

# Alive

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County

January 1999



# PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Looking back, 1998 was an exciting year at the Zoo... animal births – two baby giraffes, an important black rhino, among others; North American river otters stealing the show at the newly renovated Small Mammals building; the new Wong Family Pheasantry; Wisconsin Electric's Bears: Imagination & Reality traveling exhibit and Ameritech's Bats: Masters of the Night exhibit.

But looking ahead, 1999 promises even more excitement for our members and our community. Starting this February through May 2, be sure to visit Wisconsin Electric's engaging To See the Sea traveling interactive exhibit on deep-sea exploration. Then, Dinosaurs of the Lost World and Jurassic Park will find a summer home in the Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building.

Finally, the Zoological Society and Milwaukee County Zoo have taken on the major project of bringing timber wolves to the Zoo and creating a wilderness habitat for them that will encourage their natural pack behavior and give you a chance to become a part of their world. If we can build the exhibit the way we envision it, you will be able to see the wolves nose to nose through a wall of glass for a truly close encounter.

But, to bring wolves back to the Zoo and build their new habitat, we need your help. The project is a \$250,000 endeavor, and we need to raise the funds in just nine months. We hope we can count on you to help us Make the Howl Happen!

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



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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# Alive

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## FEATURES

### 4 SMALL MAMMAL STARS

Oscar and Buddy, the 20-month-old stars of the new Nadine Mundt North American River Otter Exhibit at the Milwaukee County Zoo, are giving visitors to the newly renovated Small Mammals building a daily dose of exuberance.

### 6 SMALL MAMMAL SAMPLING

Where's the newest "in" place at the zoo? Where can you find a kinkajou with kinks, two hot-to-trot kowaris, a sugar glider in a bag, a wild African cat that looks a lot like your house cat, and a squirrel-like acouchi that buries its food? These new animals at the Zoo live in the refurbished Small Mammals building, the Zoo's "in" spot.

### 8 DEEP-SEA DISCOVERY

Take the plunge and come to the Milwaukee County Zoo this season to explore remote ocean habitats, discover the animals that live there and learn about the hazards of the deep sea in the engaging traveling exhibit Wisconsin Electric's To See the Sea. The exhibit runs Feb. 8 through May 2.

### 16 DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Milwaukee County Zoo gorilla and giraffe keepers talk about how they're giving nature a hand when babies are rejected by their parents or when an inexperienced animal joins a group and doesn't know the rules.

Since the renovated Small Mammals building reopened to the public October 19, the animals and their visitors have been enjoying animal exhibits redone to resemble their natural habitats and the updated colorful graphics identifying and describing each animal. The renovation was made possible with funds raised from the Zoological Society's 1997 Annual Appeal.



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## ON THE COVER

Oscar and Buddy,  
North American river otters

# Small Mammal Stars

The stars of the newly remodeled Small Mammals building are definitely the otters. Buddy and Oscar the orphaned otters captivate young and old alike as they slide, dive, splash, dash, slither and dodge their way through the water, rocks,



Doug and Heidi Radix built a wonderful enclosure with pool and slides for the otters they hand-raised.

logs and toys of their Nadine Mundt North American River Otter Exhibit. Of course, one of the brothers often stops long enough to put his nose right up against the window, give you a good look-over, and offer to play.

The story behind the new otters also is the most dramatic and heart-warming of all of the new arrivals in Small Mammals. But before we tell the tale, please note that the

otters are only one of six animal species added when the building was reopened in October '98 (for new animal additions see pages 6 & 7). Plus, thanks to donors who raised \$150,000 for the Zoological Society's 1997-'98 Annual Appeal, the building has new informational signs about each animal, new mnrrals and refurbished exhibits.

Now let's talk of tragedy and tiny miracles. In April 1997, Robert and Sharon Schweitzer of Jefferson, Wis., found a dead otter on their road and called the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. A DNR representative came out, noticed that the otter had been lactating, and told the couple to keep a lookout for baby otters. For a few days the Schweitzers heard chirping in their machine shed and thought it was birds. Finally they realized the chirping was coming from under the floorboards. So they ripped up part of the floor and uncovered a big grass nest filled with — you guessed it — tiny chirping otters.

A call to the DNR led them to Heidi Radix in Sullivan, Wis. "Sharon Schweitzer brought the pups over to me late one night," recalls Radix,

who has been a state-licensed volunteer wildlife rehabilitator for 10 years. "They fit in the palm of my hand. They were in fine shape. We figured they were probably about a week old. It took four more weeks for their eyes to open." That's about normal, she adds. It's also normal for otter pups to stay with their mother for up to 1½ years, as they did with Radix. During that time, she talked with otter experts, read otter books and learned a lot about North American river otters that live in Wisconsin.

These river otters can weigh from 11 to 33 pounds (Oscar and Buddy weighed about 20 pounds each last September). In the wild, they like to eat fish, crabs, frogs, rodents, birds and insects. They are not endangered, but they have declined in population dramatically, except in the northern oceanic coastal and Great Lakes regions. Trapping for otter pelts was once a major threat. In the 1976-'77 season, more than 52,000 pelts were collected in the United States and Canada. Today pollution and habitat destruction are greater threats.

When Oscar and Buddy were 3 months old, they started learning to swim. Heidi and Doug Radix, and their 5-year-old daughter, Dani, taught the otters in their bathtub. "They were scared of the water at first," says Heidi. "We taught them how to swim. Buddy couldn't coordinate holding his breath and closing his ears at the same time, at first. But it didn't take him long to catch on."

There was a problem, however. "In winter they need a mama to teach them how to get through the ice to fish, how to find their way back to the hole and how to keep the hole open," says Radix. That was one of the reasons the experts didn't think the otters could be released into the wild. "I didn't think it was really fair to them to keep them here all the time," she explains. The Radixes had an outdoor pool for the otters, but they could not keep it from freezing solid in winter. And she wanted the otters to be in a place where they could swim all year-round and be around children. "They live to swim, play and eat fish."

When the otters came to the Milwaukee County Zoo on Oct. 12, they took to their large new indoor pool immediately. They had never swum in such deep water, and they were using muscles they didn't know they had. "They played so much, they got so tired that they slept probably the whole next day," says Small Mammals supervisor Nina Schaefer.

"They love their tank, they love the keepers, they love to play with the children [through the glass]. They have adjusted amazingly well," she adds.

So how do you tell which is which? "Buddy is bigger, has a lighter-colored coat and is more outgoing and friendly," says Schaefer. "Oscar is more reserved and slightly smaller, but he tends to be the dominant one. He'll let Buddy go check out a new toy before he plays with it. Buddy seems to have no fear of trying new stuff. Once Oscar knows it's safe, he'll go take it away from Buddy. They play like kids, and then they sleep like kids."

Radix agrees with Schaefer's assessment of the otters' personalities: "Buddy's very affectionate, very playful, very curious, more happy-go-lucky. He's the one that



Oscar and Buddy had only shallow pools before they came to the Zoo. Now they can dive nearly five feet.

always instigates everything. Oscar's a little bit more shy, more scared, more tense. He is a bit more aggressive."

Oscar and Buddy are both playful showoffs. They love to do acrobatics for Zoo visitors. So it is quite appropriate that their exhibit is named after the late Nadine Mundt, a longtime volunteer with Zoo Pride, the Zoological Society auxiliary.

Nadine's husband, Donald Mundt of Elm Grove, said that Nadine first fell in love with otters when wild sea otters "put on a show" for the couple during tours of the California coast and then of Alaskan waters. The Mundt family — including Melissa Rothe and Dr. Melanie Thompson — sponsored the otter exhibit in honor of Nadine Mundt.

Anyone searching for a job would be advised to start out the old-fashioned way. Start talking about your need for a change and, pretty quickly, somebody will know somewhere with an opening.

That's what happened to keeper Liz Bairami, who's spent 23 years of her life in medicine — first as a respiratory therapist at area hospitals and, most recently, as an anesthesia technologist at what used to be the Milwaukee County hospital.

Three years ago, fellow keeper and former hospital colleague Dean Roepke encouraged her to apply for a keeper position at the Milwaukee County Zoo. "He really talked me into it," says Bairami, 43. "I was all set to take a transfer to the County Coroner's office when Dean encouraged me to apply here."

Three years later, Bairami finds herself prepping 40 dishes and pans a day for the Zoo's smallest mammals, washing dishes (lots of them), and — when her daily routine permits — playing with the 1½-year-old sloth she helped hand raise. "Any time I get a chance



One of the otters' keepers is Liz Bairami, shown here with Chewbacca the sloth.

## ON THE JOB Liz Bairami, Small Mammals Keeper

worked at Mequon's North Shore Animal Clinic.

"I thank my lucky stars that I ended up at the Zoo," Bairami says. "All my life I've been in the ER, intensive care units and operating rooms — places where people were in pain. Now, I'm in a place where people want to be. It's a pleasure coming to work every day."

# Small Mammal Sampler

Thanks to the \$150,000 donors contributed to the Zoological Society's 1997-'98 Annual Appeal, the Zoo's refurbished Small Mammals building, which reopened in October, is drawing more people than ever to the far northwest corner of the Milwaukee County Zoo, says Nina Schaefer, building supervisor. She credits a combination of things to the recent peak in attendance to the building that some zoo-goers used to pass up: the new river otter exhibit, featuring new glass, murals and props, more light and re-painted rockwork; bigger exhibits for the ruffed lemurs and cotton-top tamarins; new murals in all the animal exhibits; a renovated fruit bat exhibit; new larger and more colorful informational signs about the animals; cosmetic changes, including refinished floors, ceilings and railings; and, most important, new animals.

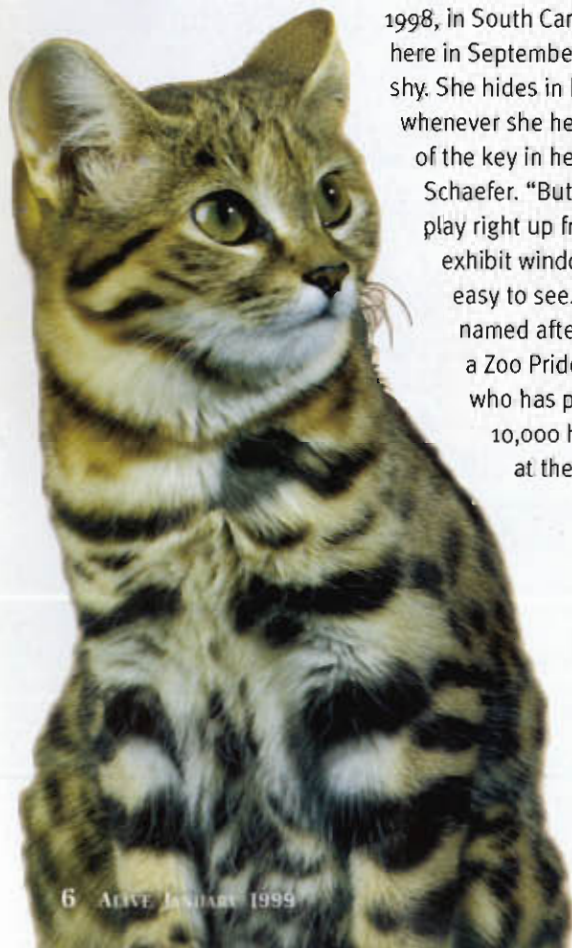
Besides the North American river otters, the Milwaukee County Zoo celebrates the addition of five other species to the Small Mammals building: the African black-footed cat, a kinkajou, two kowaris, an acouchi and a sugar glider. We hope you'll get to know these small creatures through the photos on these pages and the globes showing where they live in the wild, then through winter/spring visits to them in their warm quarters.

## Black-footed cat

Rosie the black-footed cat looks like a house cat, but she is actually a wild African small cat that's still a kitten. "And she loves to play," says Nina Schaefer, supervisor of the Milwaukee County Zoo's Small Mammals building. "We have put some cat toys in her exhibit, but she also likes to play with her food."

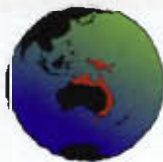


Rosie was born March 9, 1998, in South Carolina and came here in September 1998. "She is shy. She hides in her hollow log whenever she hears the sound of the key in her door," says Schaefer. "But she likes to play right up front near the exhibit window. So she is easy to see." This cat is named after Rosie Vohl, a Zoo Pride volunteer who has put in 10,000 hours at the Zoo!



## Sugar glider

This tiny nocturnal marsupial from Australia sleeps in a bag hanging from a tree! These creatures weigh 3½ to 5½ ounces.



They live in groups containing several adults and their young and all sleep together in the hollow of a tree during the day. In the wild they eat tree sap, nectar, flowers, pollen, insects and occasionally small animals. At the Zoo this female sugar glider gets one-half cup of fresh fruit plus fruit punch, seeds and nuts daily. Sugar gliders cannot fly, but can glide more than 100 feet between trees, controlling direction, speed, and height precisely. A membrane of skin extending from the forelegs to the hindlegs acts as a wing. The tail is used to steer during "flight" and, when not gliding, to carry leaves for the group nest.

## Acouchi

"As rodents go, Gervis [named after a former zookeeper] is a lovely little animal," says keeper Liz Bairami of this shiny, chestnut brown-coated acouchi. It resembles a cross between a Chevrotain deer and a common squirrel. From the tropical rain forests of South America's northern Amazon basin, this spindly legged animal lives on the forest floor, often foraging for leaves, fruit and nuts. The acouchi will dig and then cover up pits to store food for when food is scarce, a habit that helps disperse seeds in tropical forests. At the Zoo, Gervis gets plenty of fruit treats, including apples and pears, plus interaction with other animals. Our sociable acouchi shares his Zoo exhibit with a sloth named Sluggo, dad to baby sloth Chewbacca, and a douroucouli. "Gervis loves his exhibit because he can look out



his nice, new big window to see the squirrels outside," Bairami says. "He finds it enriching."

## Kinkajou

The male kinkajou that arrived here Sept. 29 is nicknamed Baby, but he's not. He was born in July 1993 and is more than 5 years old.

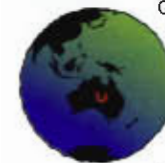


He's also not very babylike in his personality, since he tends to snarl and snap at keepers. "Let's just say he's not a friendly animal," says Nina Schaefer. She notes that kinkajous have been sold as pets, only to have their owners discover that the tiny mammals bite and make a mess. "They're not pets," she warns. "Kinkajous are part of the raccoon family. They're also called honey bears. They love fruit. Baby's daily diet at the Zoo is an orange, a banana, half an apple, five grapes, any other fruit available plus leafeater diet mixture." The last time our Zoo had a kinkajou was 17 years ago, says Schaefer.



## Kowari

The male and female kowaris that are new to Small Mammals were supposed to be introduced to each other gradually through mesh, so they could view each other for a time before physical contact. Well, they were a bit impatient. "The female pushed her body through the corner of the mesh and they started mating immediately. They have been breeding repeatedly," says Nina Schaefer. These nocturnal animals may look a bit like rats, but they are closer to kangaroos and live in central Australia. They weigh only 2 1/2 to 5 ounces and in the wild eat insects, small vertebrates and carrion. Although these marsupials live on the ground, kowaris climb well and can jump more than three times their body length.



**iF** you think there's no such thing as bad publicity, consider the great white shark.

Never a media darling, like, say, Flipper the dolphin, the great white shark has been reviled for centuries as a ruthless predator. Even as sober a tome as the *World Book Encyclopedia* once called sharks such as the great white "vicious and greedy" and a "man-eater."

But it was in the mid-1970s that the great white shark suffered a species' worst nightmare: It starred as a Hollywood villain in the film "Jaws." Since that movie, the mere suggestion of a great white shark has been enough to scare bathers from beaches, even though attacks from them are extremely rare.

At the pinnacle of the food chain, the great white's numbers have never been great. But after its vilification on the silver screen, the great white's population dropped substantially due to fishing pressure. The hunter had become the hunted.

Now, more than 20 years after the film, the tide has begun to change in favor of the oft-misunderstood shark.

Thanks for such an enlightened attitude go largely to underwater photographers like Al Giddings. Giddings and others have captured great whites on film and showed the fish for what they are: skilled predators but certainly not the top menace to humanity. Giddings' work, which includes documentaries and feature films, including "The Abyss," "The Deep," and "For Your Eyes Only," has helped lead to a better understanding of marine life in general. It has also spawned a nationally touring, multimedia exhibit that will be visiting the Milwaukee County Zoo from February 8 to May 2.

A sneak preview for members of the Zoological Society of Milwaukee will be held February 6 and 7.

The exhibit, which will be housed in the Zoo's Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building, will focus on the remote ocean habitats, their exploration, the animals that live there, the challenges of underwater photography and the hazards of the deep sea.

To See the Sea is sponsored by Wisconsin Electric



Atlantic spotted dolphin off the coast of San Salvador

Power Company. Admission to the exhibit will be free.

"If you have to boil this exhibit down, I'd say that its message is one of conservation based on education," says Brian Gibeson, director of research and content development for Academy Studios,

which owns the exhibit and is

based in Novato, Calif., a city in the San Francisco Bay area. "As the technology of under water video and photography improve, so does the public's awareness of the underwater environment and of the importance of preserving life under water.

"Al Giddings' whole idea was to get in the water, film

these animals and let people see them for themselves. The general concept of this exhibit is a celebration of Al Giddings' underwater photography. He's widely acknowledged as one of the best, if not the best, deep-sea videographer and still photographer in the world."

Wisconsin Electric's To See the Sea chronicles the deep-ocean exploration through five exhibit areas and 43 separate displays.

Gibeson offered a glimpse of the exhibition and explains that its content is suitable for children and adults. In addition

to photography and videos, displays of equipment and artifacts, as well as strong interactive components, are common throughout the exhibit.

"Basically, everything is hands on," Gibeson says. "It works well for kids of all ages. But it also has enough depth in its graphics and text to interest adults as well."

To See the Sea opens with a structure depicting a forest of kelp, the sea plants that can form an impenetrable, undersea jungle. Visitors will be able to view deep-ocean diving suits, from relatively primitive dry suits with bulky metal helmets to the latest equipment. There is a nod to the pioneers of deep-sea exploration with the inclusion of a gym suit belonging to the woman with the world record for deepest dive.

"The interactive elements in this portion of the show will deal with the effects of pressure on the human body," Gibeson says.

Denizens of the deepest reaches of the ocean and their special adaptations for life in a high-pressure, low-light environment also will be explored.

Children gather in front of a giant jellyfish video station to learn about how jellyfish have adapted to life in the high-pressure, low-light environment of the deep ocean. The exhibit is just one of several interactive exhibits featured in Wisconsin Electric's To See the Sea, at the Zoo Feb. 8-May 2.



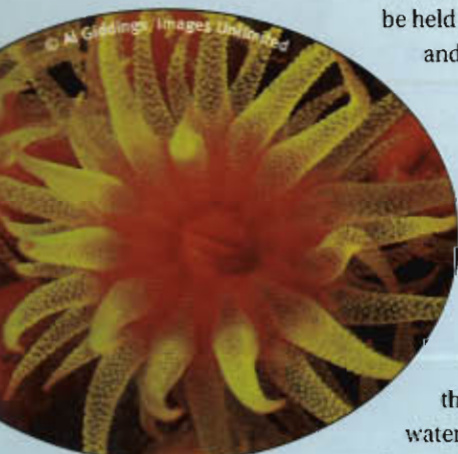
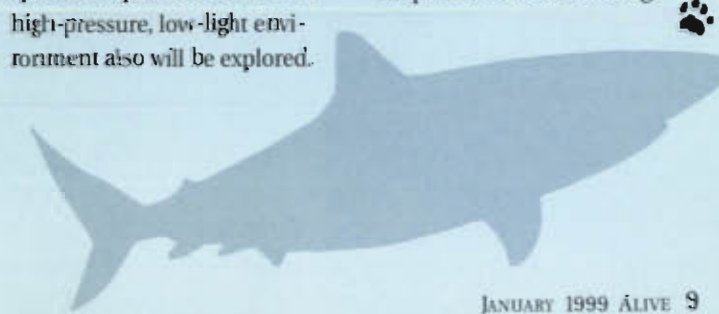
The simple eyes of the jellyfish, for example, are contrasted with the complex vision of the octopus. Here, visitors will be able to examine the life of the giant clam as well.

Other portions of the exhibit deal with recent deep-sea discoveries such as the communities of animals that live in the steamy waters surrounding hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor.

But it likely will be the great white shark's corner of the show that will draw the most attention. A free-standing shark cage and video footage of great white sharks will be featured here. Visitors also will be able to see a shark's jaw, measuring 16 to 18 feet in length.

"Ever since the movie 'Jaws,' there has been a decline in great white sharks because they've been hunted," Gibeson says. "Giddings' work has helped dispel the myth that they're bloodthirsty animals that attack anything in the water."

"They're now recognized as a key element in a healthy ecosystem. Al Giddings helped shape that current thinking."



An anemone from Micronesia's Truk Lagoon

## EDZOOICATION

# ED-OPS explores the world

Robert and Sandra Koch, wearing their Zoo Pride khaki shirts and comfortable walking shoes, are dressed for a world-class adventure.

Today they'll guide 48 students on a tour of Australia, describe its geography and explain how the continent's unique development gave rise to the evolution of animals unlike anything else in the world.

All this without ever leaving the Milwaukee County Zoo.

The students, seventh-graders from Swallow School in Hartland, also come well-prepared for their trip "down under," thanks to lesson plans, activities and worksheets provided by the Zoological Society's ED-OPS program.

When tour guide Sandra Koch points to a flock of large birds outdoors and asks what they are, it takes Megan Schmidt only a moment to shout, "Emus!"

ED-OPS has brought the corners of the world a little bit closer to Megan, her classmates and other school groups over the past five years. A \$200,000 grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute

allowed the Zoological Society's Education Department to design learning stations to capture the interest of third-through eighth-graders.

Although these six learning stations look like simple brown cabinets scattered

throughout the Zoo, they are really more like treasure chests. Collections of furs, bones and other hands-on artifacts bring subjects to life. There's even some fun tucked away—the Australian learning station doesn't just have a skull of a Tasmanian

Devil—Robert Koch shows students a Looney Tunes stuffed animal of you-know-who, too.

"This project not only introduces the world to students, it also excites youth in considering science as a future career," said Zoological Society school program coordinator Chuck Matoush.

The grant that developed ED-OPS ends this year. However, the Zoological Society will continue to offer this valuable learning tool to school groups. A total of 50 groups participated from September through December 1998.

Like all school programs, ED-OPS is free to school groups with paid admission to the Zoo; admission fees are waived for Milwaukee County school groups Nov. 1 through March 31.



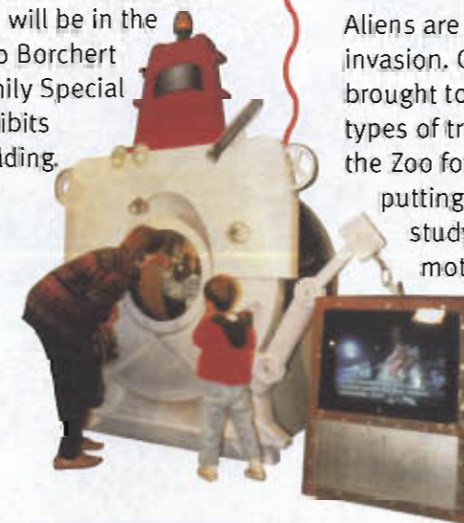
**KIDS**  
Welcome to your new  
Kids Alive pages. Let us know how  
you like them. Write to us at our  
address on page 14.

# KIDS ALIVE

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County — January 1999

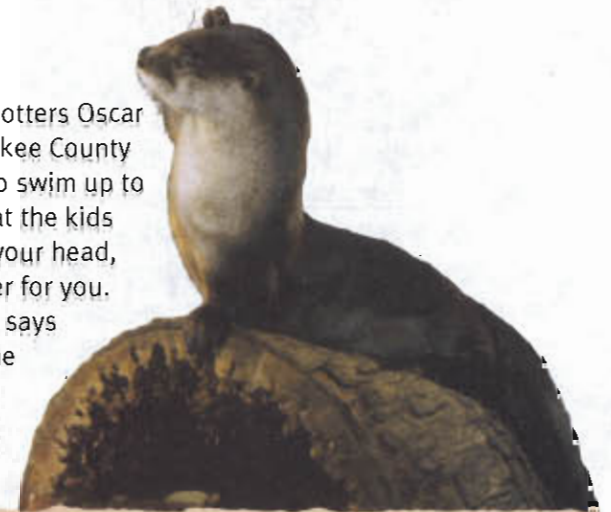
## Sea Explorers

Outer space is exciting, but inner space (the ocean) is truly mysterious. Did you know that deep under the cold ocean waters off the Oregon coast are pockets of very hot water, called hydrothermal vents? The water here can reach 750 degrees! And animals live there! Did you know that an octopus can see under water and has eyes very much like yours? Did you know that there are forests (of kelp) in the ocean? Did you know that scientists can send robot vehicles down to the bottom of the ocean for exploring (see photo)? Make a trip to the Zoo this winter to learn all about the sea. Starting Feb. 8, a touring exhibit called Wisconsin Electric's To See the Sea will be in the Otto Borchert Family Special Exhibits Building.



## Animal News

Have you gone nose to nose yet with otters Oscar and Buddy? They came to the Milwaukee County Zoo in October. These brothers love to swim up to the window in their exhibit and look at the kids watching them. If you wave or jiggle your head, they'll often do acrobatics in the water for you. "They love to play with the children," says Nina Schaefer. She is supervisor of the Small Mammals building, where they live. In this picture, Buddy looks like he's waving back to you.



## Win an Otter!

We know you have a story in you. So if you are age 7, 8, 9 or 10, and would like to try to win a plush-toy otter, write us a story. Your short story must be about water animals. It should fit on one page (two pages if you write big letters), and should be between 100 and 200 words (no more). The story can be made up (fictional) or something that really happened (factual). You may include your own drawing, if you want, if it's on blank white paper.

Winners will be picked based only on their stories, not their drawings. First prize is a plush-toy otter. Second prize is an animal poster. The winning short stories will be published in these *Kids Alive* pages. Send your story to our Budding Author Contest, Zoological Society Education, 10005 W. Blue Mound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226 postmarked no later than February 26, 1999. Include your name, age, phone number and full address.

## Alien Gypsies!

Aliens are invading Wisconsin! And they fly. But kids are helping fight the invasion. Gypsy moths are the aliens. They are native to France. When they were brought to America, they had no enemies. So now they are gobbling up more than 300 types of trees and shrubs. They like oaks best. During the last two summers, 47 kids at the Zoo for Zoological Society camps turned into scientists and tracked gypsy moths by putting up traps and then counting captured moths. They were part of a scientific study conducted by Wisconsin's agriculture department. They found that while the moths are not a great threat to the Zoo now, they could become a problem. The children found 527 moths in their traps last summer, up 64% from summer '97. By eating its leaves (defoliating a tree), moths can kill off a tree in two years. Next summer, children who attend the Butterfly Garden Camp will continue the research and help use safe weapons, called biological controls, to reduce the moth population. An excellent Web site to explore is: [www.gypsymoth.ento.vt.edu](http://www.gypsymoth.ento.vt.edu)



# Shark Zone!

## Shark Search

There are more than 350 shark species in the world. The Milwaukee County Zoo has three: the leopard, horn and the swell shark. See how many of the shark words below you can find in the puzzle and circle them. You may not know what some of the words mean. After you have found all the words, you and your parents can look up the word in a dictionary or encyclopedia.

cartilaginous, Great White, shark, swim bladder, denticles, gill, ampullae, fish, pups

G Z K S W I M B L A D D E R D Z  
 U C I R C V F V B M N M O S T K  
 D S A L O P E Q X P X Z W P L A  
 I N E R Y O W A S U A A H U B I  
 F E J I T A B H A L K Q P P A D  
 S F E D L I U K N L A I W S K A  
 H V K Q A S L N X A R K W E C P  
 A F H S I F I A O E H A R H J A  
 R E D W K T F H G T D V R G A S  
 K A B B F S T A G I A K S F W G  
 G B P E W T T A W X N M E P A I  
 W X V P I O X S E M X O A V L L  
 S A B A R A C X A W C F U A H L  
 A B X D M A F I E J H A T S A P  
 G R E A T W H I T E A K Y A A K  
 A X C Z U A O S E L C I T N E D

## Shark Match Game

To play, match the icon/picture (A-E) with the correct shark (1-5). Be careful—some of these are difficult! You may have to get a shark book and look at the shapes of several sharks to figure out the outline shapes of sharks 1-5 below.



## Animal Facts

### Leopard Shark *Triakis semifasciata*

The location of the leopard shark often determines the habits of individual fish. Along the bottom, leopard sharks sneak about, relying on the element of surprise to catch their food. Within the kelp forest, they often dart through schools of anchovies in search of their next meal. Sharks have excellent hearing and smell, but they also have an acute sensitivity to electric currents. They can detect extremely weak electrical fields produced by their prey.

This fish does not lay eggs. It generally gives birth to between 4 and 30 live pups. Leopard sharks (shown below) are not considered dangerous. They grow to six feet in length and have been known to live 20 years in captivity. Zoo diet: capelin, herring, squid, occasional clam meat.



# Curious Kids

**QUESTION:** I have a water frog. At one time I had two. Did the little frog jump out or did the big frog eat him? — *Emily Sammon, 6, Chicago, Ill.*

*Dear Emily,*  
It is possible that the larger frog did eat the smaller one. I am assuming that the larger frog is a bullfrog. Bullfrogs eat small fish, insects and even smaller frogs of their own species. They also prey on snakes, young alligators, and small mammals. The tadpole (baby frog) uses the small, horn-like appendages around its mouth to gather algae and bacteria from the water. It also feeds on dead fish or animals found in the water. As for the frog jumping out of the tank, this could happen if the sides of the tank were not very high, or if you had a rock too close to the top of the tank.



**QUESTION:** Do male polar bears eat new arrivals like their newborn? How much does a new baby polar bear eat? How many polar bears do you have? — *Jamie Macisak, West Allis, Wis.*

*Dear Jamie,*  
Polar bears eat mainly meat (they're carnivorous), although when hungry enough they will eat just about anything. This includes smaller polar bears. But the mama bear is very protective of her young and will defend them



from the males. Some of their favorite foods include seals (ringed and bearded) and walrus. It is hard to tell how much a baby polar bear eats. It really depends on the individual bear. When cubs are born, they weigh 21 to 25 ounces. When they leave the den at about 4 months old, they can weigh as much as 24 pounds. They gain that weight by drinking mother's milk, which is 31% fat. Here at the Milwaukee County Zoo, we have two adult polar bears: Zero (male) and Aurora (female).

**QUESTION:** What do bats like to eat? — *Djuka Potkonjak, 3*

*Dear Djuka,*  
Most of the bats in the world are insectivores (they eat insects). At the Zoo we have four types of bats in the Small Mammals building: 1) vampire bat, 2) straw-colored fruit bat, 3) Ruwenzori long-haired fruit bat, and 4) Indian flying fox. Vampire bats feed on the blood of animals, especially cows, pigs, and horses. The bat usually picks an animal that is standing a little apart from the rest of the herd. Using its chisel-like incisor teeth, the bat makes a small cut in the animal's skin, and then drinks the blood that flows from the wound. The Indian flying fox, straw-colored fruit bat and Ruwenzori long-haired fruit bat use large, flat molars



to chew up a variety of fruit. They usually spit out the fruit pulp and seeds once they get all the juice.

**QUESTION:** Do otters like being in the snow? — *Kyle Hessenthaler, 6, Brookfield, Wis.*

*Dear Kyle,*  
Oh, yes! Snow is such a wonderful thing to play in, and otters do love to play. They play with rocks or sticks, they play tag and hide-and-seek, they dunk each other in the water, and they wrestle. And, of course, they love to slide on the snow. They can reach speeds of up to 15 miles per hour by alternating running with sliding on the snow. Our two new North American river otters won't play outside in the snow, but they have a great time in their water exhibit in the Small Mammals building.



Kids! Why not make your own post card to send in your questions. You can draw animals on it, like us.



## CONSERVATION CHRONICLES

### Counting the Birds

It was a successful summer and fall for researchers with the Birds Without Borders / *Aves Sin Fronteras* project. In fall they banded 1,810 birds from 69 species, including 477 Tennessee warblers in Pewaukee, an unusually large number. The warblers were on their way to wintering grounds in Central America.



Birds Without Borders is a joint, five-year conservation-education-research project of the Zoological Society and its partner, the Foundation for Wildlife Conservation. The staff bands and counts birds during spring and fall migration and studies migratory and resident birds during the breeding season.

Last summer, researchers located 157 nests in three Wisconsin sites. At the Pewaukee site, they found 56 nests of 19 species, including the Gray catbird, Scarlet tanager and Northern cardinal. At the Rosendale site in central Wisconsin, they found 62 nests of 11 species, including the Bobolink, Sedge wren and Red-winged blackbird. At the top of the state, on the Land O' Lakes site, they located

39 nests of 16 species, including the Nashville warbler, White-throated sparrow and Yellow-bellied flycatcher. Field research continues this winter in Belize, where international coordinator Vicki Piaskowski will be setting up bird banding and nest searching at the two research sites.

The educational portion of the project includes public presentations as well as school programs. Last fall, busloads of children from a variety of schools visited the Pewaukee site to see how researchers band birds, learn about migration routes and do bird observations of their own. Students from West Milwaukee High School, for example, saw Piaskowski demonstrate how she gently catches birds in delicate "mist nets" for banding (see photo.) In November Zoological Society educator Kerry Scanlan visited those same students at their schools to review what they had learned and get them started on their own bird-research projects.

### Aid to Bonobos

During the unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo last summer and fall, the Zoological Society of Milwaukee joined with other conservation groups and zoos in an emergency relief effort for captive bonobos in Kinshasa, the capital city. During the political instability, extreme food shortages and power/water outages threatened humans as well as animals. Conservationists raised \$4,500, including \$1,000 from our Zoological Society, to feed bonobos and chimpanzees.

"This is the second time we've done a bonobo relief effort using our bonobo-conservation T-shirt fund," says Society conservation coordinator Gay Reinartz. Two years ago we helped a male bonobo named Viaje who lives at a Mexican safari park called Zoofari.

"Since he was an animal alone, and bonobos are highly social, we wanted to

explore relocating him to Milwaukee's large bonobo group," says Reinartz, who also is coordinator of the Bonobo Species Survival Plan (SSP).

Before Viaje could be imported into the United States, his health had to be checked. "Sales of our bonobo T-shirts funded a veterinary team to go down to Zoofari to do extensive health exams on him." He was found to be healthy, and, as a result, the SSP recommended that he be transferred to the Milwaukee County Zoo on a breeding loan so he could be with nine other bonobos here. Our Zoo now is waiting for an import permit, but Viaje's arrival is imminent.

The Society sells forest-green bonobo T-shirts for \$15 each to help in such conservation efforts. To order T-shirts or donate to our emergency-relief effort, call (414) 276-0339, ext. 306.



One of the Milwaukee County Zoo's bonobos



# Dangerous Liaisons

In the wild when a new animal is born or joins a herd, nature has a way of taking care of things. The animal is strong enough to survive and bonds with others or it doesn't — and dies. But at the Milwaukee County Zoo, each animal is precious. So zookeepers try to give nature a hand when a baby is rejected by its parents or an inexperienced animal joins a group and doesn't know the ground rules.

This summer, for example, for the first time in many years, the Zoo had two giraffe calves at the same time, born within two months of each other. On July 14 Skye was born in the outside yard to Rahna, a first-time mom who did not bond with her calf. Instead she became aggressive, kicking at Skye whenever the calf tried to nurse. Skye was separated from the herd for her own protection. On Sept. 15, Gudrun was born to an experienced mom, Malindi, who carefully protected her.

In the wild, Skye would have died. But here the zookeepers bottle-fed and comforted her. Soon she was old enough to go into the same space with Rosza, the herd's 2-year-old. Rosza, too young to have a calf herself, adopted Skye. "She nuzzles Skye and she

gets in between Skye and Rahna if Rahna starts acting up," says giraffe zookeeper Tracey Dolphin.

As part of giving nature a helping hand, the zookeepers were careful about how they introduced vulnerable Skye into the herd, which this summer consisted of Malindi (a six-time mom), Rahna, Rosza, baby Gudrun and Kio (the father of Skye and Gudrun). Kio is always kept separate, until keepers are ready to breed him with one of the females.

After Skye was put in with Rosza for a while, she was

introduced to Gudrun and Malindi in an area without Rosza.

Then all four of them were put together. It wasn't until Oct. 2 that Rahna was put back in with Skye and the other females.

"You first introduce the animals that are easy-going and will be more comfortable," explains Dolphin. "The last one to be introduced is the one most likely to cause problems." In this case, that was Rahna.

One of the best things that happened to Skye was Gudrun's birth. Within a week of the birth, zookeepers introduced Skye to Gudrun and her mom, Malindi. "The first day the calves were very curious about each other, but they didn't do much. Then, after a few days, they started to bond," says zookeeper Beth Roszak (and, yes, Rosza is named after her). "Now they sleep together and run together."

Adds Dolphin: "It turned out to be an invaluable tool to have another calf that Skye could bond to." Left by herself, without a strong mother or a diverting playmate, Skye would have had a hard time — even with Rosza's occasional mothering. But with a playmate whose mom, Malindi, is leader of the herd, Skye has an advantage. "By the time we introduced Rahna back to the herd, Gudrun and Skye had bonded, and they would stay together and go by Malindi for protection."

While this summer was an unusual event for

the giraffe keepers, introducing new animals to the group in a way that keeps them safe is an everyday event for Claire Richard in the Stearns Family Apes of

**Malindi watches over her calf, Gudrun, and the young Skye, who was born two months before her playmate Gudrun.**

Africa Pavilion. She works with the gorillas, an older and much more complicated group than giraffes.

The gorilla group consists of three older females and three significantly younger males: Femelle, 36; Linda, 34; Ngajji, 32; Cassius, 12; Maji Maji, 7; and Hodari, almost 4. (The previous silverback, Joe Willy, died in December 1997 of neuromuscular problems.) The two gorillas that are being introduced to the rest are Hodari, who came to Milwaukee in September 1997, and Cassius, who arrived in February 1998.

For Hodari, it's the first group setting he has been in," says Richard. "He was hand-raised from Day 1 at the Cincinnati Zoo. Within the first 16 hours of life, he was injured by his father, and they needed to pull him from the group for surgery and rehabilitation." For the first 2 1/2 years of his life, other than a few months when he had contact with a younger gorilla, Hodari learned his socialization from humans. He came to Milwaukee so he could become part of a gorilla family and learn to be a gorilla.

"Gorillas that are completely or partially hand-raised are often at a disadvantage for knowing proper gorilla behavior and etiquette," notes primate curator Jan Rafert.

Unfortunately, none of our Zoo's females took over as Hodari's mom. In fact, when he first was put in with Linda, who's the smallest and probably the most docile female, things didn't go as well as the staff had hoped. "He was basically cuddling in her arms," recalls Richard. "He had been used to playing in our arms, playing with our hair, gently wrestling. He started playing with Linda's head and playfully slapping her [which would be inappropriate in the wild], and she pushed him away. I'm sure he was confused. He went back to play, and she started banging on the doors and following him, trying to intimidate him. She tried to make him submit by pinning him to the floor and mouthing him [in a pretend bite]. He was terrified." After that, Hodari was more cautious around Linda.



When 32-year-old Claire Richard was a child, becoming a zookeeper was her dream job — "like being an astronaut," she says. It's not something she ever expected to happen. In fact, when she started work at the Milwaukee County Zoo in 1987, it was for the grounds department, not working with animals.

"I was just walking through the Zoo and saw they were taking applications for summer help. I worked as a park attendant and custodian and then got a seasonal position in the children's zoo in 1989," she says. Eventually she became a roving zookeeper, working throughout the Zoo. "I recall speaking with Claire back in 1987, encouraging her to hang in there," says Sam LaMalfa, a longtime gorilla keeper known for his work with Samson the gorilla. "I knew she would do well, although I didn't realize then that someday she would step in my place as principal gorilla keeper." Neither did Richard, who never guessed that she might take the place of a man she greatly admired. "I thought Sam would be here forever," she says. But in 1995 he retired, and later that year, Claire Richard became principal gorilla keeper in the Stearns Family Apes of Africa building.

"I fell in love with the job," she says. She also fell in love with another primate zookeeper, James Richard, who has worked at the Zoo since 1981. They were married last July and live in Brown Deer.

Late in 1995, keepers began a training program with the gorillas that had been started with the Zoo's bonobos in 1994 (see October 1998 *Alive*). The training method, called operant conditioning, slowly shapes animal behavior by rewarding them for every small step that leads to the behavior the keeper wants, such as turning their backs toward the keeper for health inspections.

"The gorillas are nowhere near as advanced as the bonobos. They're not as tactile. So you have to get them used to being touched. Just getting them to present different body parts was a major thing," explains Richard. Now, however, some of the gorillas will sit still for drug injections or a temperature reading with a rectal thermometer. And any wounds can get treated. The training means that they can get better medical care.

It's rewarding work for a woman who loved animals but didn't have many pets as a child ("I was the youngest of nine, and my dad said we had enough mouths to feed"). Now she gets closer than most people ever imagine to some of the world's largest primates.

continued on next page

# SERENGETI CIRCLE

His first meeting with the older Femelle, however, went even worse. It lasted only a few seconds. "While gorillas usually are mild-mannered, Femelle is a very dominant, aggressive female," explains Richard. "We barely had the door open, and she was on top of him. She bit two of his toes. We feared for his safety."

Hodari was introduced to Maji Maji last summer, in hopes that the two young ones would become playmates. Maji is more socially adjusted because he was raised partly by an adult female gorilla and had both male and female role models. "Hodari and Maji played real well when just the two were together," says Richard. "But when the two were in the same space with Linda, Maji would try to act tough in front of her, banging on doors and scaring the little guy." So now Hodari and Maji play together by themselves every day, for hours at a time. They've become buddies.

"With gorilla troupes, each individual that comes or goes totally changes the hierarchy," explains Richard. "If you take Femelle out, Maji and Ngajji team up against Linda. If you put Maji together with Femelle, he stays away from her."

"To keep tension at a minimum, it's extremely important that anytime we have interactions or introductions, we set it up so that there are no corners that a gorilla can get caught in, so that one gorilla can't block the doorway and intimidate the other. There also are 'sight barriers,' like a wall, so that if one wants to get away and not be seen by the other, he or she can. They are less likely to bother each other if they can't see each other constantly. We also make sure there is plenty of room so that they can run around and burn off energy, if they need to. We'll scatter the food and the toys so that they have other things to focus on than the newer animals."

It doesn't always work.

Cassius, a 400-pound male, is slowly trying to establish dominance and become leader of the group. He has mated with two of the females. And he has bitten every

gorilla except

Femelle.

Normally, in

the wild, says

Richard,

the male

would

just clamp on enough until the other animal submitted, causing, at worst, a puncture wound. But Cassius bit Hodari in the leg and drew blood, although the wound turned out not to be serious. Cassius also gave Linda two bad slashes on her right upper arm, and Cassius bit Maji's arm.

"In the wild, Cassius, at age 12, would either be starting several years as a lone silverback before forming his own group, or be subordinate to his father, from whom he eventually would inherit the group," says Rafert. "But Cassius did not have adult role models. He was hand-raised for eight months and then raised with two similar-aged females. Now he's looking for his place in society, and he sometimes uses more force than is necessary - something seen rarely in wild gorillas."

Adds Richard: "Even though Cassius has injured the others, he's not an aggressive animal. He is just immature and doesn't know how to deal with the other animals, and he doesn't know his own strength. He tends to run from them when they're in groups or in pairs - and only start chasing them after they've chased him enough. When he was first introduced to the females, it seemed to be a game to him: getting chased and then turning and chasing them. But then the tension built, and he had to let them know that he's a silverback. He wanted to be the dominant one."

Cassius is staying only with Femelle now, separated from the others. The puzzle for zookeepers is: Should they try to introduce Cassius back into the full group or just put him in with the females to breed? And should Hodari be re-introduced to Cassius and/or Femelle, or should they wait until he's bigger and can defend himself better?

"It's all extremely complex, especially dealing with a little one who doesn't know what it's really like to be a gorilla and a young adult (Cassius) who doesn't know his role, either," says Richard.

Sounds as if the modern definition of zookeeper is animal psychologist.



Cassius, a 400-pound male lowland gorilla, is slowly trying to establish dominance and become leader of the group.

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The Cheerios honey bee greets guests at the Milwaukee County Zoo for a Family Free Day sponsored by Roundy's Pick'n Save and General Mills. Everybody gets into the Zoo free on these Family Free Days in 1999: Jan. 9, Feb. 6, March 13, April 10, Nov. 6 and Dec. 4.

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Linda Grunau  
Community Leader

*"My love for the Zoo started as a child when it was in Washington Park and I'd go often with my grandmother. The Platypus Society gives me the opportunity to continue to support something that's important to me and the other children and families in our community. As I travel and visit other zoos around the country, I come away knowing what a jewel of a zoo we have and how lucky the Milwaukee community is. Every time I visit our zoo I get excited about all of the wonderful things my support of the Platypus Society and the Zoological Society have done. The Platypus Society can always count on my support."*

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- Oak Crest Assisted Living
- Omni Tech Corporation
- + PBBS Equipment Corp.
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- Time Warner Cable
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- \* Unique Exteriors
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- Viller Foundation, Inc.
- Wauwatosa Savings Bank
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- Bay Group Staffing Ltd.
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- Dr. Gil & Lillian Boese
- Building Services, Inc.
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5 year Platypus Society Member in bold (updated each fall)

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Friends contributing to the Platypus Society after November 20, 1998, will be recognized in the next issue of *Alive*.



## NEW MEMBERS

The Zoological Society welcomes the following new Platypus Society members as of November 20, 1998:

### CORPORATE I \$1,000-\$1,499

- Country Inn Hotel & Conference Center
- Crivello Carlson Menikowski & Steeves S.C.
- Fleet Mortgage Group
- Johnson Bank
- Midway Hotels
- Northern Trust Company
- Oak Creek Assisted Living
- Schmidt & Bartelt Funeral Service

### PATRON \$500-\$999

- Peggy & John Beckwith
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## NEW GIFT LEVELS

The Zoological Society thanks the following members for their increased levels of giving:

### GOLD CORPORATE \$5,000-\$9,999

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- Heinemann's Restaurants

### PATRON I \$1,000-\$1,499

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The Platypus Society is a group of about 385 Milwaukee-area foundations, corporations and individuals that contribute more than \$444,000 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 Joan Rudnitzki at (414) 276-0843.



## WHAT'S GNU

### Black Rhinoceros

**Pachyderm Mall**

Born: October 22, 1998

Weighing 78 pounds at birth, Buster the black rhinoceros was one big baby. And officials at the Milwaukee County Zoo couldn't be happier. This rhino born to Barley (shown with Buster in photo) and Brewster was an exciting addition to the world's population of critically endangered black rhinos, which number only about 2,500 in the wild. Buster is Barley's third offspring. Rhinos, which can weigh up to 3,250 pounds when fully grown, live in the southern countries of Africa. When Buster matures, he'll likely move on to another site to help propagate the species, says Dave Sorensen, area supervisor for pachyderms. Meanwhile, he will drink mother's milk for six months to a year — until his developing horn becomes uncomfortable to Barley — and then start eating solid foods such as alfalfa/timothy hay, sweet potatoes, carrots and high-fiber pellets.

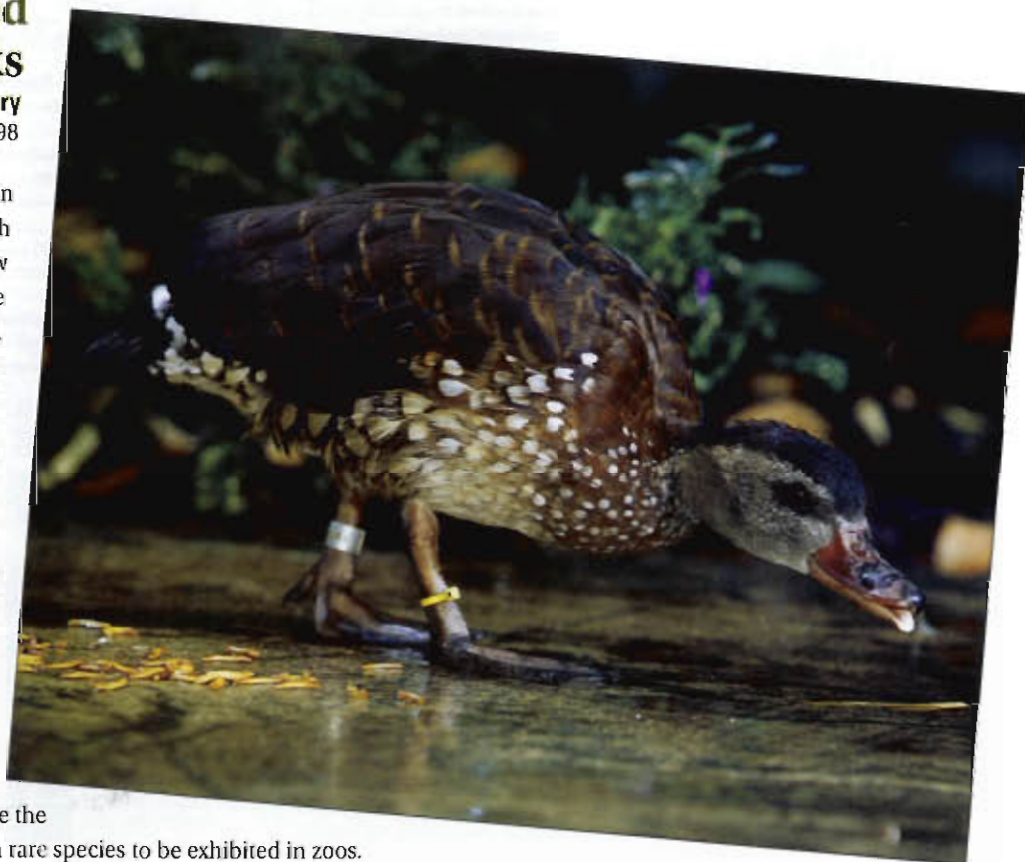
Buster already has tried to show the keepers who's boss in his enclosure. "He'll run up to you in a little mock charge," Sorensen says. "But he doesn't quite know what to do when he gets to you. So he hops up and down. It's kind of cute."

### Spotted Whistling Ducks

**Herb & Nada Mahler Family Aviary**

Arrived at Zoo: June 30, 1998

Lucy and Ethel, naturally, find themselves in the "middle of everything," says Elizabeth Joseph about the Milwaukee County Zoo's new spotted whistling ducks. The female pair owe their names to the old "I Love Lucy" sitcom, featuring Lucy and her friend, Ethel, facing one predicament after another. The Zoo's Lucy and Ethel haven't found themselves in hot water yet, says Joseph, a zookeeper. But they do make themselves noticed. "When they come on the scene, the other ducks give them their due respect," Joseph says. "They move right out of the way." As their name suggests, Lucy and Ethel have a striking appearance and a gift for gab. "They're very visitor-friendly," Joseph says. "They stay out in the open, they like to watch people, and they make that whistling sound continuously." The spotted whistling duck is from New Guinea, where the bird's habitat is threatened, and is a rare species to be exhibited in zoos.



### Northern Water Snake

**Aquatic & Reptile Center**

Born: October 12, 1998

Consider the female northern water snake at the Milwaukee County Zoo part reptile and part magician. Although she hasn't been with a male snake since 1996, the female gave birth this fall. "This particular baby snake may not have a father," says Craig Berg, curator of reptiles and fish at the Zoo. This unusual form of reproduction is uncommon, to say the least, and often leads to the birth of young with partially developed reproductive organs. The northern water snake is fairly common to Wisconsin waters. But it is often mistaken for a water moccasin and killed, Berg says. There are no water moccasins in Wisconsin.



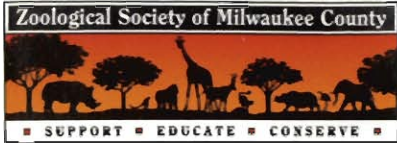
### Eclectus Parrots

**Herb & Nada Mahler Family Aviary**

Arrived at Zoo: May 13, 1998

Zookeeper Gene Emer chuckles when he reveals the names of the Milwaukee County Zoo's new Eclectus parrots: Stop and Go. Truly fitting, in view of the bright red feathers that cover Stop, the female, and the green plumage on Go, her male partner. The two Indonesian birds, which arrived at the Zoo in the summer of 1998, are part of an ambitious training program that aims to make them more tolerant of the contact needed for medical exams. So far, they've shown a willingness to perch on command and enter a crate, reports Emer. "I'm amazed at their intelligence," he says. "It approaches or surpasses a dog's. If we can get them to respond to commands, we can avoid a great deal of trauma for them."





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