purchases. † Denotes a benefactor who is now deceased.



# LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEW YEAR

**T**his year, the Board of Trustees will take an active position in the vital role it plays on behalf of the Zoological Society of Florida (ZSF). Trustee members support and promote ZSF through a personal annual financial commitment to the organization, and through social and political influence in the community. In addition, Trustees are educational ambassadors to the community, highlighting the urgency and importance of wildlife preservation and conservation.

In return for the ongoing support provided by the Board of Trustees, ZSF has diversified Trustee events and communications. We introduced the newly revamped *Behind the Scenes* newsletter created especially for Trustee members, or as we call them, "Insiders." Beginning this fall a number of fun-filled "For Trustee Only" events are scheduled for members and their families. These activities are designed to provide opportunities for networking and socializing with friends who enjoy the natural wonders of our world. On Saturday, November 8, forty Trustees will be soaking up the sounds and sights of the River of Grass as they venture on an exciting "Habitat Sampler" field trip to the Everglades. Traveling from the wetlands to the world of *haute couture*, on Thursday, November 13, the new Bloomingdale's Aventura is hosting an exclusive wine reception and fashion show by world famous designer Dana Buchman for ZSF Trustees, Directors and contributors. In appreciation of Trustee's "wild" side, and in celebration of the holiday season, ZSF



ZSF Board of Directors members Diana Udel, Ralph de la Vega and Jennifer Getz with Trustee David Klein. Photo: Sergio Alsina

and the Britto Central (Romero Britto's gallery on Lincoln Road) are hosting a big, splashy holiday event on Saturday, December 13. Trustee calendars will be filled with more exciting events in 1998!

Our fundraising goals for the 1997/98 fiscal year are set a little higher to help us honor our commitment to supporting our home, Metrozoo. Effective October 1, 1997, Board of Trustee membership will require a minimum tax deductible contribution of \$1,250. This small increase in Trustee dues will enable ZSF to improve the scope of the Board of Trustees and to make member involvement more productive and enjoyable, while furthering ZSF's conservation and preservation mission.

Joining the Board of Trustees is a

financial commitment and a proactive statement in support of conservation and preservation of wildlife. In recognition of that support, Trustees are invited to utilize their talents and expertise through participation in selected committees such as Events, Development & Marketing, Membership, and Planning. Trustees receive invitations to exclusive "Trustee Only" events, the informative *Behind the Scenes* newsletter, name recognition in the community and all printed materials where Trustees are listed, plus other surprise treats.

As we begin this new fiscal year, please consider becoming a member of this very special support group, the Board of Trustees. Please contact Linda Nadler, associate director of development, at 305-255-5551 for more information.

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- President Elect**  
Edward Soto
- Past President**  
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- Secretary**  
Jason Israel
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Lynn M. Cambest  
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## PERSONALS

## FEAST

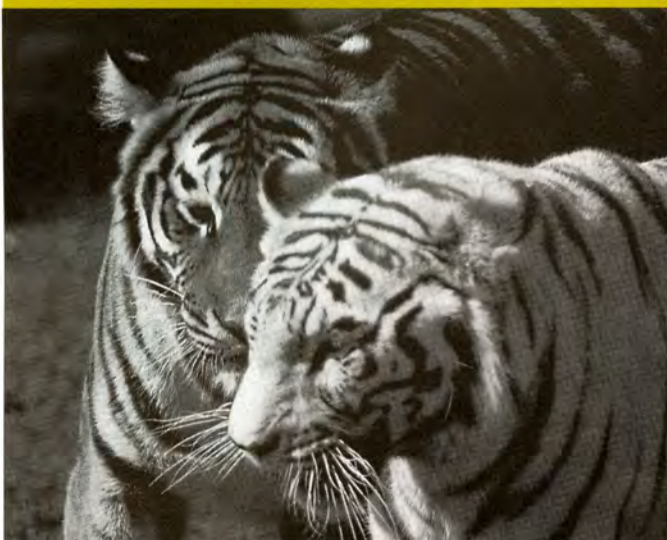


Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

Photo: Sergio Alsina

**THE PURRFECT HOLIDAY GIFT**  
ADOPT A TIGER FOR \$50 AND GET A FREE T-SHIRT WITH THE ANIMAL'S PHOTO. MAKE THIS YEAR'S GIFT ONE TO REMEMBER. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 305-255-5551.  
**(T-SHIRT ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 10)**

"The Balance in Harmony" is a working theme for the 11th Annual Feast With The Beasts, scheduled for Friday evening, March 6 at Metrozoo. In addition to the spectacular culinary event, this year the Zoological Society will be offering other activities including a lecture by Dr. Richard Leakey, world renowned conservationist and anthropologist, at FIU's South Campus, and a special presentation and dinner "by invitation only" with Dr. Leakey at Mary Ann and George Batchelor's home. For more information please call 305-255-5551. In the photo above, Board Member Diana Udel, Feast '98 chair.



# TORTOISES AND TURTLES

## OUR SHELLED FRIENDS



The African spurred tortoise is the third largest species of tortoise, with recorded lengths of over 30 inches and over 200 pounds.  
Photo by Ricardo Stanoss

By Steve Conners

Metrozoo General Curator

**O**f the four major groups of reptiles, tortoises are by far the most popular. Snakes and crocodilians have few admirers.

Lizards fare a little better, but their rapid movements (including up walls and across ceilings) make some people uneasy. But what is there not to like about a tortoise? Their slow purposeful gait, apparently caused by the "shelter" they carry around, their sorrowful eyes and shy demeanor combine to form an irresistibly cute animal. Metrozoo has a diverse collection of these "cute animals," with nine different tortoise species represented, although not all on display. The following article will cover a bit about each of these species and their place in the grand scheme of things.

"So what's the difference between a turtle and a tortoise?" you might wonder. Not much, really. Both are members of the order *Testudines* whose members are all easily distinguished from other reptiles by having a shell, four limbs, and a mouth with a beak rather than teeth. The term "turtle" is generally applied to aquatic species which tend to have a flatter shell and webbed feet or flippers, whereas "tortoises" tend to be mainly terrestrial with a high, domed shell and sturdy elephantine feet. Just to make the situation confusing, we also have a turtle called a "terrapin," which is found along coasts of the southeastern United States.

The little **Egyptian tortoise** is the smallest of the species in the Zoo's collection. The Egyptian tortoises are tan with black markings, and mature when only about five inches in length. As you may have guessed, they are native to the arid

lands of northern Africa, but unfortunately have been wiped out from large portions of their range due to collecting for the pet trade. In fact many of the Metrozoo's specimens were previously pets that came to us in poor condition due to improper care. Egyptian tortoises have recently been afforded legal protection from international trade which should allow them to make a comeback. The Zoo's specimens are held off display in the clinic and at the Children's Zoo, where a few babies have been produced.

Two very similar South American tortoises are presently housed in the quarantine area awaiting future display. These are the **red-footed** and **yellow-footed** tortoises. Both of these species are rather elongated in shape, and have colored scales on the legs which give them their name, although this can be variable (and confusing!). The shell is dark brown or black in both forms,

with a yellow spot in the center of each scute (or scale on the turtle's shell). The record yellow-footed tortoise measured over 30 inches long, but usually they are around 12–18 inches. Red footed average a little smaller. People, in addition to large cats, prey upon both species in their tropical homeland.

Native to eastern and southern Africa, the **leopard tortoise** has a highly domed, straw-colored shell with numerous black spots. Our "leopards" have recently been placed on exhibit with the African spurred tortoises (across from warthogs). These gentle grazers are still abundant in both grassland and arid woodland habitats—still abundant probably because females have been known to lay up to seven clutches of eggs in a year. Their eggs sometimes take over a year to hatch.

*Continued on p. 11*

Continued from p. 10

The world's third largest species is the **African spurred tortoise**. Lengths of over 30 inches and 200+ lbs. have been recorded, but the average size is much smaller. Their plain, tan shell undoubtedly provides camouflage in the drying vegetation found throughout much of the year in their natural habitat. Spurred tortoises are found in areas of northern Africa south of the Sahara and north of the tropical forests. This is a large arid region with a short wet season. The tortoises survive prolonged dry periods by burrowing into the earth and remaining inactive (estivating) until the rains and fresh vegetation return. Unfortunately, the Sahara desert is spreading southward due to overuse by humans of this delicate landscape, indicating possible trouble for this species in the future. Although adapted to endure much drier conditions, our spurred tortoises live and breed very well in the south Florida climate.

Off the eastern coast of Africa lies the unique island of Madagascar. The island is home to many unusual plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. The beautiful **radiated tortoise** is one of these uncommon species. They get their name from the yellow lines which run from the center to the edge of each black scute on their highly domed shell, creating a striking starburst design. Radiated tortoises are endangered for a number of reasons and are being managed in zoos through a Species Survival Plan (SSP) in which Metrozoo is an active participant.

The biggest problem is the skyrocketing human population on the island, which consumes space, vegetation, and other resources at a constantly accelerating pace. These effects are most dramatic in the forested northern parts of the island, but the impact is also felt in the dry southwestern region where radiated tortoises are found. Religious taboos prevent the local inhabitants of this area from eating the tortoises, but not from capturing them for sale to other tribes for consumption. Add to this the problem of poaching and smuggling of specimens for sale to private collectors, and it would appear that the odds are stacked against this innocent reptile.

If you visit the Asian River Life Exhibit you will see a pair of tortoises on display with the Indian muntjac and demoiselle cranes. These are **Asian brown tortoises**, a species not often seen in captivity. We have observed mating behavior in the Zoo's pair but have yet to get any fertile eggs. Asian brown tortoises are one of only a handful of reptile species which guard their eggs. Not only do they guard the eggs, apparently they construct a nest of leaf litter and soil in which to lay the clutch! To our knowledge all other turtle species simply dig a hole and bury their eggs.

The giant **Galápagos** and **Aldabra tortoises** are among the most spectacular animals at the Zoo. They are very similar in appearance and size, with males of both species often weighing over 500 lbs.! Very large tortoises were once found in many places around the world (including

“ Although any species with a small restricted range could be considered at risk of extinction, it appears that the Aldabra tortoise has a pretty secure future. ”

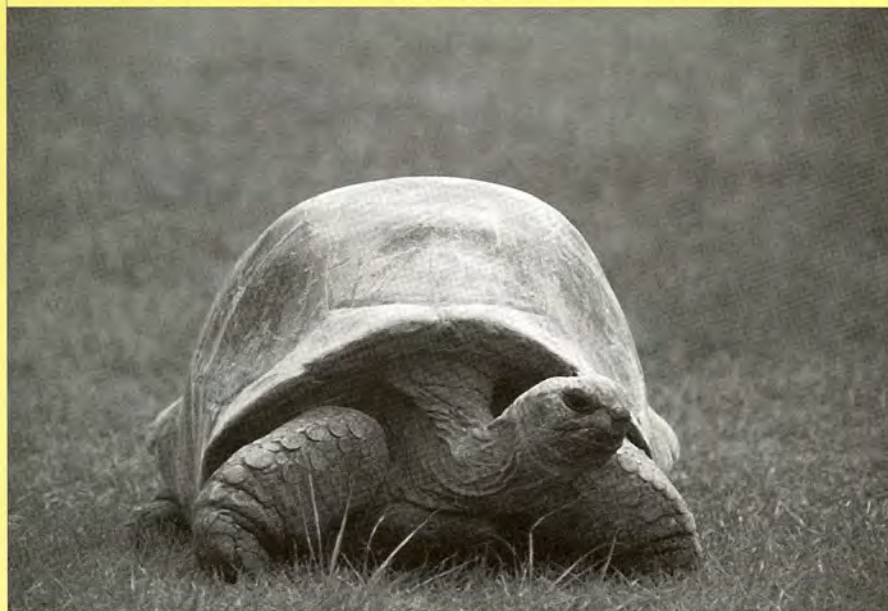


Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

Florida), but now they are restricted to the Galápagos, off the coast of Ecuador, and the Aldabra Atoll and Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean, respectively.

Although any species with such a small restricted range could be considered at risk of extinction, it appears that the Aldabra tortoise has a pretty secure future. The outlook for the Galápagos tortoise is far less certain. Numerous subspecies have evolved on the various islands in this archipelago, and some of these forms are already extinct. One of the subspecies is represented by only one last individual held in captivity at the Charles Darwin

Research Station and is appropriately named "Lonesome George." The remaining populations are threatened by introduced animals such as rats and house cats—which eat eggs and babies—and feral goats—which consume the same plants that the tortoises need for food.

To counter these threats, a captive breeding program has been under way on the islands for many years. This effort returns captive reared tortoises to the wild once they reach a somewhat predator-proof size. Zoos also have begun more coordinated efforts at captive breeding these giants. Many of the tortoises in this country trace their roots back to collecting expeditions that took place in the 1930's. Recent genetic research has revealed the precise local origins of all the specimens of Galápagos tortoise held in U.S. zoos. This information will allow us to pair animals that were originally from the same regional population, and thus duplicate what would take place during natural breeding on the islands.

The popularity of tortoises has led to their decline via exploitation, but it also has been helpful in enacting legislation to conserve them. Like most other wildlife, tortoises face a variety of threats to their future existence. We must devise creative solutions to these threats in order to keep these inspiring animals around. The next time you visit Metrozoo take a moment to pause in front of the tortoises and relax. We can take heart in the fact that whatever trials they may face, tortoises will deal with their problems with a calm determination that has helped them survive for millions years.

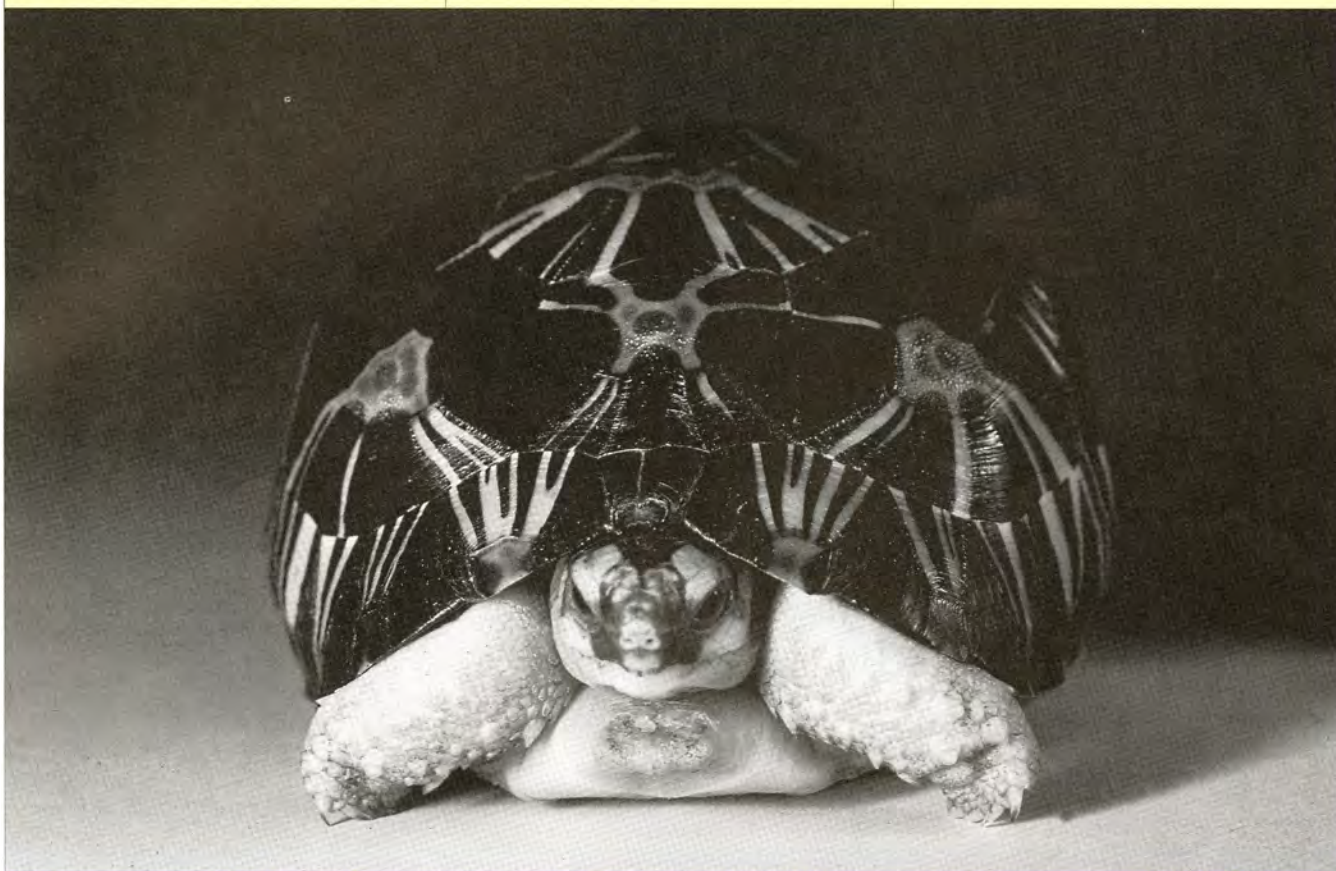


Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

The radiated tortoise is an uncommon species native to the island of Madagascar, off the eastern coast of Africa.

# HAVING A "BEAST" OF A TIME FINDING YOUR HOLIDAY GIFTS?

THEN SHOP AT THE "ANIMAL KINGDOM"  
OF THE TOUCAN TRADER GIFT SHOP  
AT METROZOO.

MEMBERS GET 10% DISCOUNT  
OF ALL PURCHASES.



## THANK YOU!

**A**s we approach the new year, it is a good time to remember all those who have helped the Zoological Society and Metrozoo throughout the years. Paul Neidhart, together with his wife, Lois and son, Paul Jr. ("PJ"), has been a loyal supporter for many years. His business, Curbside Florist, a family-owned full service florist shop, has provided numerous flower arrangements and special discounts for various ZSF events totalling over \$40,000 in in-kind donations. You have probably seen some of the gorgeous floral creations which Curbside Florists has provided for Feast with the Beasts since its very inception.

"I remember visiting Metrozoo as part of a South

Dade Chamber's committee visit (now Chamber South) when the moats were being dug," Paul recalls. "I always loved animals and, since I couldn't come to the Zoo very often, I decided to support the Zoological Society and Metrozoo as vital parts of South Dade."

Paul is committed to helping our community. Besides serving as a ZSF Trustee, he also is involved with other organizations such as the Cultural Council, Inc., the Rotary Club, the Historical Society and Chamber South. "My wife is a born Miamian and I've lived here for over 40 years. It's only fair to 'give back' some of what we have received from the community," Paul adds.

Thank you, Paul—we are proud to call you our "friend."



From left to right: Paul Neidhart Jr., with parents Lois and Paul Neidhart.

# TOUCAN TALK



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