

# Alive

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County

April 2000



The mission of the Zoological Society is to support the Milwaukee County Zoo, to educate people about the importance of wildlife and the environment, and to take part in conserving wildlife and endangered species.

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President's Letter



Look at the back page of this magazine and you'll see our future: the Zoo Pass. This fun new card soon will replace our old, plain membership cards. It may seem like a small thing, but the new card is part of a new promotion of the Zoological Society that says: "Same Great Value, Whole New Look." If you haven't already, you'll be seeing and hearing our new advertising campaign soon. It's a new look, a new sound, a new approach to Society membership. While the new Zoo Pass represents the same Zoological Society membership that you've always enjoyed, with the same great benefits, it's a symbol of our new direction.

As we plan for the future and head into a capital campaign that will raise money for major improvements to the Zoo, we need to develop a strong identity for both the Society and the Zoo we support. And while Zoological Society membership has always meant free admission to the Zoo for our current members, we need to get the message out to a whole new generation of people. With the new Zoo Pass promotion, we hope to gain not only improved recognition, but also increased Society membership. As you know, more members mean more dollars for the Society. And that means we can do more for the Zoo and the animals than ever before.

You'll enjoy your membership with our great summer lineup. From June 12-15, members get free admission to the Zoo for the evening premieres of Ameritech's Butterflies: Living Jewels of the Mundo Maya<sup>SM</sup> exhibit. This beautiful exhibit will take you on a winding journey through the lush rain forests and spectacular ruins of the Mayan world. On your journey, you'll see a building full of live tropical butterflies! The Zoological Society is proud to have funded the creation of this exhibit and, with the expert assistance of the Zoo's registrar in getting permits, arranged to transport the butterfly stars of the exhibit from Central America's Belize to Milwaukee. In the process, the Society has helped the Green Hills Butterfly Farm in Belize to expand its facilities and its conservation efforts.

The Mayan theme will continue with our evening premiere of Temple Monkeys of Tikal, July 11, 13 and 14. This striking exhibit spotlights two groups of spider monkeys in an expanded exhibit that more closely resembles their Central American rain-forest habitat.

Remember to read your *Wild Things* newsletters for notices of events year-round where you can use your Zoo pass. Most important, continue to renew your membership and continue to expect the same great value from your Zoological Society.

Gil Boese, Ph.D., President  
Zoological Society of Milwaukee County

Alive

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Experience hundreds of vibrant, Central American butterflies in a winding journey through a lush Mayan rain forest when you visit Ameritech's Butterflies: Living Jewels of the Mundo Maya.<sup>SM</sup> This colorful exhibit, built by the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, is at the Zoo for just 15 weeks: June 17 to September 30.

Butterfly Photo below by Jan Meerman

8 Zoo Pride's 25th  
Zoo Pride, the Zoological Society's volunteer auxiliary, celebrates 25 years of love for the Zoo and innumerable hours of service to our community.

15 Into the Mouth of the Beast  
Doing root canals, fixing fractured teeth, and treating gum disease in animals as small as a tamarin (photo this page) and as large as a rhino is all in a day's work for Dr. John Scheels, the Zoo's dentist. Learn about this dedicated consultant's amazing contributions to veterinary dentistry, a field that didn't exist just 20 years ago. Photo above by Dr. John Scheels



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A female blue morpho (*Morpho peleides*)  
Photo by George R. Cassidy



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# On Safari for Living Jewels



*Dryas julia*  
Photo by George R. Cassidy

This summer you can have your own version of an Indiana Jones adventure – all at the Zoo. First, you'll travel to the Tropics for a visit to the *mundo Maya*, the Mayan world that once dominated most of Central America. You'll get a field guide to help you savor the experience. Then you'll venture into a cave and discover partially excavated Mayan artifacts such as sculptures and vases.

As you leave the cave, the world opens up into a radiant rain forest, with pockets of light streaming through the foliage and around the ruins of mysterious Mayan temples. And there, in the light beams, you'll see fluttering jewels. Iridescent blue. Tawny orange. Butter yellow. Graceful bits of color hover near shallow pools. This is the world of tropical butterflies.

Transported in pupa stage from the country of Belize to the Milwaukee County Zoo, these butterflies hatch in Milwaukee – some right in front of your eyes. Using your field guide, you can identify some of the 40 varieties that will be part of Ameritech's Butterflies! Living Jewels of the *Mundo Maya*™ from June 17 through Sept. 30\*.

This is the first exhibit that the Zoological Society of Milwaukee has created and built for the Zoo. It is about a half-million-dollar investment and includes building a greenhouse on Zoo grounds to produce tropical foliage and flowers for the "rain forest." Butterflies will be housed in the Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building, built by the Society for the Zoo. The exhibit is the inspiration of Dr. Gil Boese, Society

president, and some of the design is based on his research.

"I have explored three Mayan caves and numerous ruins in Belize and sketched my impressions in field notebooks. These impressions are being expressed in this exhibit," he says. The exhibit will have few graphics. "It will represent a walk in the rain forest, using a field guide to give some insights into the butterflies and the environment you're exploring."

Unlike the Milwaukee Public Museum's new permanent, glassed-in butterfly exhibit, set next to a busy downtown street so that people can enjoy the butterflies even from the outside, the Zoo's temporary exhibit will be larger, more of a rain forest and focus on the Mayan world. Because they offer different experiences, the museum and the Zoological Society and Zoo are working together to promote butterflies in Milwaukee.

"People are beginning to appreciate the insect world, particularly butterflies," says Boese. "Our colleagues at the museum have presented some very fine temporary butterfly exhibits and now this permanent exhibit (to open in May). We felt the Zoo had the facility to enhance that experience and add to the understanding of the Mayan world. We had been planning our Temple Monkeys of Tikal exhibit, a permanent exhibit that opens in July, as a view of the animals of the Mayan world. Butterflies are an important part of the fauna, too. Most of the Mayan temples are overgrown with forest, and so

they are a good place to see butterflies. So we conceived this butterfly exhibit.

"The people of Belize who are organizing the *Mundo Maya*™ concept, which is to bring all Central American countries of the Mayan world together to promote tourism and conservation, gave us the right to use the *Mundo Maya*™ Organization trademark."

Children visiting the exhibit will be able to enjoy not only pupa hatcheries and live butterflies inside the rain forest, but also 12 Dinamation™ robotic butterflies and interactive displays at the entrance to the exhibits building and in other parts of the Zoo.

Boese is proud of the support that the Zoological Society has given to researchers Jan Meerman and his wife, Tineke Boomsma, and their Green Hills Butterfly Ranch and Botanical Gardens in Belize.

They have been able to expand their ranch to produce the pupae for the Milwaukee exhibit.

Meerman, a biologist and botanist, is the Society's field expert and consultant for the butterfly exhibit. His research on butterflies soon will be published in a book called *Butterflies of Belize*. And many of his photos will illustrate the butterfly exhibit's field guide.

Tropical butterflies often live longer than Midwest butterflies, says Meerman, partly because there aren't the huge temperature extremes in the Tropics. "Here in the north, butterflies

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*Phoebis philae*  
Photo by Jan Meerman



*Malachite (Siproeta stelenes)*  
Photo by George R. Cassidy

*Zebra (Heliconius charithonia)*

Photo page 4: James Tynion, of Chicago, holds a butterfly while visiting Belize.

Photos by George R. Cassidy



A



B

A. Tineke Boomsma, co-owner of Green Hills Butterfly Ranch in Belize, feeds caterpillars in white cups. B. In caterpillar cages in Belize, caterpillars grow on specific plants. C. The *Hamadryas februa* butterfly is camouflaged against wood. D. Glasswing (*Pteronymia catylta*)

Photos by Jan Meerman

have to depend on flowers. In the Tropics, the one thing that's available year-round is fruit. So in Belize 40% of butterflies are fruit feeders rather than nectar feeders. Fruit juice has a higher nutrient content than nectar. This allows them to live longer, and they can lay eggs over a longer period of time. They also have a much longer season.

"Butterflies that live longer run more risk of being eaten; typically, tropical butterflies [through natural selection] have developed ways of becoming poisonous to avoid being eaten. For example, the postman butterfly (*Heliconius erato*) feeds on a passionflower that is so poisonous that the larvae can eat only the youngest shoots, which have not developed large amounts of poison yet. This plant does not grow all the time; it has growth spurts, which has given this butterfly the need to live longer, waiting to lay her eggs till the plant is ready. Now the butterfly lives so long that it needs protection from being eaten itself; therefore it evolved to become poisonous and develop a red-black-yellow color pattern to let animals know that it is poisonous."

The bright colors of many tropical butterflies are adaptations that provide camouflage or warn predators away. Children attending Zoological Society summer camps at the Zoo will learn more about the adaptations of both Midwest and tropical butterflies (see *Kids Alive*, pages 11 and 12).

Meerman notes that the butterfly exhibit will have a selection of up to 40 species, but for practical reasons, it's not possible to have all 40 species at the same time. "So you will see 15 to 20 species together in the display at the same time. But in the first week you will find different species than you will in the last week."

If you want butterflies to land on you, he says, do not wear bug repellent (such as DEET) or a sunscreen mixed with repellent. That can kill the butterflies.

Meerman hopes exhibit visitors will become interested in the ancient Mayan culture, as he is. "I'm intrigued by a culture that was in one way primitive by not having metal tools and animals to carry loads for them, and yet developed mathematics and a very complex society. They had to find ways to use the environment to feed and house themselves. Yet the Mayan population was probably five times higher than the current Belizean population. How were they able to sustain themselves for hundreds of years?"

\* Zoological Society members get a special preview of Ameritech's Butterflies! Living Jewels of the Mundo Maya; June 12-15. Your invitation will be mailed May 1 with the June Issue of your *Wild Things* newsletter.



Blue morpho (*Morpho peleides*)

Photo by George R. Cassidy



Malachite (*Siproeta stelenes*) feeding on fruit juice.

Photo by Jan Meerman



Malachite (*Siproeta stelenes*) feeding on an orchid common throughout the Mayan world.

Photo by George R. Cassidy

# Zoo Pride's 25th

It's all about animals and people. Looking back over a quarter-century of Zoo Pride, the volunteer auxiliary of the Zoological Society, charter member Bev Kumershek says that what stands out most in her mind are the wonderful people she has met. "You might be working with a retired doctor, a teacher, a truck driver, a military person. Everybody's there for the love of the Zoo, and so it brings you together with a common interest."

As Zoo Pride celebrates its 25th anniversary year, some of its 640 volunteers looked back on their accomplishments.

Robin Higgins, the Zoological Society's director of member programs and of volunteers, began her career as a volunteer and has watched Zoo Pride grow and evolve. From 63 charter members in 1975 who put in slightly more than 1,000 hours, volunteers in the 1999 fiscal year put in 45,456 hours.

The first volunteers staffed a mobile information kiosk at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Over the years volunteers have developed activities that have added to visitors' enjoyment of the Zoo. They created and now staff Remains to Be Seen carts full of animal skulls, hides and other artifacts. They serve as guides throughout the Zoo. They even present about half of the educational Animals in Action programs in summer, talking about gorillas, camels and orangutans.

You'll find Zoo Pride volunteers helping throughout the year with Zoological Society animal-

science workshops and summer camps at the Zoo. You'll also find them dressing up as bunnies at Easter or carving pumpkins for Halloween. Zoo Priders conduct "animal watches" for animals that are sick or need to be checked. They staff a library used by Zoo and Zoological Society staff. They help with the Society's Sponsor an Animal program and its Kids 'n Critters Club. And their impact stretches outside the Zoo through a speakers bureau and through fund-raising projects for worldwide conservation programs.

Jessie Franz, who puts in more than 500 volunteer hours a year, has been a Zoo Prider for nine years and is on 11 of the 20 Zoo Pride committees. "I do a lot of


guiding. I lead behind-the-scenes tours, Walk on the Wild Side tours, the pachyderm area walking tour. I do the camel talk in summer."

What does Franz like most about the work? "The excitement I get from a visitor when they've learned something new about the Zoo or the animals. It's like a light bulb. I supposed it's the kind of thing a teacher feels when the kid finally gets the math question right."

Bev Kumershek, a founding member of Zoo Pride, is proud of Zoo Pride's early projects. "We set up the hospital when there were few supplies and any medical work was done by volunteers. The funds we raised from a bake sale went to buy things

for the hospital. We also had a program called Zookeeper for a Day, where we sold tickets for a child and an adult to spend the day with a zookeeper. They would help prepare the food and do the activities that a zookeeper would do. That was very popular and raised money for the hospital."

Kumershek recalls the original Zoo Pride uniform: dark trousers and white shirt or blouse, a red sash that went diagonally across the body, and, yes, pith helmets. Quips Robin Higgins: "Maybe that's why there were only 63 charter volunteers." Today you'll recognize Zoo Priders by their khaki uniforms, sometimes worn with red shirts, and their Zoo Pride shoulder patches.

For information on how to join Zoo Pride, call Barb Dix, volunteer services coordinator, at (414) 258-5667. 



Zoo Pride volunteer Audrey Wandrey reads to Emily Ische, Kevin Harack and Megan Schneck for a Zoological Society workshop.

# EdZoocation

## An Early Start

Tiny Nicholas Wagner stayed close to mom as they entered the Zoological Society's Education Center on a snowy Saturday in January. His mom, Terri Wagner of Menomonee Falls, was nervous about her son attending the "Adorable Apes & 'Maah'liveous' Monkeys" workshop. "He's just 3, very shy and not comfortable with strangers," she said, but added: "I hope to foster in him a respect for animals."

She didn't have to worry. He soon was entranced as they walked into what looked like a tropical rain forest, with toy monkeys hanging from paper kapok trees. Children were playing in a "gorilla nest" of shredded paper in the far corner. Nicholas, with the help of his mom, made a bookmark from a construction-paper monkey, then went on to sponge-paint monkeys and apes drawn on white paper.

For more than 15 years the Zoological Society of Milwaukee has offered animal-science workshops to help children understand their place in the environment and in the animal kingdom. Only in recent years has the Society offered workshops for 2- and 3-year-olds, accompanied by an adult. Yet they are among the most popular, says Mary Thiry, director of education. "The adult may learn as much as the child, and they get to know each other."

Children come to the workshop not only with parents and grandparents, but also with other relatives and family friends, says Patty Trinko, an early childhood educa-

tion specialist who led the apes workshop. "It provides a special day for the child. It's one-on-one time when they don't have to share that parent or relative with siblings."

Besides teaching children to appreciate nature and the importance of their own actions in conserving it, workshops promote positive interaction between adult and child, says Trinko. "It starts as soon as they come into the classroom and move through each interactive station. The adult has to read the information so the child knows what to do."

For example, at the start of the apes workshop, 3-year-old Ashley Trawicki of Sussex led her father, Rick, to a computer with a program on primate facts. Ashley clicked the mouse and saw pictures of monkeys smiling. "Like you, monkeys use their faces to communicate," read Rick.

During a game of "Monkey See, Monkey Do," children imitated their parents. "Baby monkeys learn by doing what mom does," Trinko told them. Then children and adults practiced knuckle walking, scavenging for food, and monkey greetings: "Ooo, ooo, ooo." They made binoculars for a tour to examine real apes and monkeys in the Zoo to see which had tails.



"Before this workshop, I didn't know that monkeys had tails and apes didn't," admitted Rick Trawicki. His daughter is a regular at the Zoo. "Ashley calls the workshops her Zoo school," said her mother, Michele Trawicki, over the phone. "Ashley thinks of it as an



Terri Wagner praises her son Nicholas' craft project during a Zoological Society workshop on apes and monkeys.

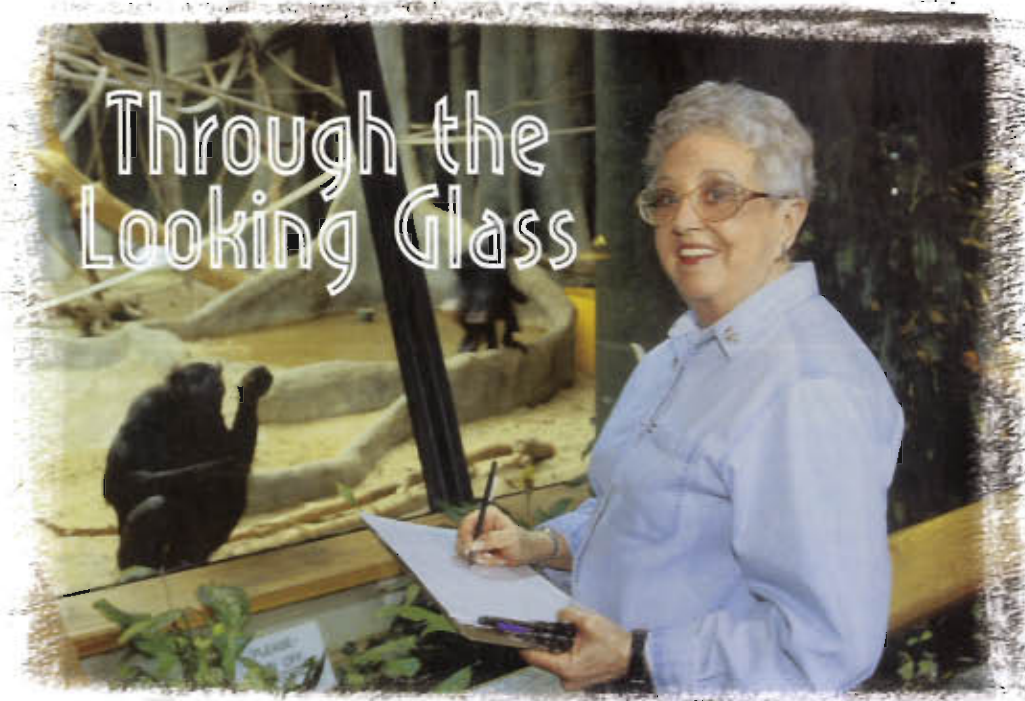
Oval Picture: Rick Trawicki and daughter Ashley use a computer to find out about primates.

extension of her preschool." Zoological Society educators really understand children, added Trawicki, an elementary math and science teacher in the Elmbrook School District. "The workshops expose children to lots of information about animals and nature but in hands-on ways they enjoy."

Such workshops offer parents a chance to impart their own values about nature and conservation to their children, says Dave Riley, the Rothermel-Bascom Professor of Human Ecology in the Child & Family Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "In my own family we hold dear a view of humans as part of a much larger web of life, all of which is sacred. We find meaning in viewing humans as part of something so much greater than ourselves and our usual petty concerns."

Says Michele Trawicki: "We value learning. We want Ashley to be well-rounded, not just well-versed in things we happen to know. I personally don't enjoy picking up a guinea pig or lizard. That's no reason for Ashley to have the same fears. [Zoological Society workshops] have introduced Ashley to animals in a non-threatening, calm environment. Now she's not squeamish at all."

— Sandra Whitehead



Maddy Howard observes our Zoo's bonobos for a national study.

In the Stearns Family Apes of Africa Pavilion at the Zoo, just in front of the bonobo exhibit, you'll often find Bob or Maddy Howard of Mequon staring through the glass at these rare great apes and taking careful notes. They're among a group of volunteers observing and recording the activities of a highly endangered animal that is native to an African river basin torn by war: the Congo.

As much as the Zoological Society has tried in the last few years to study bonobos in the wild, civil war has made it impossible. So any data gleaned from studying captive bonobos is invaluable. Since the Milwaukee County Zoo has one of the largest North American collections of bonobos (a group of 12), they have become part of a national study on the social and sexual dynamics of bonobos.

Bonobos solve a lot of conflicts with sexual behavior and affection. "The bonobo offers us another picture of ourselves as a species," notes Gay Reinartz, conservation director of the Zoological Society and coordinator of the Bonobo Species Survival Plan. "The bonobo is one of two chimpanzees that are 98% genetically similar to humans. Bonobos show remarkably low levels of violence. Social dominance is maintained by female bonding." Much of that bonding is cemented by sexual activity.

The national study is comparing ovarian cycles (measured by hormone levels) with bonobo social behavior. The study is trying to determine how much hormones influence behavior and vice versa. Since bonobos have strong similarities to humans, this may provide clues to human behavior, also.

The eight study volunteers in Milwaukee, coordinated by Bob Howard, put in a total of about 55 hours a month observing the highly social apes and assisting with the research. They observe

adult female bonobos for 30-minute periods, recording particular behaviors at 30-second intervals.

Sounds simple, right? Perhaps, if the bonobos are sleeping. But when they're active, it's a job to keep up with them since observers must score 45 types of behavior. Thanks to thorough training, Milwaukee's volunteers regularly supply high-quality observations vital to the research, says study supervisor Dr. Mike Jurke. He coordinates the project from the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species at the San Diego Zoo. Volunteers at three other U.S. zoos also are contributing to the research.

Says Jurke: "When I look at the observation sheets from Milwaukee, it's always a pleasure to process and summarize them because the 'stories' they tell are coherent. I can't emphasize enough that without the volunteers' dedication, this study would not have been what it is: a comprehensive investigation of bonobo reproductive behavior and endocrinology, the first of its kind in such a large-scale sample. I'm very grateful for the volunteers' continuing efforts."

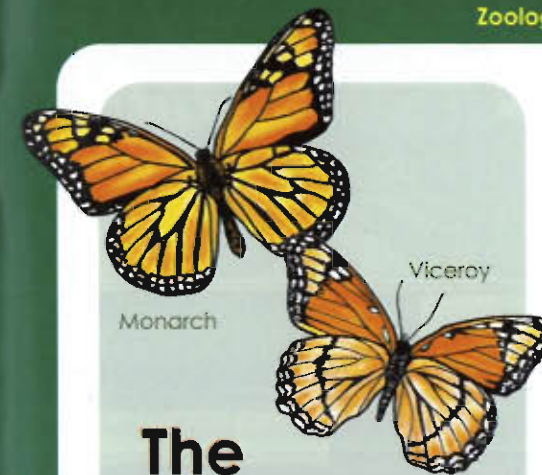
Already, data compiled at the Milwaukee County Zoo (including volunteers' observations and hormone information from 3,500 bonobo urine samples collected by bonobo zookeeper Barbara Bell and others) have been submitted for publication in scientific journals.

To the Howards, volunteering for the bonobo project represented a chance both to learn about the rare apes and to perform a valuable service. "We've had a very rich life, and, by that, I don't just mean materially," says Bob Howard, a retired vice president of finance at Badger Meter Inc. "One of the most important aspects of life is giving something back to your community. We feel blessed to be able to do that. That's what life is all about."



## Butterfly Page

A special exhibit of tropical butterflies comes to the Milwaukee County Zoo in June. See our story on page 4. Meanwhile, learn about some Wisconsin butterflies here.



### The Monarch & the Viceroy

Here's a tale of two Wisconsin butterflies. The monarch butterfly tastes icky to birds because it's bitter. The viceroy butterfly tastes good to birds. So the viceroy needs protection. Nature helps it out by providing a special adaptation: mimicry. Birds have learned that the monarch's orange and black pattern is bitter. So birds do not eat butterflies that look like monarchs. The viceroy is called a mimic because it resembles the monarch, even though the viceroy is smaller. While the two look alike, they are quite different. The monarch caterpillar feeds on milkweed. This plant has a poison that makes the adult butterfly bitter to birds. The viceroy caterpillar feeds on willows, plums and cherry trees, which make it taste good to birds. The Wisconsin monarch flies south for winter, sometimes as far as Texas. The viceroy stays in Wisconsin in its larva stage.

### Butterfly Garden

It's spring and it's time to think about expanding your back yard and adding a butterfly garden. To get butterflies to come to your garden, you must give them four things: 1) food, 2) a shallow puddle of clean, still water, 3) a flat stone or a bare patch of ground in the sun and out of the wind (butterflies use solar power to "recharge" themselves), and 4) caterpillar food. Each species of butterfly lays eggs on specific plants. When the eggs grow into caterpillars, they are living on their food source. Butterflies eat nectar from flowers that are tubular and grow in flat clusters, such as lilacs or zinnias. Here are plants you can add to your garden to attract specific butterflies: Monarchs need milkweed or butterfly weed. Swallowtails eat dill, parsley and fennel. Tiger swallowtails like lilacs. Painted ladies need hollyhocks. To get ideas for your garden, visit the Wisconsin Butterfly Garden exhibit, presented by the Falk Corp. (see photo), in the Milwaukee County Zoo's Stackner Heritage Farm. Master butterfly gardeners from the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension helped children in Zoological Society workshops create this wonderful exhibit at the Zoo and provided information for this story.



### Gypsy Moths

Gypsy moths have invaded Wisconsin and are eating our trees, especially our oaks. The Zoological Society is helping the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to monitor and fight gypsy moths at the Zoo. Between 1997 and '98, the moth population doubled at the Zoo. Between 1998 and '99, there was a slight decrease. "We hope that the decrease was caused by our control efforts," says Mary Thiry, Zoological Society education director. "Children in our summer camps have put up and checked moth traps that use moth pheromones - NOT pesticides - to attract the insects. If you see red triangular containers hanging from trees, these are the moth traps." In Wisconsin the moth lives mainly in counties near Lake Michigan, and the agriculture agency has been able to keep the population partly under control.

## Hunters of the Sky

Butterflies, moths and birds are connected along the food chain. Visit Wisconsin Electric's Hunters of the Sky touring exhibit at the Zoo. Look at the section of dinner plates showing what raptors eat. In this photo Susan Edwards of Wisconsin Electric and Katie Kazmierski, 10, of New Berlin view plates of dead animals and insects that a hawk or an owl might devour. Now answer these questions:



- 1) Moths and tree crickets are favorite foods for the flammulated \_\_\_\_\_ (name of raptor).
- 2) Some raptors are specialists that eat only particular food. Others are opportunists, meaning they eat a variety, depending on what they find. What is the snail kite: opportunist or specialist? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) The snail kite eats only \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) The snowy owl eats arctic lemmings and lives in what kind of habitat? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) This bird of prey is an opportunist that eats frogs, crayfish, snakes, spiders, voles, beetles, woodpeckers and other small birds. It is a \_\_\_\_\_ hawk.



**Buckeye** (*Junonia genoveva*)  
Photo by Jan Meerman

## Tropical Butterfly Facts

On June 12th an amazing flying exhibit comes to the Milwaukee County Zoo. It's called Ameritech's Butterflies! Living Jewels of the Mundo Maya™. You will enter the Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building and see huge Dinamation® robotic butterflies. Then you will enter a room filled with hundreds of live tropical butterflies. They all will be from the Central American country of Belize.

Here are some comparisons between tropical butterflies and Wisconsin butterflies:

- Many tropical butterflies live up to six months. In Wisconsin most live about one month.
- A lot of butterflies in Belize eat fruit juices. Most Wisconsin butterflies eat flower nectar.
- There are more varieties of colorful tropical butterflies than there are of colorful Midwest butterflies.
- The biggest and the smallest of all the butterflies are both tropical. Biggest: birdwing (*Ornithoptera alexandrae*) from New Guinea; smallest: the tiny, or pygmy, blue (*Brephidium exilis*) from Central America.
- We don't know how many species of rain-forest butterflies there are, but most Midwest butterflies have been identified.

HUNTERS OF THE SKY ANSWERS:

1) owl, 2) specialist, 3) snail, 4) tundra, 5) red-shouldered

## Winged Quest

When you come to the Zoo, go to Stackner Heritage Farm and visit the brown wooden structure with peek-a-boo windows in the Wisconsin Butterfly Garden exhibit, presented by the Falk Corp. (see page 11). Find the two mounted butterflies in the exhibit that hibernate as adults during our Wisconsin winter. Write your answer below.

Answer to January 2000 Winter Quest: Which animal from snow country has white fur but in truth is not white? The polar bear's fur looks white, but it really is translucent to let in light and heat.



## Curious Kids

**QUESTION:** Do you go and get the animals from South America and other parts of the world, or do you have them shipped to you? And if they're shipped, what are they shipped in? - Erica A. Kirk, 11, Greendale



"The vast majority of animals at our Zoo come from other zoos, not from the wild," says Deputy Zoo Director Bruce Beehler. Most zoo animals today are born in captivity. Animals from the wild are collected only with permission of the United States government and the government of the country that the animals are coming from, and it is only for special purposes, such as animal rescue or animal breeding. For example, the African country of Zimbabwe sent two black rhinos (Brewster and Borley) to the Milwaukee County Zoo many years ago so they wouldn't get shot in the wild. And Melrose the moose came to our Zoo for protection after she was found wandering through Melrose, Mass., a suburb of Boston. As for shipping, Beehler adds: "Melrose was shipped by truck, but most long-distance transfers of large animals now are done by jet, using specially constructed containers designed for the animal's safety. International shipments are always accompanied by trained zoo and

wild-animal experts to ensure the health and well-being of the animal."

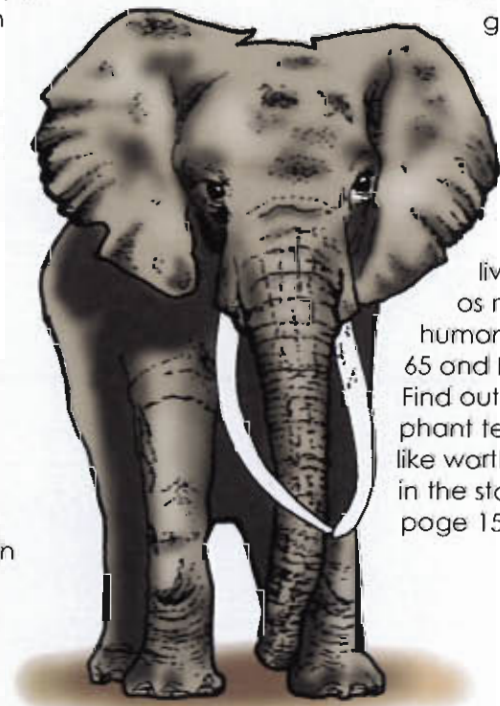
**QUESTION:** Where did house cats first live? Egypt? Africa? Australia? - Leann Mason, 7, Racine

House cats first came from Africa. In 3500 B.C., Egyptians began domesticating wild cats from Africa. Domesticating an animal means getting it used to being around people. Some animals can be domesticated, but other animals such as lions and tigers cannot be domesticated completely. They can be dangerous to humans and do not make good pets. After 2,000 years went by, Egyptians started viewing cats as sacred, or holy. Around 1500 B.C., if you killed a cat in Egypt, you might be put to death. When their cats died, Egyptians made them into mummies, just as dead Egyptian leaders were mummified (preserved). Traders spread house cats all around the world.

**QUESTION:** How long do elephants live? - Alice K., 5, Wauwatosa

Elephants in the wild live as long as they have teeth. They have six sets of teeth in their lifetime, starting with

two sets at birth. They lose the first set at age 2, the second set at age 6 - mainly because they are growing and need bigger teeth for a bigger mouth. Set No. 3 lasts the elephant until age 15, set No. 4 falls out at age 28, set No. 5 lasts till age 43, and set No. 6 usually lasts until about age 65. Wild elephants can't eat without teeth, but elephants in zoos can live longer because when an elephant's lost teeth fall out, zookeepers



give it liquid food that doesn't have to be chewed. So elephants live as long as many humans, to age 65 and beyond. Find out why elephant teeth are like warhog teeth in the story on page 15.

**Kids! Send us your animal questions. Remember to include your first & last name, age, phone and full address.**



**A** 5,500-pound Indian rhinoceros needs a root canal. A 420-pound gorilla has an infected tooth. A fruit bat with the tiniest, most delicate teeth needs one removed. An African spoonbill has a broken bill, and the bird can't eat. Who does the Zoo call?

Dr. John Scheels. This Wauwatosa, Wis., dentist who is a consultant to the Milwaukee County Zoo has broken new ground and helped create a field that didn't exist until the 1980s: veterinary dentistry. Even today he is one of only about a dozen dentists in the United States who does extensive dental work on zoo animals.

"I enjoy doing this," says Scheels. "I think that rhino was really exciting. The root was five inches long. The filing was about the diameter of a nickel. It took almost two

hours. It was just so big. When we have teeth this big, what we use to clean out the teeth is sterilized pipe cleaners and hobby-saw blades."

"Scheels' work is valuable for the health and well-being of an animal," says Roberta Wallace, senior veterinarian at the Zoo. "He takes care of abscessed teeth, malocclusions (teeth that don't meet right - he can file them down so they're not poking into the animal's palate), he does root canals - and he does it across species."

"I've done about 80 species now," says Scheels, who finds the work both challenging and rewarding. "Working with endangered species is really special. I feel like we're making a difference in their survival." He notes that animals - and even humans -

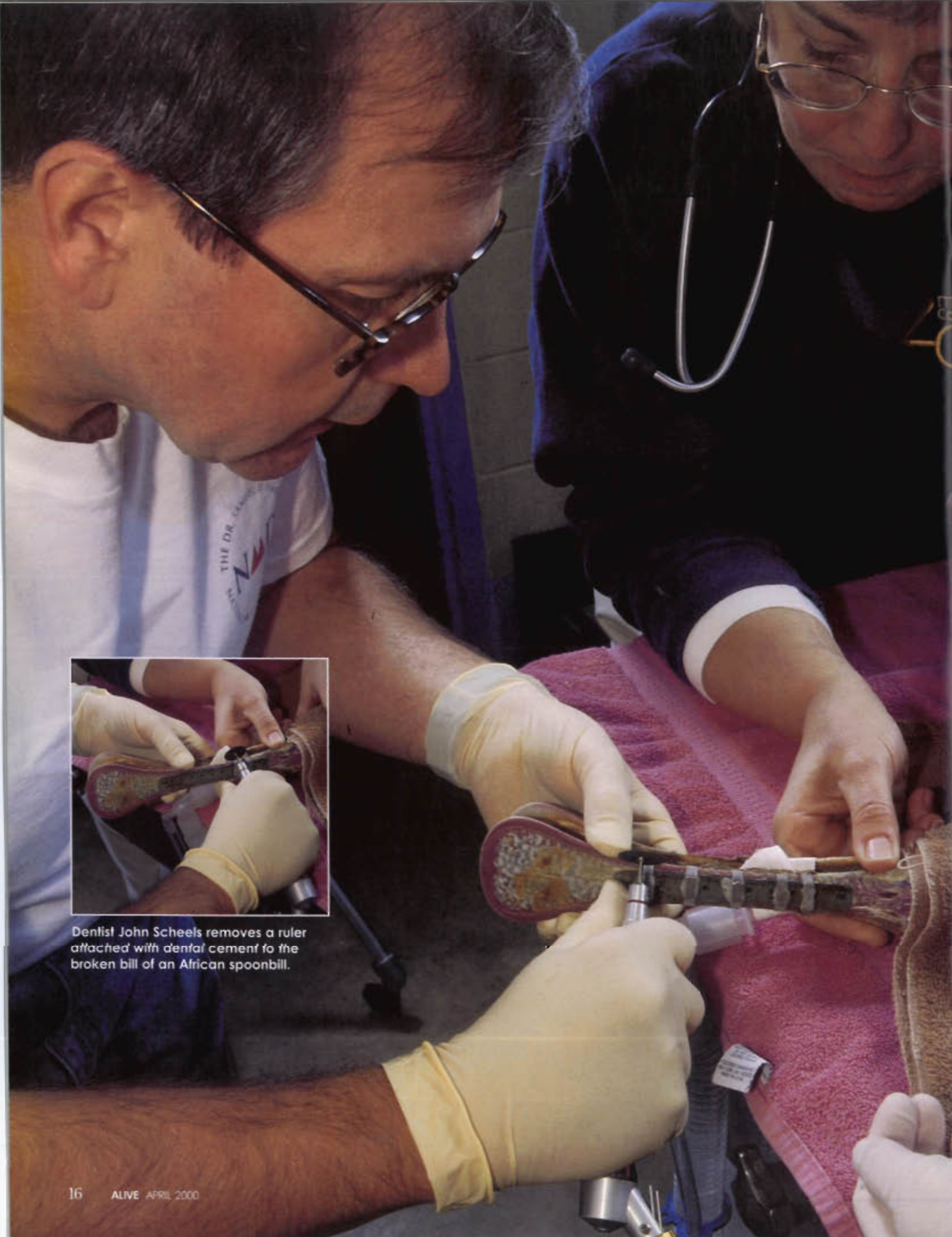
*continued on page 17*

## Into the mouth of the beast

Orangutans have gum disease. Here Saba the orangutan gets dental work.







Dentist John Scheels removes a ruler attached with dental cement to the broken bill of an African spoonbill.

can die from complications of an abscessed tooth. "Before antibiotics, it was very common; some old dentists told me that they would lose one or two patients a year."

In fact, it was an abscessed tooth in Tanga, a 420-pound male gorilla, that persuaded Zoo management staff to bring Scheels on as an official, paid dental consultant (initially thanks to funding by the Zoological Society). Before then, he had volunteered his time and his staff's time for five years, often donating supplies until the Zoological Society funded the purchase of a mobile unit with a dental drill and specialized instruments.

"Tanga hadn't eaten for several days," recalls Scheels. "He was very sick; he had an infection throughout his body from the tooth. I extracted a tooth, and he got better quickly." Since Tanga was a big attraction to Zoo visitors, Zoo staff realized how important it was to have a dentist on call for emergencies, as well as to make regular Zoo visits. Scheels says that he comes to the Zoo almost every week of the year, usually on Thursday mornings since his Thursday human client hours don't start until the afternoon.

Deputy Zoo Director Bruce Beehler says that the Zoo pays Scheels mainly for his supplies and other expenses. "He's volunteering his time. With his dedication and skills, he has made a significant impact on the health of the animals at the Zoo."

The most common problems he deals with in zoo animals are fractured teeth, lesions or growths on soft tissue, malocclusions and periodontal (gum) disease. Orangutans have a problem with gum disease, here and at other zoos. No one knows why, and there needs to be research on whether wild orangutans have gum disease, says Scheels. Some gum disease is caused by diet: Cats that eat soft, canned cat food are likely to get gum disease while barn cats that eat mice don't. Years ago

the Zoo stopped allowing visitors to feed marshmallows to the bears, and the bears' teeth improved.

Even though it sounds dangerous to put a hand into the mouth of a lion, the animals usually are under anesthesia. "I have to be careful with my fingers as the animals start to come out of anesthesia," says Scheels, but he adds: "I've never had a problem where I thought I was really in danger."

How did Scheels get so interested in animals? "I've always had pets, had relatives on farms, and I was around animals a lot. I earned a B.S. in zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee before I went to dental school. So it was a natural fit," he says. "At that time veterinary students were not taught dentistry at veterinary school. I saw an article about a dentist helping out with animals. I called the Zoo. That was in 1981. Dr. Bruce Beehler, the Zoo's first veterinarian, had been there only two months, but he had worked with a dentist on some cases at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C."

Recalls Beehler: "We had a jaguar that needed a root canal. I believe I had never done a root canal on a carnivore, and I was looking for veterinary assistance, and by coincidence Scheels introduced himself and volunteered his time. And that's where it all started."

Scheels started talking with the few other people who were doing zoo dentistry across the country, particularly in Chicago and in San Diego. He worked on more and more cases with Beehler. And, he adds: "I

*"Working with endangered species is really special. I feel like we're making a difference in their survival."*

did a lot of research on my own and learned more."

Scheels is still learning. Currently he is researching sea-lion teeth, which he found can take up to 9 or 10 years to mature, compared to two years for dogs. Last year he got on the Internet and connected with a dentist in

Pretoria, South Africa, to find out basic information about the teeth of the African warthogs at the Milwaukee County Zoo.



Scheels does a root canal on a rhino while vets make sure the animal is safely under anesthesia.

A warthog introduced to a new exhibit got excited, ran into a wall and knocked out one of its four tusks (a canine tooth) and cracked another. Scheels was called in and found that the first tusk was completely gone, and the other tusk was infected. When the infected material was cleaned out, the warthog had a large hole. "I used a wax technique that I developed while working for 10 years with horses. We put dental wax in the hole to keep out food and to let the infected area heal. And it did very well, healing in about six weeks."

In this process he discovered some back teeth that also looked infected. Before extracting them, however, he did some research. "We didn't have much information about warthog teeth. Even though warthogs are in the pig family, their back teeth do not look at all alike. Warthog teeth look like little circles (see photo page 18)." He discovered that warthog back teeth migrate forward and crush and push out the teeth that had been there previously. "The only other two species that do that are the elephant and the manatee. They have similar food to the warthog's: very tough, fibrous." So it's good

continued on page 18



# Platypus Society

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*"Our association with the Zoological Society for the past decade has been a very rewarding experience. In that time, there have been numerous improvements to the Milwaukee County Zoo, which have helped contribute to its status as a world-class facility. We are very fortunate to have a well-established public/private partnership between Milwaukee County and the Zoological Society. This, in return, has enabled the Zoo to move forward in such a positive fashion. However, without the support of the many corporate and individual contributors and an army of volunteers, none of it would have been possible. Woller-Anger & Company LLC is proud to continue our support of the Zoological Society and the Milwaukee County Zoo. We look forward to seeing you at the next Platypus Society event."*

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The Platypus Society is a group of about 300 Milwaukee-area foundations, corporations and individuals that contribute more than \$11,500 annually to the Zoological Society. If you would like to join this group in helping the Society uphold its mission of supporting the Zoo, educating the community about wildlife and the environment, and conserving endangered species, call Tom Rudnitzki at (414) 278-0842.

## What's Gnu

### Meerkats

Arrived September 22, 1999  
Small Mammals Building

Meerkats don't look like cats. They look like prairie dogs. They stand upright on their little hind legs, scouting for danger or just being curious. At the Milwaukee County Zoo, the new slender-tailed meerkats in the Small Mammals building often peek out the back window in their exhibit to stare at zookeepers. "They can sit up on the rocks and watch us in the kitchen while we're making their food," says Carol Boyd Kagy, a longtime zookeeper. "They're very curious, very alert... and extremely active. People stay for quite a while just watching their antics: digging in the sand, running through the rock work." The Zoo has three meerkats on exhibit: a mom and dad with a baby born here last Oct. 13. A female meerkat is waiting to go on exhibit until two other meerkats arrive this spring. Meerkats, native to southern Africa, are found in dry, open country, digging burrows in rocky ground. They are related to the mongoose and live in clans of about 10. Adults weigh only two pounds and often pile together to keep warm. They have a vocabulary of more than 10 calls.

### Grunt Sculpins

Arrived: Oct. 21, 1999  
Aquatic & Reptile Center

You'll need to take this photo with you to identify the latest additions to the Milwaukee County Zoo's Puget Sound exhibit. Grunt sculpins, bottom dwellers from this species-rich region of the Pacific Ocean, look more like bottom than dweller, says Craig Berg, the Zoo's aquarium/reptile curator. "The grunt sculpin essentially looks like a pebble, a rock. It doesn't look like a fish at all." Nor does it act like a fish. "It sits on the bottom," Berg says. "And it has developed fins that are more like legs than actual fins. It sort of hops along the bottom." The clever camouflage allows the tiny fish to snare small invertebrates and avoid being snared itself.

The exhibit's three grunt sculpins, which came from a collector in Vancouver, B.C., range from 1 1/4 to 3 inches long. "People will have to look very, very carefully to see them," says Berg. "It's going to be sort of a game to find them."



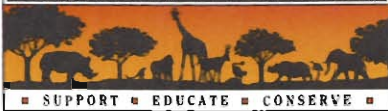
### Colobus Monkey

Arrived: November 3, 1999  
Primates of the World

This white-headed black male monkey was brought to our Zoo from Nebraska's Riverside Zoo to breed. Christopher will be sharing an exhibit with five females, but breeding with only one of them for now, according to primate keeper Trish Khan. "All of the females except one are getting birth-control implants," Kahn says. The female to be bred was picked for her genetic makeup by the coordinator of the Colobus Species Survival Plan (SSP). Any offspring will help preserve the biological diversity of this endangered African species in captivity. Christopher takes the place of Henry who, because of his close relation to all of our females, shouldn't breed with them. Henry's new home is at the Hogle Zoo in Utah.



Zoological Society of Milwaukee County



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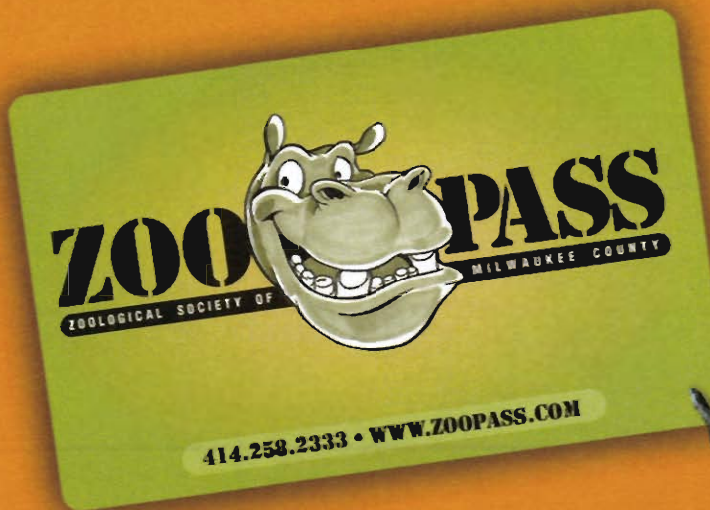
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