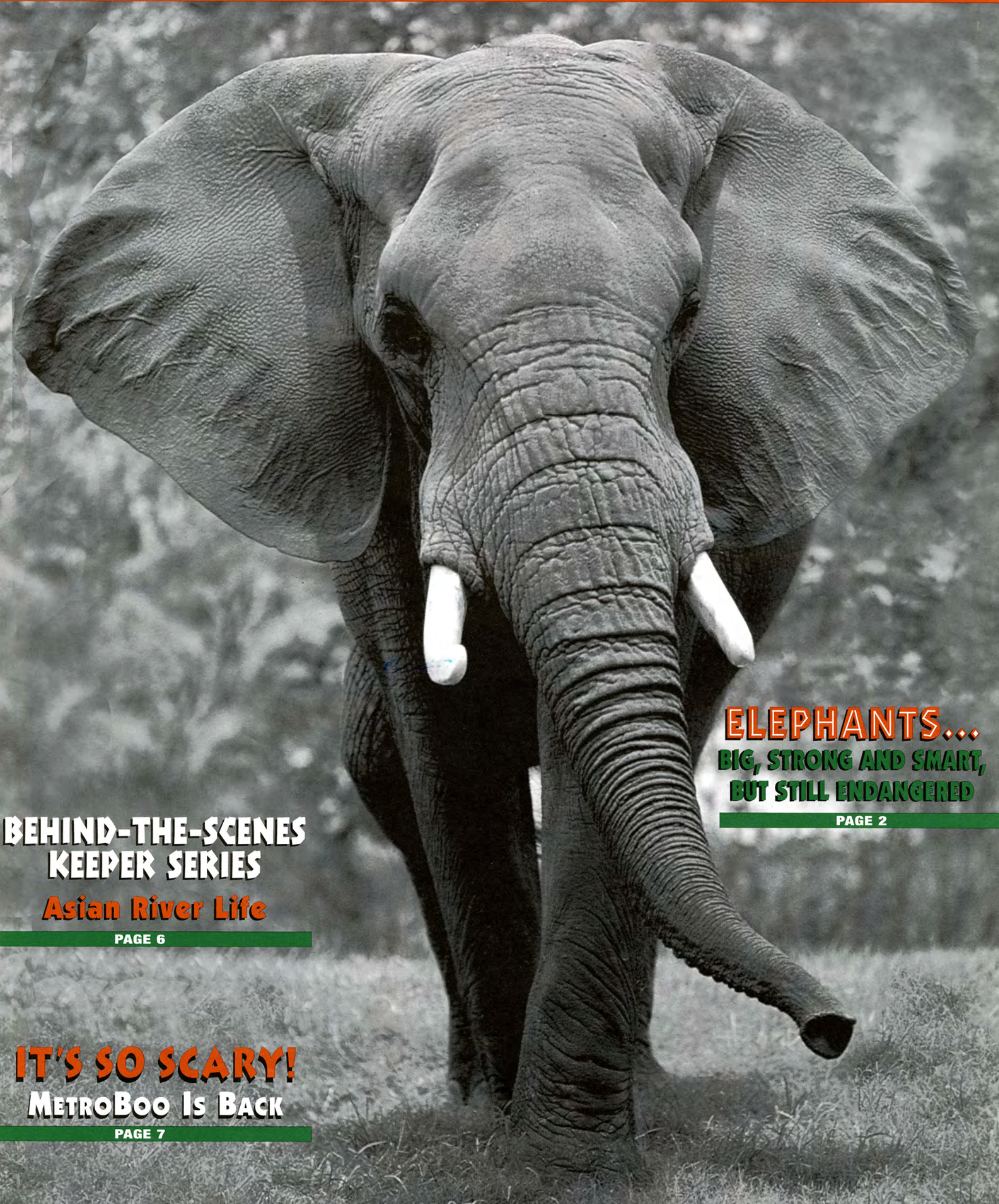


TOUCAN TALK

A TRIP TO THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU!



ELEPHANTS...
BIG, STRONG AND SMART,
BUT STILL ENDANGERED

PAGE 2

BEHIND-THE-SCENES
KEEPER SERIES

Asian River Life

PAGE 6

IT'S SO SCARY!
METROBOO IS BACK

PAGE 7



Cover photo by Ricardo Stanoss


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ELEPHANTS:

BIG, STRONG, AND SMART BUT STILL ENDANGERED

By Steve Connors

General Curator

It's hard to really appreciate how big an elephant is unless you're close to one. It makes me feel downright insignificant. Elephants are serious animals in every sense of the word. They have so many fascinating attributes relating to their size, physiology, senses, and reproduction that numerous books have been written about them. Books have even been written solely about their historical relationship with humans. Lacking that much space, I'll limit my comments to a few points that hopefully will be of particular interest to ZSF members.

So how big is an elephant anyway? As the world's largest land animal, both African and Asian elephants far exceed the size of other pachyderm giants like rhinos and hippos. The size of an adult male African elephant ranges from 4 to over 8 tons! Shoulder height can be up to 13 feet, and if you stretched out the

trunk it might be 23 feet from its tip to the base of the tail. Males are generally larger than females and African elephants tend to be larger than Asian elephants. However, there is considerable variation. For instance "Dalip" our male Asian, at 5 tons, is larger than all of the Africans; "Machito" our male African is about the same size as the female "Peggy" and only a little bigger than the other female "Mabel". Tusks add to the imposing grandeur of these beasts and it is interesting to note that the largest on record was just over 11 feet long and weighed 235 pounds. Dalip's respectable set of ivories measure in at about 3 feet a piece.

An animal of these proportions has to consume large quantities of food just to maintain its body weight let alone grow, and elephants grow their entire (60+yr.) lifespan. Metrozoo's elephants each consume about 200 pounds of hay, 35 pounds of grain, and 17

Continued on page 3



Photos: Ricardo Stanoss

Continued from page 2

pounds of carrots daily. Treats include assorted types of browse cut on the grounds along with the occasional loaf of bread or special produce snack. All of this is washed down with 50-60 gallons of water. Their somewhat inefficient digestive system produces around 3 wheelbarrow loads of solid waste daily. They are definitely high maintenance behemoths.

It is safe to assume that whatever an animal eats in captivity will be less than what it would consume if it were living in the wild. In nature animals expend more energy looking for food, water, mates, etc. than they need to in the zoo, and therefore in the wild they need to eat more. Knowing how much elephants eat, it's easy to see how quickly they are affected by loss of their natural habitat. They travel long distances to satisfy their hunger and thirst. Thus large tracts of land are required in order to satisfy the needs of even a small population. This often brings them into conflict with farmers who grow their crops in or adjacent to, areas where elephants reside. Crop raiding elephants are commonly shot, and the loss of habitat to agriculture squeezes them out of areas they have occupied for thousands of years.



Another threat to elephant survival is of course poaching for ivory. This is more of a problem in Africa partly because in that species both sexes have tusks. Poachers wiped out hundreds of thousands of elephants on that continent in the '80s, eventually reducing their numbers to less than half of what they were in the early '70s. A worldwide ban on ivory sales, that was in effect up until recently, resulted in a noticeable reduction in poaching. Now that

the ban has been partially lifted, it remains to be seen whether wildlife agencies will be able to adequately protect their herds from the predicted resurgence in poaching.

No discussion of elephants would be complete without a mention of their intelligence. They are very smart and this contributes to their distinct individual personalities. All of the zoo's elephants know and respond to between 30 and 40 different commands. Their innate curiosity, combined with a strong and dexterous appendage, gives these animals a vast potential for getting into mischief.

Virtually any object accidentally left within their considerable reach will become a toy or "food item".

This includes rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, ladders, hoses and fishing rods. Bits and pieces are

often all that remains of anything they get hold of. Destroying things can be sort of a hobby. Peggy made a game of demolishing large concrete pillars at one end of the exhibit until they were braced with steel. Her distinct personality was evident one time when she refused to come into the barn at the end of the day. Usually she's anxious to come in to eat, but on that occasion nothing could entice her to come in. Finally we realized one of the keepers had been handling African wild dog pups earlier in the day and she must have smelled them. Although none of the other elephants seemed to care, something about the dog scent scared the wits out of Peggy.

Perhaps this brief introduction to our elephant collection will give you a little better understanding and appreciation of these truly awesome beasts. Like all animals the more you learn about them the more interesting they become. They have had a close relationship with humans throughout history that continues to this day. (In fact Peggy has recently volunteered to write a column for Toucan Talk!) Hopefully we will ensure their survival through the next century and beyond.



Photos: Ricardo Stanoss

STAFF PROFILE

Eric Stephens Miami Metrozoo Director



Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a zoo director? **Eric Stephens**, Metrozoo's newly appointed director, can answer many of your questions. A native of Illinois, Eric earned a B.S. in Park and Recreation Administration from Illinois State University in 1979. He arrived in Miami in January of that year, to intern with the Miami-Dade

County Park and Recreation Department. Subsequently, he took the position of Administrative Officer at Miami Metrozoo. Today, after serving Metrozoo for the past 19 years, Eric looks with pride upon our Zoo's accomplishments.

"When I first began," says Eric "Metrozoo was open only on weekends allowing visitors to tour the 25-acre Preview Center." Two decades and one devastating hurricane later, Metrozoo operates on 290 acres with 40 more to be developed. A new endeavor, called "Tropical America", will feature diverse fauna of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Other projects under development that Eric is involved with are the rebuilding of

the Aviary and the completion Education Court. Those are a few things that keep Eric busy, not to mention the daily operations of the Zoo. Every week, Eric makes time to speak with and assist several staff members both from Metrozoo and the Zoological Society of Florida with their daily undertakings.

In addition to animal display and care, there are many other facets to running Metrozoo. These include visitor experience, maintenance, security, education, administration, etc. How does he do it all? Eric has a deep conviction that an institution like Miami Metrozoo should take the lead in conservation, education, and research. This belief and his love for our environment motivates him to juggle his various duties.

Because of the strong commitment to conservation, Eric is very active with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). He chairs the AZA Board of Regents and has served on the Charter and Bylaws and Membership Committees. As a member of the Board of Regents, he is a key player in organizing and overseeing the annual activities of the AZA Schools for Zoo and Aquarium Professionals.

Eric has also been instrumental in the establishment of Metrozoo's Conservation Committee, whose purpose is to support research and conservation, both inside and outside of the zoo. With the recent partnership between Miami Metrozoo and the Zoological Society of Florida, Eric envisions a very bright future for our zoo. "The past few months" he says "prove how much you can accomplish when you work together."

What does the zoo director do when he is not at the zoo? He spends time with his family, wife Sandy, son Ben, and daughter Emily. Both children favor sports like football, baseball, basketball, and roller hockey, so faithful Dad dutifully accompanies them to practice and participates through coaching.

RECENT ARRIVALS

May, June 1999

BIRTHS

- 0.1 Grant's gazelle
- 0.1 Impala
- 0.1 Addax
- 1.0 Bactrian camel

ACQUISITIONS

- 0.1 Tree kangaroo
- 1.0 Malayan sun bear
- 1.0 Cheetah (king)

HATCHINGS

- 0.0.3 Red footed tortoises
- 0.0.3 Radiated tortoises
- 0.0.34 African spur tortoises
- 1.0.1 Red-crested pochards
- 0.0.2 Demoiselle cranes
- 1.2 Mandarin ducks
- 0.0.1 Sacred Ibis
- 0.1 Black neck swan
- 0.0.1 North American ruddy duck
- 0.0.2 Abyssinian ground hornbills
- 0.0.1 Abdim's stork

- *1.0 = Male
- 0.1 = Female
- 0.0.1 = Unknown gender



LIONS, TIGERS, & BEARS

Meet the lion, tiger, and bear zookeepers to learn about these exciting animals! After the classroom orientation, it's off to a night tour where you will meet the fabulous animals up-close. Refreshments and snacks will be served following the evening tour.

Date: Friday, September 10, 1999
Time: 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Cost: \$15.00 members. \$20.00 non-members Adults 16 and over only
Pre-registration required



Photo: Carmen T. Fernandez

LEAPING LIZARDS

Lizards are a group of reptiles that have many looks. Learn what makes a lizard a lizard and all the different types we have here at Miami Metrozoo.

Date: Saturday, September 11, 1999
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Cost: \$8.00 members. \$10.00 non-members Children 4 & up
Pre-registration required

SOME LIKE IT HOT

Zookeeper Adam Stern will show you the correct captive environment for animals that have special needs or require special care, such as reptiles, arthropods, amphibians, and small mammals. So, if you have or are planning to acquire any of these animals, you won't want to miss this one!

Date: Saturday, October 23, 1999
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Cost: \$8.00 members. \$10.00 non-members Children 8 & up
Pre-registration required

GOING APE

Most people call them monkeys, but monkeys they certainly are not. Orangutans and chimpanzees are apes. Find out what makes each of our great apes so special!

Date: Saturday, October 9, 1999
Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Cost: \$8.00 members. \$10.00 non-members Children 10 & up
Pre-registration required



Photo: Carmen T. Fernandez

DID YOU KNOW?

By Martha Thaden, Lead Keeper

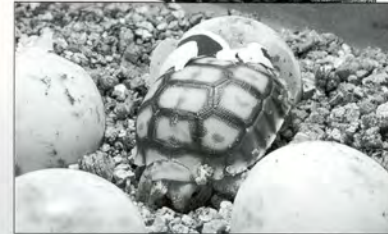
You may not realize it but our quarantine area serves many functions other than that of monitoring the health of the incoming and outgoing animals to and from Metrozoo. The area is also home to many different reptiles, including crocodile, turtle, and tortoise species which are set up in "off-exhibit" situations for breeding purposes. The quiet, undisturbed pens provide ample room and privacy for sometimes hard to breed species.

One of these groups includes our smaller land tortoises, such as the radiated tortoise from Madagascar – a critically endangered species, the red-footed and yellow-footed tortoises of South America, and the spurred and leopard tortoises of Africa. Every year, hatching begins as early as January, and continues until mid to late August when the last of the hatchlings emerge from their eggs.

The number of eggs laid depends on the species of tortoise. For instance, the radiated tortoise only lays 2 to 4 eggs in each clutch and often lays only 1 or 2 clutches per season. In the case of the spur tortoise, she is capable of laying 20 eggs in a clutch and may lay 2 to 4 clutches in a season.

The number of eggs from each clutch that hatch is dependent on a number of factors such as fertility, temperature, humidity, and the original condition of the egg. Sometimes "mom" can accidentally break some of her eggs in the process of laying them, or while covering up the nests with soil.

So...how are we doing this year? Are we having any success with our breeding program? You bet we are! (Check the hatchings on page 3)



Photos: Dolores Batchelor

SCHOOL'S OUT...ZOO'S IN

MINI CAMP ADVENTURE PASSPORT SERIES

Our mini day camps are full of excitement and wonder! Don't miss our passport to the world of the wild. We have a series of scheduled stops to discover animals from around the world.

Departure Dates:	Times:
September 20, 1999	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
October 15, 1999	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
November 11, 1999	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
January 28, 2000	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
March 31, 2000	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
April 21, 2000	9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Cost: Individual departure dates
 Members \$45.00 Non-members \$55.00

Mini Camp Adventure Pack (includes all six departure dates)
 Members \$240.00 Non-Members \$300.00
 By registering for the Adventure Pack you will save \$30.00.
 To take advantage of the Adventure Pack you must be registered by September 17, 1999 (no exceptions).

FAMILY SAFARI NIGHT

Have you ever wondered what it is like to sleep at the Zoo? We have a special evening planned for you and your family. Your safari begins at 6:00 p.m. when you are greeted by one of our Zoo Educators. A special pizza party will keep you entertained until dark when it will be time to explore the Zoo at night! Your program ends the following morning at 8:00 a.m. after a continental breakfast. So bring your sleeping bag and get ready for a wild adventure!

Date: Friday, September 17, 1999
 Saturday, September 25, 1999

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Cost per person: members \$25.00
 non-members \$35.00

REGISTRATION FORM

Space is limited for all our education programs...so call (305) 255-5551 and register early to secure your spot.

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 card holders 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.

TOUCAN TALK'S ANIMAL SERIES CONTEST

ZSF

All ages

Here is the fifth issue of "Toucan Talk's Animal Series" showcasing the largest of the duiker species, the yellow-backed duiker. The past four issues this year have brought to you different animals with lots of interesting facts about them. Read and collect all six issues this year and, at the end of 1999, look for our contest questions about the animals in the series. The winner will enjoy a special "Behind the Scenes Tour" with Metrozoo's Ron Magill.

YELLOW-BACKED DUIKER

Cephalophus silvicultor

The largest of the duiker species, also called the giant duiker, has a dark velvety brown coat with a patch of yellowish orange erectile hairs that grow in a wedge shape along its backbone. It also has a well-developed crest of hair on their forehead between their short, thin, pointy horns. They weigh up to 80 kg, and are between 55-87 cm tall. Giant duikers are found in the equatorial rainforests of West Africa at low and medium elevations.

Duikers are omnivorous: They eat fruits, seeds, plants, small rodents, birds, frogs, snakes, eggs, and carrion. Duikers live alone or in small family groups with one male.

Mating occurs in spring, and after a gestation of around 120 days, a single calf is born. The calf receives minimum maternal care and spends most of its time alone, hidden, or 'tucked' away by the mother in protected spots.

Giant duikers have many predators, including leopards, jackals, large birds of prey, and pythons. They have little to offer the trophy hunting human, but are hunted for their flesh, which is a large part of the local meat ration.

The name 'duiker' is from a Dutch word meaning 'diver' as the reaction to disturbance is to instantly dive into or under the thick brush or into streams for cover. The short forelegs, longer hindlegs, and arched body shape enable duikers to slip easily through dense vegetation.



Photo: Ron Magill

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

- September 10: Lions, Tigers, and Bears
- September 11: Leaping Lizards
- September 17: Family Night Safari
- October 9: Going Ape
- October 23: Some Like it Hot
- October 30: MetroBoo!
- October 31: MetroBoo!

For details on Educational Programs see page 4

For details on MetroBoo! see page 7



Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

ASK PEGGY!



Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

Dear Peggy:

Why are white rhinos called white? They look the same as other rhinos.

The earliest settlers to Africa were the Dutch, in their early descriptions of the "wide" mouthed rhino, the way they said the word "wide" was misunderstood to be "white". This mistake led to the name white becoming the name that is accepted.

Twenty-two-year old Peggy, one of our African elephants, is answering any animal questions our young readers may have. Peggy will select the two best questions to be printed in the next *Toucan Talk*, and the children will receive a photo of Peggy herself, along with an autographed copy of her answer.

Dear Peggy:

How does a flamingo eat?

A flamingo eats by turning its head upside down and while moving its head from side to side, uses a spiny tongue that acts like a piston to pump water and mud into the bill, which acts like a filter to trap food and allow the water to pass through.

Questions may be sent by mail to: Ask Peggy • C/o Zoological Society of Florida • 12400 SW 152 ST. • Miami, Florida 33177

Behind-the-Scenes Keeper Series

Story by Sandi Redlich, Zookeeper
Photos by Ricardo Stanoss

Asian River Life



Keeper Tom Condie feeding the small-clawed otters.

Last issue of **Toucan Talk** we introduced to you the Behind-the-Scenes Keeper Series in which we brought you the Tiger Area. This issue we bring you the Asian River Life Exhibit.

Tom Condie and Linda Cunningham, two very dedicated zookeepers at Metrozoo, work at the Asian River Life Exhibit, which opened to the public in 1990. There you'll find a fascinating variety of animals such as small-clawed otters, Komodo dragons, blood pythons, muntjacs, clouded leopards, an Indonesian water monitor, and a wide range of birds, fish, and tortoises.

Linda and Tom begin their workday at 7 or 9 am, and at that time some of the animals are still sleeping! The first thing they do is check on each animal and confirm that

everyone is okay. It's necessary for both keepers to maintain a routine that is familiar to the animals. Noticing physical and behavioral changes is a vital skill for any zookeeper and it's important that Tom and Linda note things that appear out of the ordinary. This can be a change in the animal's behavior or something physical like traces of blood, a limp, or some type of injury. Keepers also record food and water intake on a daily basis because loss of appetite could mean that an animal is not feeling well. If anything ever seems unusual the keepers will inform the Senior Keeper for Asia, Dave Jimenez, and Zoological Supervisor Alice Gilley. Any medical concerns are reported to the Zoo Veterinarian, Dr. Chriss Miller. All of them work together to treat any problems that arise. Linda and Tom are sometimes given the responsibility to medicate any sick animals and they occasionally assist the veterinarian with medical procedures.

The morning routine quickly progresses and once Linda and Tom have completed the morning routine, they can go on to other important things—like serving breakfast! Feeding the otters and all the other animals is one of Tom's favorite things about being a zookeeper. He enjoys watching the anticipation of the animals around feeding time because as he says, "They just seem so happy to see me!" The animals are usually fed at different times and keepers are responsible for distributing all the food. Once breakfast has been served and all exhibits are prepared, the animals can be moved out onto display. Tom and Linda can then begin another important part of their job...cleaning! All cages, pens, stalls, and enclosures must be thoroughly cleaned and this usually keeps Tom and Linda busy for a good part of the day. With 23 Komodo dragon babies plus all the other animals, cleaning can be an extensive task! These two keepers also extend their chores beyond animal maintenance. Display windows must be cleaned, pumps must be serviced, and exhibit pools must periodically be cleaned out. They tend to the plants, make sure the walkways and exhibits are neat and orderly, and perform various other tasks that will better the overall appearance of their area. They also conduct "keeper talks" and everyday at 12 p.m. they feed the otters a treat of live fish and crickets. The rest of the afternoon is spent cleaning and working on any additional projects in the area. Any free time that Tom and Linda have is used for animal observation. At the end of the day the animals are returned to their cages and enclosures. Dinner is served and a "night report" is filled out. This is a form that each keeper must submit every day. It includes information on the animals and allows Tom and Linda to keep records on the sick, injured, and medicated, as well as births, deaths, transfers, etc.

The days are sometimes long and very busy, but Tom and Linda each share a respect for their careers and the animals they care for. Although Tom admits to being very fond of Jack, the adult Komodo dragon, both keepers will confess that all animals at the Asian River Life are their favorite because of their diversity. Each species offers a unique quality or behavior that makes them special. Tom and Linda care and provide for them while making a positive contribution to wildlife conservation.



Linda and Tom with Komodo babies.



Tom checking up on baby Komodo dragons.

The morning routine quickly progresses and once Linda and Tom have completed the

ZOO NOTES

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DOCENT

By Claudia Steadman

Docent? – What? Who? ... Docents, Latin root meaning "teacher," are the educational and interpretive voices of the Zoo. These trained volunteers use their knowledge and skills to educate the public and to assure pleasant experiences for Zoo visitors and the community. To be a docent, a positive attitude is one of the primary attributes, and an attitude check begins with the dawn of each new day. Corny, maybe, but it works for me!

Without going into the details of one's personals, I have a trifle cup of caffeine, do a little personal reading, and then take care of my critters at home. Each one needs personal attention, from the five cockatiels (possibly seven by publication date), to my sweet guinea pig, to my ole faithful three dogs. The bird and guinea pig cages need to be cleaned, the ears on the dogs need to be checked, and, of course, their little bodies need to be fed. Then it's off to the Zoo to whatever position I've signed up for the day.

There are a lot of Docent positions. One of my favorites is feeding or cleaning in the ARC (Animal Resource Center,) located at the Children's Zoo. When I first heard of ARC, I thought of Noah's Ark, and it can be compared to that, with mammals, reptiles, and birds needing to be fed and their homes needing to be cleaned. Feeding – using your skills of Emeril or Wan Kan Do, with the chopping of fruits, greens and veggies. Cleaning – just what it says – cleaning the enclosures of the animals used for our Outreach programs. These two positions usually start off early, about 7:30 am, and last approximately two to three hours depending on your chopping or cleaning skills. Most docents also include some time to talk to the animals... you can be a real Dr. Doolittle in this area.

Next, a possible shift in the Information Booth may be on my schedule. Here I can observe people walking by looking perplexed at their maps, trying to decide what to do or which way to go. I try to catch their eye, wave them over, and ask if they need help. I'll advise them of

any activities going on that day, or new animal births, and I'll explain the map details. I enjoy the Info Booth, especially when accompanied by Sydney, one of the cockatoos from the ARC. I set her on her perch, and she's a draw to the booth, where the public, especially the children, enjoy Sydney's vocabulary; her famous "I love you" pleases everyone.

Another Docent position I might select is Station Interpreter – just what it says – stationing myself in front of an exhibit and talking to the public about the animals displayed there.

Also, I may choose to work in the Children's Zoo petting yard, where my role is controlling the crowd, watching for little munchkins running around, and to be the champion "pooper scooper." The yard consists of sheep, pot-bellied pigs, and a few chickens. We try to keep the yard "dropping-free."

Finally, I could sign up for an Outreach Program, where the docents take biofacts and live animals to schools, libraries, homebound students and nursing homes and teach about animals and conservation.

A major part of a Docent's job is public relations; being positive and proud of the Zoo helps promote zoo relations with the patrons. Docents enable the Zoo to reach wider audiences, communicate on an individual level, and provide special programs. If I look back at why I wanted to become a Docent, it was to help people and to be around animals. As a Docent, I have shared my knowledge and love of animals with the people I have met at the Zoo.

If you are interested in learning more about our Volunteer Program, call 305-255-5551 ext. 124.



Photo: Carol Lang

Use Your Credit to Help the Zoo

If you use credit cards, you have an option that will help Miami Metrozoo: **Discover** makes available a "National Alliance for Species Survival Card." A percentage of each purchase made with this card benefits The National Alliance and your choice of a participating AZA-accredited zoo or aquarium.

The sign-up information asks for a designation of the cardholder's favorite zoo and that's where you check 039 for Miami-Metrozoo. No annual fee, a balance-in-full repayment grace period of 25 days, and an APR of prime rate plus 8.9% are other features of this card.

1-800-586-6911 is the number to call to inquire about the National Alliance for Species Survival Card.

JUNGLE JOG IS BACK

After a "leave of absence," the popular 5K race and walk at Miami Metrozoo, Jungle Jog, will again take place February 20, 2000. The Rotary Club of Coral Gables and the Zoological Society of Florida will organize the event. For information on registration call Split Second Timing, Inc. at 954-384-7521, or check its web site: www.split-secondtiming.com.

ZSF is "Twice Blessed" Through Matching Funds

Your employer may have a matching gifts program to amplify your gift to ZSF. Matching gifts are made by companies that provide a corporate contribution equal or proportional to a donation from one of their employees to a non-profit organization. Thus if you make a contribution to the Zoological Society of Florida your company may match your gift with a donation of equal size. The matching gift policy may include only current employees, but in many cases it also covers gifts by retirees of the company.

The company may match the employee's donation 1:1 or may determine its matching amount by some other formula. Some companies exempt fund raising event tickets from their matching gift policy while others consider any form of donation, including tickets, eligible for matching.

Every company that has a matching gift program has its own procedures and forms and they provide that information to their employees. A good place to start is in your employer's human resources department -- if the information is not available in that office, they can certainly steer you to the right department. Naturally, ZSF will provide any information your employer's matching gift program requires us to make available about our organization.

Purple Martins

Story and Photos by Dolora Batchelor

Purple martins are the largest member of the Swallow Family. They are about six inches long, and the only species of martin in North America. Adult males are dark iridescent purple with black wings and tail. Adult females are lighter in color; their breast and forehead are grayish with a white belly, and their crown and back are iridescent purple with black wings and tail. There are only subtle differences between subadult males and subadult females. Adult plumage appears when an individual is at least two years old.

Purple martins are migratory, spending winter as far south as southern Brazil. During the spring nesting season they will migrate as far north as central Canada. They nest once a year and begin arriving in south Florida, their southernmost breeding range, in late January. The farthest fliers arrive in central Canada in early May. Scouts arrive first, looking for the most desirable nest sites. Purple martins usually return to the same nest site occupied the year before. Time of migration is determined by the weather and by the availability of food.

Like most of the Swallow Family, the purple martin's diet consists mostly of airborne insects such as bees, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, flying ants, damselflies, mayflies or mosquitoes. They are sometimes observed on the ground eating ants. The diet changes over the course of the breeding season. For feeding the nestlings, a small ball called a bolus is formed when many small insects are compressed to the roof of the adult bird's mouth by its tongue. This is fed to the nestlings up until 15 days of age at which time they are fed larger insects such as whole dragonflies.

Purple martins are colonial nesters, and east of the Rockies they are almost completely dependent on humans for their housing. The birds sometimes nest in natural sites such as dead trees with woodpecker holes. In the southwest, purple martins are not dependent on humans for housing and use mainly cactuses for shelter.

They exhibit a variety of territorial, defense, and courtship behaviors, as well as vocal and visual displays. Other behaviors such as preening and stretching, sunning, bathing and drinking are important for feather maintenance. Nest building, egg laying and incubation, nesting, leaving the nest, and pre-migratory communal roosting all take place during the nesting period in North America.

This past spring has been eventful for martins at Miami Metrozoo. A donated 12-unit, aluminum, octagon martin house was erected in early March. The house is attached to a 16 foot galvanized pipe in an open grassy area between our serval and Arabian oryx paddocks. The birds began arriving one week later and completed their nesting cycle by mid-June. Five to six pairs nested and produced over 14 chicks! Not bad for our first attempt.

METROBOO!

The annual MetroBoo! Will soon be here to delight young visitors 12 and under. MetroBoo!ers will enjoy a fun day of costumes and contests with fabulous prizes and safe trick-or-treating throughout the Zoo. There will be plenty of delicious treats for the kids. Don't miss South Florida's wildest Halloween party on Saturday and Sunday, October 30 and 31! For information call (305) 255-5551.

Free admission to one child in costume with each paying adult MetroBoo! is free for ZSF members.



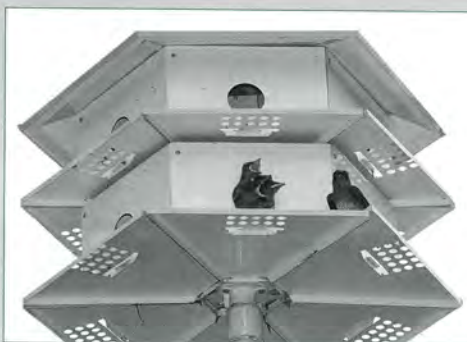
IT WAS SOOOO COOL!

Visitors to Metrozoo this summer were treated to some surprises during the Cool Zoo Summer Experience. Newly installed thatch reed umbrellas, misters, and volunteers randomly distributing ice water helped our visitors keep their temperature down and energy up. On July 3, 4 and 5, live music, face painters, clowns and other activities for children livened the atmosphere. "This is just the beginning of the many wonderful plans we have in store for Metrozoo," said Glenn Ekey, ZSF executive director. "We want people to know Miami Metrozoo is the place to visit all year round."



Photos by Ricardo Stanoss

If you would like to attract purple martins to your property, there are five important things to consider. First, make sure you live in the summer breeding range. If you live east of the Rockies you have a very good chance since they nest mainly in human supplied housing. Second, you will need an adequate open feeding habitat within one to two miles of your property. Water availability is an attraction, but not a requirement. Third, the area around the base of the martin house should be clear of dense or high vegetation. Fourth, wires should not be allowed to connect the housing to the ground or other structures, as this would provide easy access for predators. Fifth, the housing must be at least 40 feet from tall trees or structures, and within 100 feet of buildings. Housing is available in aluminum, wood and gourds. Twelve unit aluminum houses are low maintenance, durable, fairly inexpensive, and lightweight. Wood houses insulate better and can be custom designed with more exact dimensions. Natural gourds, housing made by the native American tribes of the southeast, were the first artificial houses to be used by purple martins. Early European settlers continued the tradition of providing gourds as homes for the birds. Calabash gourds are the most inexpensive of all the housing since you can grow them yourself. They offer large nesting space and the swinging action repels most nest cavity competitors. They are well insulated but need to be treated with fungicide and then painted, if desired. Plastic gourds are commercially available but may not seal properly to keep water out.



If you have any further questions regarding purple martins, The Stokes Purple Martin Book by Donald and Lillian Stokes and Justin L. Brown is an excellent guide with information on attracting and housing purple martins. They also have a website: <http://www.StokesBooks.com>.

Purple martins are a welcome addition to your home area because you can spend hours observing and appreciating their graceful aerial displays and musical vocalizations!

Photos: Dolora Batchelor

KOMODO DRAGON EXPERT VISITS MIAMI METROZOO

Dr. Putra Sastrawan, the vice chancellor of Udayana University in Denpasar, Indonesia, and distinguished Komodo dragon expert, visited Miami Metrozoo last June. Dr. Sastrawan began his work with dragons in the 60's. He was recruited by Dr. Walter Auffenberg, a world renowned Komodo dragon scientist, to accompany him to the land of the dragons – the Komodo islands. During the talk he gave at Metrozoo, Dr. Sastrawan recalled his experiences when he first landed on the island of Komodo. Even to the natives of Indonesia the climate of the island was oppressively hot, reaching over 100°F!!! In fact, the surface temperature went almost as high as 120°F, causing shoes to tear apart within a few weeks. In these harsh conditions, Dr. Sastrawan began his study of the world's largest lizard. He spent ten months in a tent where he had to maintain a campfire in order to deter numerous snakes! Since then, Dr. Sastrawan has returned many times to Komodo to learn more about these magnificent reptiles. Studying Komodo dragons requires not only observational skills, but a lot of strength too. It takes a baited trap and four people to catch a dragon! Komodo dragons are extremely powerful animals, not afraid to attack large prey, including a human. With their powerful claws they dig 2.5 meter deep burrows in which to lay their eggs. According to Dr. Sastrawan the average number of eggs laid and hatched is 24. This information was of particular interest to our Komodo dragon keepers because of the 27 dragons that hatched here in 1998. His fascinating presentation was well attended and brought a lot of questions from the public. We are looking forward to more educational events like this in the future!



Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

ADOPT FAMILY REUNION

This year's Adopt Family Reunion breakfast took place on May 15, 1999, and a good time was had by all. The Adopt parents started with a continental breakfast and an interesting lecture given by one of ZSF's Education Specialists, Ricardo Stanoss. There were animal critters from our children's zoo, fun door prizes and to finish up, the Adopt parents went out on a "baby stroll" to see the new "little ones" at the zoo and visit their Adoptees. You too can join in the fun next year by adopting at the \$75 level and up. Call (305) 255-5551 for more information!

Special thanks to our sponsors: Afternoon Tea Bake Shop, Cookies by Design, Curbside Florist & Gifts, Einstein Bros. Bagels – Kendall, SportsService Corp., staff members and ZSF volunteers: Barbara Birmingham, Nelida Delgado, Donna Jacoby, Ron & Kathryn Medford, Connie Owens, Olga Perez, Carol Rey, Claudia and George Steadman, and Phyllis Tamburello.

ADOPT-AN-ANIMAL

How about adopting the South African Cheetah? For your \$50 contribution you will receive an adoption package that includes the following:

- A personalized adoption certificate (suitable for framing)
- A fascinating fact sheet on the cheetah
- An adopt-an-animal auto decal
- A 4x6 color photograph
- A plush cheetah to the first 25 adoptions.

Call now at:
(305) 255-5551 to order your adoption package.



Photo: Ricardo Stanoss

METROZOO SCAVENGER HUNT



Thanks for your responses. Here are some more intriguing questions. You can find the answers by observing the animal exhibits and by reading the signs located in front of them. Bring your answers to the reception desk of the Zoological Society of Florida, or mail them. One winner will receive an exciting prize.



Brothers Ryan and Jacob Lendic with their special prize)

Photo: Carmen T. Fernandez

- 1) Which is the least sociable of the great apes?
- 2) How does the nocturnal sun bear escape the heat of the day?
- 3) Does the sun bear enjoy bathing in water?
- 4) How many white tigers are in existence?
- 5) Which relative of the alligator, on exhibit at Metrozoo, is probably extinct in the wild?
- 6) What is the diet of the black-necked stork?
- 7) What caused the Indian rhino to become endangered?
- 8) For how long is a young red kangaroo nursed inside of its mother's pouch?
- 9) What are the two kinds of giant tortoises displayed at the zoo?
- 10) These birds clack their bills to communicate with each other.

ANSWERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOUCAN TALK



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