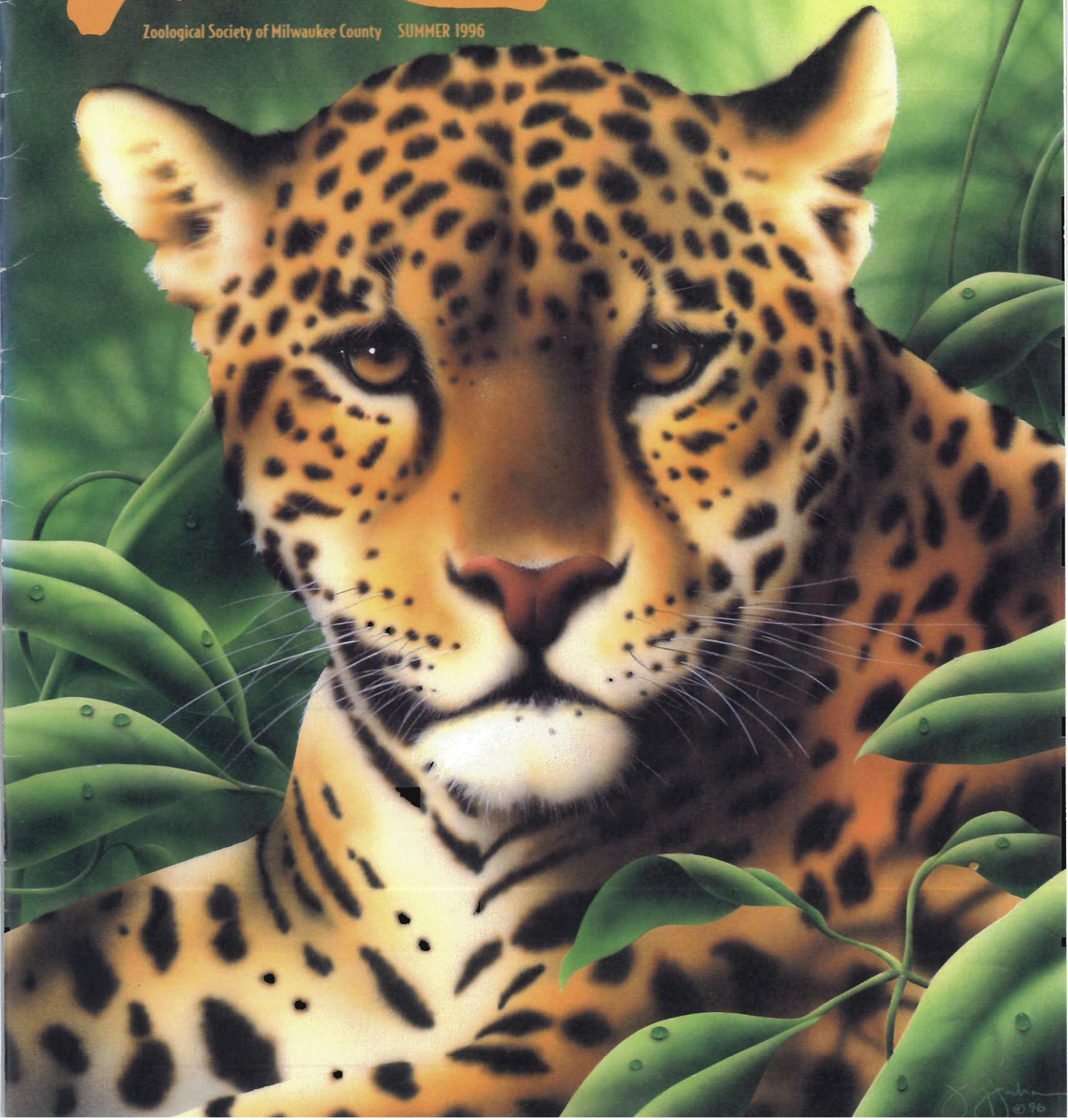


Alive

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County SUMMER 1996





Last issue, I wrote about the very important role your membership plays in the Zoological Society's ability to support Zoo programs and operations. In this letter, we recognize the other sources of income vital to the Zoological Society's future.

Upholding the Society's mission of supporting our Zoo, educating our community about wildlife and the environment and conserving species demands increased support each year. To raise the dollars we need to maintain our consistently high-quality education, conservation and Zoo-support programs, we depend on our loyal members, donors, event-goers, volunteers and Platypus Society members (recognized in each issue of *Alive* magazine).

However, as the demand for important annual operating support increases, the Zoological Society welcomes new partners in conservation, education and Zoo support, including members of the newly established...

Serengeti Circle, our special circle of community leaders that sponsor Zoo and Zoological Society events, exhibits and attractions, programs and promotions. You can find a list of these important corporations and foundations in each issue of *Alive*.

Simba Society, a group of our special friends who give major lifetime gifts to the Zoological Society through their wills or estate plans, protecting vital wildlife habitat and our fine Milwaukee County Zoo for generations to come. Please watch for more details on the Simba Society in future issues of your new newsletter, *Wild Things*.

Combined, the important support we receive from all of our friends will help us face the future challenge of strengthening our programs and improving the Zoo.

Thank you, as always, for helping us grow.

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



The mission of the Zoological Society is to support the Milwaukee County Zoo, 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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Half a world away, Milwaukee County Zoo Supervisor Daron Graves discovers fire, land-clearing and disease are fast adding up to an uncertain future for Australia's furry ambassador.

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If you haven't explored Ameritech's Destination Dinosaur II yourself, meeting the massive beasts through the eyes of children is the next best thing.

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In an innovative science program initiated by Zoological Society of Milwaukee educators, the University of Wisconsin Extension and teachers from Wisconsin's Fox Valley, children are exploring animals and the Zoo with major support from Kimberly-Clark.

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A look at what one Zoological Society-supported researcher is doing in the forest and in her village about conserving the most endangered of the great apes.

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Jaguar-After The Rain by Jay Jocham

Artwork endowed by Gretchen and Andrew Dawes Endowment, Inc.





Milwaukee DOWN UNDER

AUSTRALIA

Cute and cuddly though it may be, the koala faces big trouble. Intense residential and commercial development, disease and fire have exacted a heavy toll on the Australian marsupial, says Milwaukee County Zoo Australian Area Supervisor Daron Graves, who witnessed the koala's plight first-hand during a recent visit to the species' Eastern Australia home range. There, stands of eucalyptus trees have been felled by developers to make room for new housing for humans.

"Eastern Australia is the most populous part of the country, and it's where most of the koalas live as well," Graves says. "Eucalyptus trees go down and subdivisions go in. A lot of the towns near the coast are being built up incredibly fast."

Changes in the eucalyptus forest keenly affect koalas, Graves says. Koalas, which grow to a length of about two feet and stand about one foot at the shoulder, live on the limbs of certain eucalyptus trees and feed exclusively on their leaves and buds.

While there are about 650 types of eucalyptus trees in Australia, koalas dine on the leaves of only about 100. They eat a little more than two pounds of the leaves and buds per day.

The koala, with its thick, soft, gray fur and yellowish-white belly, requires about two-and-a-half acres of living space.

The Australian Koala Foundation estimates that about 80% of the animal's habitat has been destroyed by agriculture, road and home building over the last 200 years. Meanwhile the remaining 20% of the koala's range is unprotected.

Further, the foundation notes that as much as 70% of the trees the koalas feed on are threatened by development. Living in

proximity to humans causes other problems. Slow afoot, koalas often are struck by motorists. Defenseless, koalas also fall prey to dogs.

Disease also has hit koalas hard. Researchers have found that two in five koalas suffer from chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease. The malady can blind koalas, leave females infertile, cause pneumonia and bladder infections, and in some cases lead to death.

As if those problems were not enough, Graves notes that fires, intentionally set, also endanger the koala's well-being. In the two weeks Graves spent in Australia, he said he found few mature eucalyptus trees. Many tree-dwelling animals, such as koalas, rely on older, more fire-resistant trees to survive the periodic blazes. Koalas climb up high in the taller trees to avoid the intense heat. Graves explains that so-called backfires often are set in and around the eucalyptus forest. The idea is to burn off underbrush and tree litter before it can build up to a level that would fuel a conflagration.

"The problem is that when you play

with fire, sometimes it gets out of control," Graves says. "They had a big fire in '94 and some areas that I saw were burned out and totally destroyed."

"When you look at the problems facing koalas, it's not one simple thing that can be addressed. It's a number of different things that affect prime koala habitat and threaten them with local extinction in some areas."

While the situation appears grave, there are, happily, reasons to believe that humans and koalas can live together, Graves says.

Important work by the Koala Foundation, funded in part by the

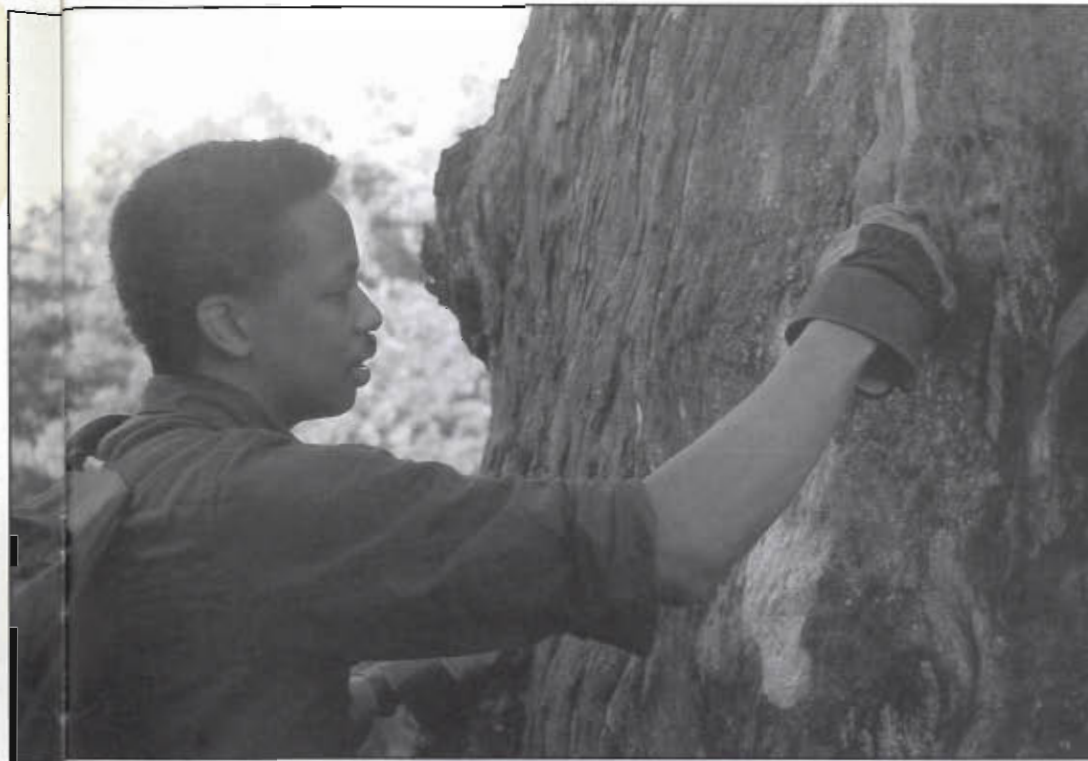


photo courtesy of Georganne Irvine, San Diego Zoo

GEOGRAPHY



Australia



photo courtesy of Georganne Irvine, San Diego Zoo



photo courtesy of Ron Garrison, San Diego Zoo

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Daron Graves, Milwaukee County Zoo Australian Area Supervisor, examines a eucalyptus tree for koala scratch marks and the presence of the koalas themselves during a recent trip to Australia. Graves was in Australia to assist the Australia Koala Foundation with conservation field work. Road and highway construction is slashing through thousands of acres of prime koala habitat, displacing numerous koalas in the wild. Koalas already have lost 80 percent of their eucalyptus forest homes to urbanization; most of the remaining habitat is unprotected.

Zoological Society of Milwaukee County, already had prevented the wholesale destruction of thousands of acres of prime koala habitat. One initiative, known as the Koala Atlas Program, employed sophisticated computer and satellite technology to pinpoint key koala habitat.

Armed with scientific data, advocates for the koala were able to convince Australian officials that a planned super-

highway would have slashed through 25,000 acres of prime koala quarters and displaced more than 4,000 of the animals. Officials ultimately re-routed the highway to accommodate the koalas.

Graves points out that there have been smaller, yet no less significant victories, as well.

Developers, he says, have been working to find ways to cushion their impact on

koalas. Instead of leveling mature eucalyptus trees, residential home builders now incorporate the forest in their subdivisions.

"We can only hope for more happy compromises in these areas," Graves says. "With local groups working with developers on koala habitat and look forward to creating more koala-friendly subdivisions."





Keepers of the Wild



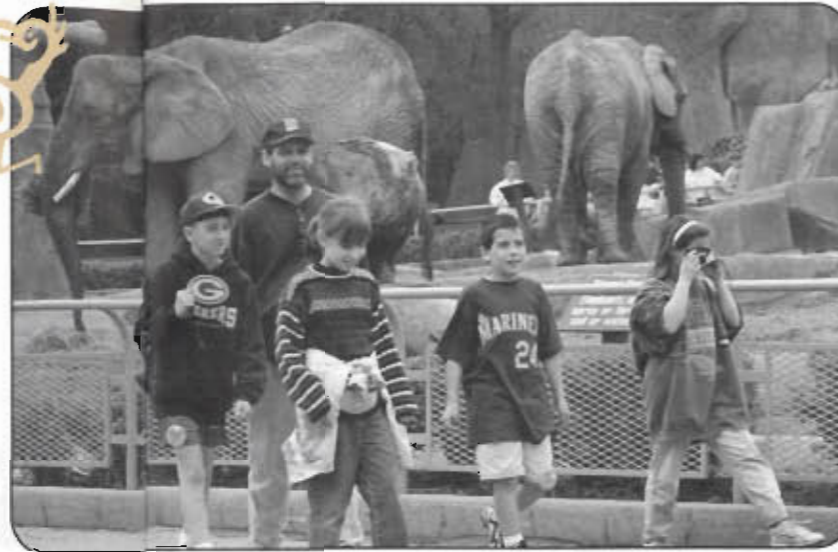
The children were delighted. Some had been awakened at 5:30 a.m. for this trip. They had traveled in school buses for almost two hours. It was damp and cool, but no matter. They were seeing elephants and koalas and otters.

"Several of them have never been to the Zoo and probably would not have had the opportunity to ever come," said third grade teacher Lynn Lee from Westside School in Kimberly. "So they're really excited."

The Zoo visit was a small part of a science curriculum called "Keepers of the Wild" that was introduced last spring to all

the public and private elementary schools in the Fox River Valley. This year-long, animal-exploration curriculum for grades three through five was produced by the Zoological Society of Milwaukee with \$50,000 from Kimberly-Clark. That grant also provided a \$200 subsidy for each of the nearly 100 schools to send children to the Milwaukee County Zoo.

"Without the \$200 grant from



A class from Westside School in Kimberly visited the Zoo as part of "Keepers of the Wild" activities. From left are Chris Femal, 9, of Kimberly; parent Chuck Tysver of Darboy; Amy Drum, 8, of Harrison; Josh Tysver, 9; and Nikki Casper, 9, of Kimberly.

Kimberly-Clark, we probably would not even have considered coming," said Lee. "The grant allowed us to say: Let's try it. The kids had to be at school by 6:30 a.m. The buses cost us \$500, but the \$200 was partial payment, and it got us going." The school district picked up the rest of the cost for the 80 kids on the trip.

As for the curriculum itself, Lee said that it was a great complement to the third graders' regular science text. "The best parts were the hands-on things, like snake-skin and feathers." And children have enjoyed activities such as the endangered-species game, a "board" game where they are the moving pieces. Plus, during the Zoo visit, the students heard a talk on animal adaptations and got to touch such artifacts as an alligator jaw and deer antlers, which brought to life pages from their science book.

Written by educators from the Zoological Society's Education Department and from the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, "Keepers of the Wild" has three units, each with a kit of materials ranging from teacher-background data to games and animal-fact cards for the students. The units focus on: 1) habitats and food chains (where animals live and what they eat), 2) animal adaptations and Wisconsin's Endangered Species, and 3) environmental issues around the globe and ecology careers.

"Keepers of the Wild" is espe-

cially unusual because it involved the elementary schoolteachers from the start and because it will continue to involve them over several years," said Mary Thiry, director of the Zoological Society's Education Department and associate professor with the University of Wisconsin Extension.

The curriculum was developed after a survey of Fox River Valley teachers found that they needed more hands-on science materials about animals and that visiting the Milwaukee County Zoo often was too expensive a trip for their pupils. Six Fox River Valley teachers from six schools then were recruited to be on an advisory committee that served as a guiding force in the writing of "Keepers of the Wild."

"We are establishing a long-term, working relationship with all the elementary schools in the Fox River Valley," said Thiry. "We'll add enhancements to the three basic kits annually, such as a computer disc we're adding this fall. We'll be providing educational newsletters at least twice a year to students and their teachers. And we here at the Zoological Society also will serve as an ongoing resource by answering questions from students throughout the year."

The Zoological Society first introduced "Keepers of the Wild" last March in a program at Lakeview School in Neenah. Terry Murray, Kimberly-Clark Vice President, presented the curriculum kits to several students. Kimberly-Clark, which now has headquarters in

Dallas, Texas, has a long history in the Fox River Valley, and Mr. Murray's own children had attended Lakeview School.

"Keepers of the Wild" is part of the Zoological Society's expansion of its education programs into the Fox River Valley. The Society's goal is to give children in other parts of the state some of the same resources and information about animals and conservation that it has provided to Milwaukee-area children for years. The expansion has been possible



Third-graders from Westside School in Kimberly are awed by an alligator jaw.



In a classroom experiment, ten-year-olds Cynthia Petersen and Ryan Batley of Lakeview School in Neenah learn how to test for blood types.

thanks to funds from sponsoring businesses that are concerned about education. For example, Roundy's Pick'n Save has sponsored Care for Critters programs in the Fox River Valley area and in Madison. Care for Critters is a wildlife outreach program that helps children learn how to live safely and compatibly with wildlife in their neighborhoods.

Helping Zoo Animals Have Fun

How do you bring excitement and variety to a Zoo animal's environment? Ask some kids. That was indeed the question posed last spring to 26 students ages 9 to 13. They were all members of the Science



Adventures Club studying animal behavior, a Saturday afternoon program run by Lee Anne Norris of the Zoological Society's Education Department.

First, students learned that behavioral enrichment for Zoo animals means encouraging activities that animals would do in the wild and reducing abnormal pacing or other actions that Zoo animals sometimes repeat. Then students made a scientific observation of the animals they selected and compared the behaviors observed to how these animals would behave in the wild. Then they brainstormed.

The jaguar group came up with two ways to enrich the exhibit of Valera, the Zoo's only jaguar: 1) Distribute the scent of a small prey animal around Valera's exhibit, with pieces of meat next to it, to get her to explore her area; 2) Drill holes in a hard

plastic ball, put meat inside it and let Valera play with it. "The first time she had it, she actually pounced on it," says Feline Area Supervisor Neil Dretzka, who helped the students polish their ideas. "Then she cradled it against her chest (see photo)."

Says Norris: "This was a wonderful authentic, hands-on, scientific process. Kids

this young don't get a lot of chances to do that." Students came up with enrichments for the Japanese macaque monkeys, mohols (bushbabies) and tayras (weasel-like mammals). Kracor Inc., a Milwaukee plastics molder, donated balls for the projects. Norris coordinated limited science clubs this summer and plans to do another in winter.

Recycled Zoo

It was a zoo within a zoo when owls, pigs and monster mosquitoes took up habitat in the Stackner Heritage Farm in May and June. They were all part of the Recycled Zoo, a display of Wisconsin animals created from recyclable

materials. Sponsored by Miller Brewing Company, this "zoo" involved 70 schools and, new this year, several 4-H clubs.

Recycled Zoo is remarkable because of the number of goals it accomplishes. Children learn about recycling: what's not biodegradable, other uses for plastic, damage human waste products do to animals.

Then, by making creatures from "scratch," they get a three-dimensional view of animals: How do the feathers go together on birds, for example?

Another lesson is teamwork. A class may work together on an animal, as did a fourth-grade class at Durkee Elementary School of Kenosha in creating a great horned owl from plastic bags (see photo). The project also brings increased awareness of the Zoo and the need to protect animals.

"Wild About Wisconsin: Recycle" was the theme of this third year of Miller's Recycled Zoo. Last year it was aquatic animals and in

'94, it was dinosaurs. Everyone who participated was invited to the Zoo and to hear folk singer David Drake play biodegradable instruments and sing "recycled songs."



KIDS!

When you are finished reading this page, get out your crayons and color the animals, just like in your coloring books.



Alive

for kids and families

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY SUMMER 1996

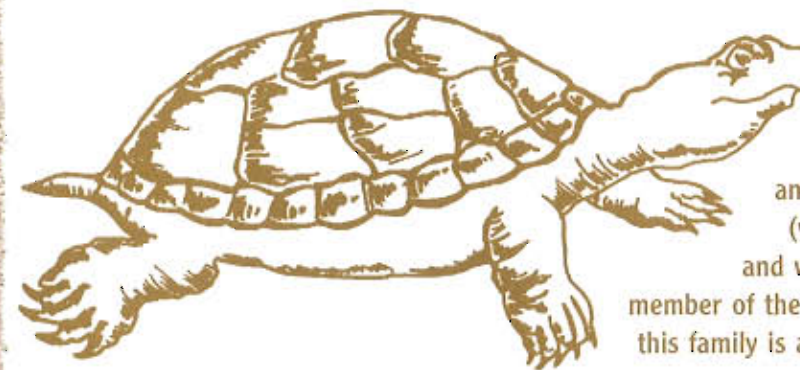
PULL-OUT SECTION



Did you know that dinosaurs were not the only creatures alive during the times when they roamed the Earth? Look for the following animals when you visit Ameritech's Destination Dinosaur II Dinamation Exhibit at the Zoo. Once you have seen and read about each animal, color it in.

Dinnetherium (din-NAY-theer-ee-um)

This small, rat-like animal is a typical early mammal. It ate insects and other animals. It was about 4 inches long and not quite 2 inches tall. Like the dinosaurs, it is now extinct. [In the dinosaur exhibit at the Zoo, you'll find it in back of the Dilophosaurus.]

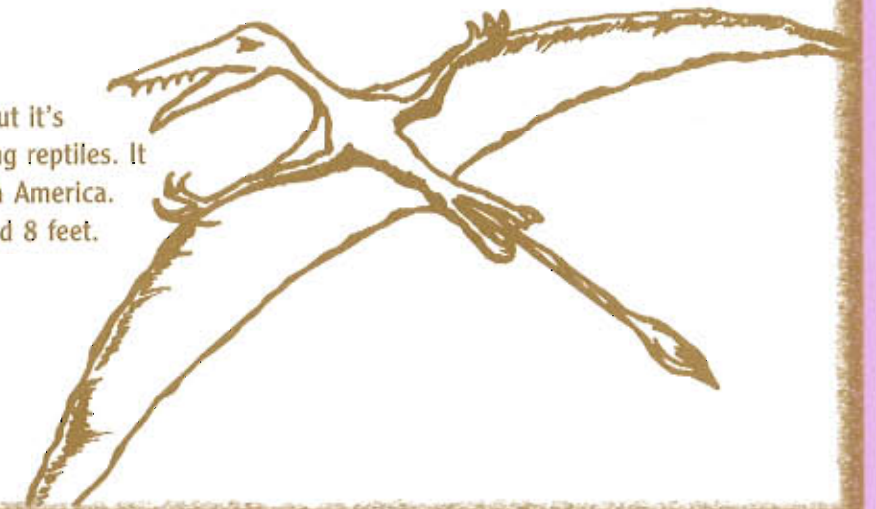


Adocus (add-OAK-us)

This turtle family was common 66 million years ago, when Tyrannosaurus Rex and other dinosaurs lived. Adocus ate aquatic (water) vegetation. It was about a foot long, and weighed around 5 pounds. This turtle is a member of the hidden-necked family. Only one species of this family is alive today.

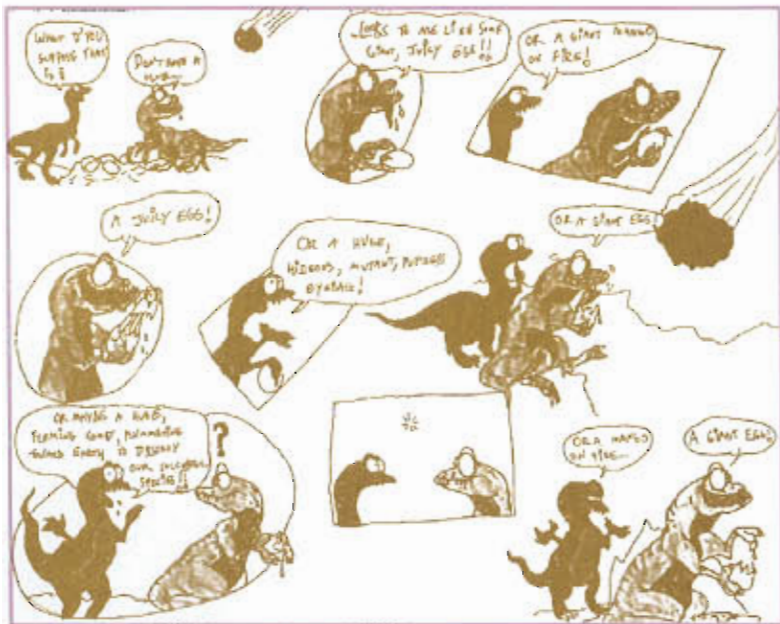
Comodactylus (koh-moe-DAK-till-us)

This animal may look like a dinosaur, but it's really a member of the now-extinct flying reptiles. It was warm-blooded, and it lived in North America. It ate fish and had a wingspan of around 8 feet.



CONGRATULATIONS!

To our dinosaur cartoon contest winners.



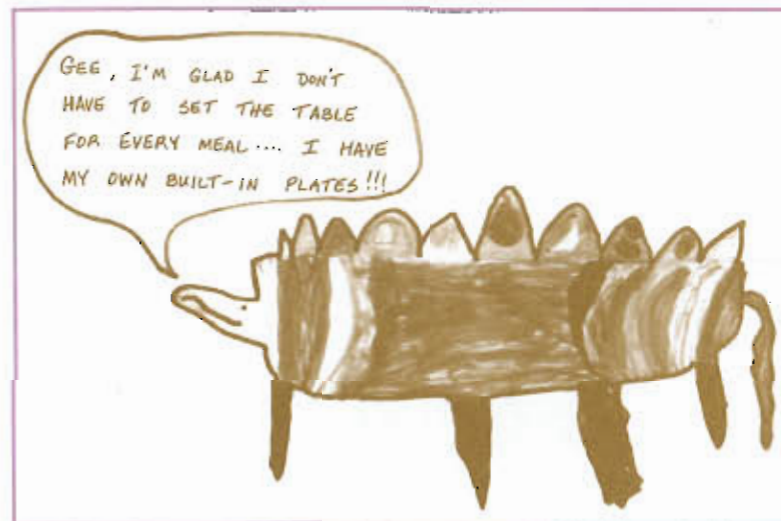
Older youth category
 Ethan Schowalter-Hay - age 12
 2423 E. Menlo Blvd.
 Shorewood, WI 53211



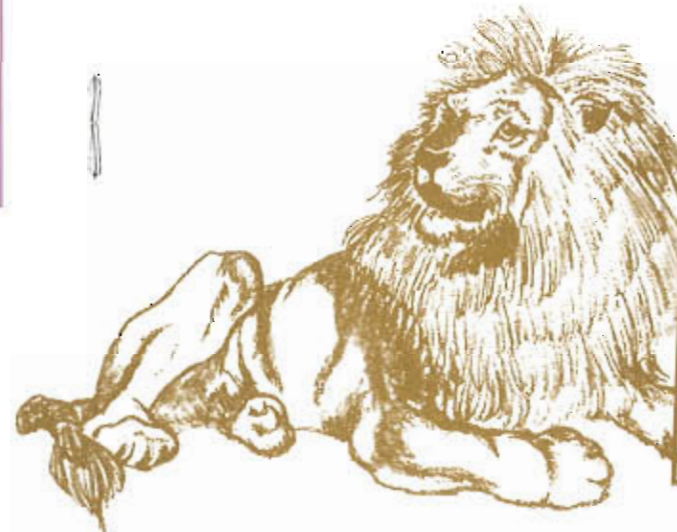
Ages 5-6
 Rachel Hanson - age 6
 8000 W. Auer Ave.
 Milwaukee, WI 53222



Ages 7-8
 Joel Kelly - age 8
 3843 Oak Ridge Ct.
 Colgate, WI 53017



Ages 3-4
 Kevin Guskowski - age 4
 10123 W. Nash St.
 Wauwatosa, WI 53222



Priscilla Ray, Age 12
 West Allis, WI

Dear Priscilla,
 You wanted to know: **"Do fish lose their scales in the spring?"** Fish do not lose their scales in the spring. In fact, according to Tim from the Aquatic and Reptile Center, fish do not shed their scales; however they occasionally lose scales. If they do lose a scale, they are able to replace it.

Rianna Hardesty
 Columbus, WI

Dear Rianna,
 I am glad you asked: **"Why do you have Dinos in your Zoo?"** Dinosaurs, as you know, are now all extinct. By studying the dinosaurs (learning how they lived, what they ate, etc.), we can learn more about today's living animals. Dinosaurs also serve as a reminder of how delicate the balance of nature really is. The dinosaurs became extinct due to natural causes. Today, many animals are becoming extinct due to human causes. Next time you visit the robotic dinosaurs at the Zoo, take a few minutes to reflect on what you can do to help the world's endangered species.

Pamela Penza, Age 8
 Kenosha, WI

Dear Pamela,
 You had a good question: **"How long do rattlesnakes live?"** Laurence M. Klauber, in his book "Rattlesnakes", writes: "Such data as we have on the age that rattlesnakes attain must come from observing captive snakes. At the San Diego Zoo, 20 rattlers have lived in captivity for 10 years or more. Two western diamonds were still alive after 18 years in captivity, the longest-lived captive rattlesnakes known up to this time." At the Milwaukee County Zoo we have a timber rattlesnake that came here in May 1994 and a blacktail rattlesnake that arrived in October 1995. Since they arrived as adults, we do not know their ages. We also have three timber rattlesnakes that were born August 3, 1994.



Andrew Fotsch, Age 5
 Brookfield, WI

Dear Andrew,
 Your inquisitive mind wanted to know: **"Why do snakes shed their skin?"** Snakes shed their skin periodically. This shedding is important in keeping the snake healthy. Shedding helps the snake get rid of worn-out skin and helps allow the snake to grow larger. A healthy snake sheds its skin by crawling through it in such a way that the skin peels backward over the snake's body, turning inside out as it proceeds. The old skin is shed as one unbroken piece.

Dear Curious Corner questioners:
 We thank all of you who have submitted questions, and we hope more of you will write to us with questions. Send them to: Curious Corner, 10005 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226. I look forward to reading and answering as many of your questions as possible.
 Your friend in science,
 Dr. Marisa Zoology

Education Programs

Dear Members,

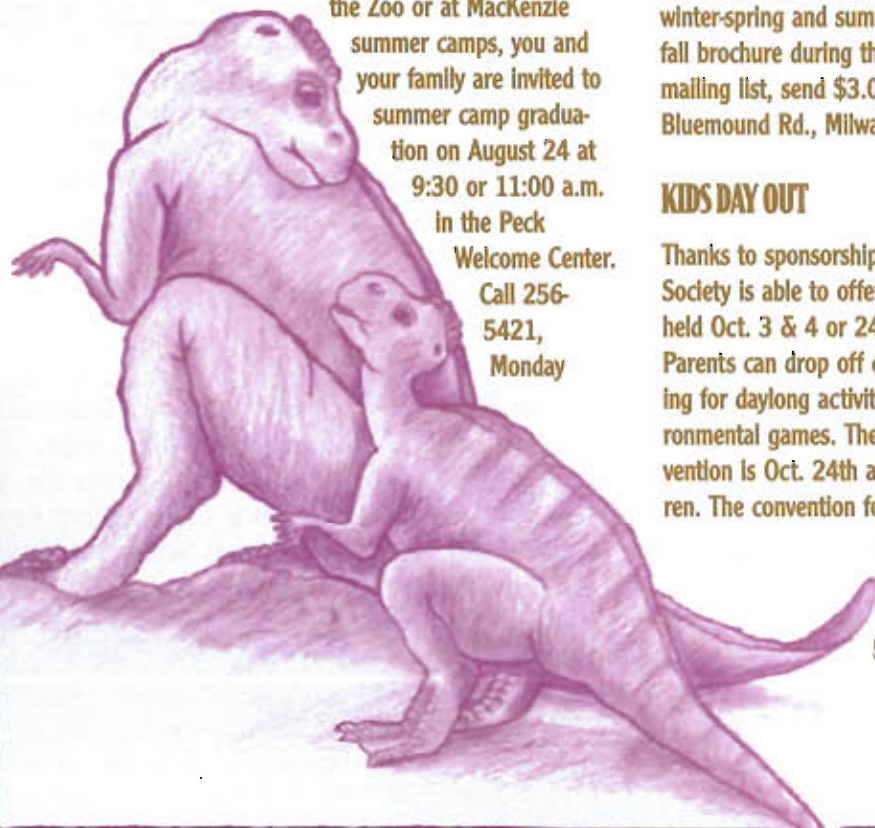
This is the last time education programs will be listed in the Kids and Families section of "Alive" magazine. From now on, educational programs will be described in your WILD THINGS newsletter (the next issue will be in late August). Starting in October, this page will become an animal-discovery area. Watch for fascinating bits of science about the animal world. We'll see you in the October "Alive" magazine with this new addition.

SUMMER CAMPS

There are limited openings in the Zoological Society's day camps. Call for availability in Little Caesars Summer Camps at the Milwaukee County Zoo in July and August, as well as at the MacKenzie Environmental Center in Poynette, north of Madison, July 8-19. Call the 24-hour recorded message, (414) 475-4636, Topic No. 748. Or call (414) 256-5424 Monday through Friday (excluding holidays), 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., for information or to register over the phone using a credit card (Master Card, VISA, Discover or American Express).

SUMMER CAMP GRADUATION

If you attended any of the Little Caesars Summer Camps at the Zoo or at MacKenzie summer camps, you and your family are invited to summer camp graduation on August 24 at 9:30 or 11:00 a.m. in the Peck Welcome Center. Call 256-5421, Monday



through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or leave a message on our answering machine stating name of camper (please spell out name), age, number of people attending, and time preference.

FALL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The brochure for the Zoological Society's fall education programs (youth and family) will be available starting August 7. Programs for 3- to 12-year-olds and for families will be offered throughout the week and on weekends. You can pick up a brochure in either the Society main office or the Education Center. Or, send two 32-cent stamps and a mailing label to: Fall Programs, 10005 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226. Mailing list members, who get the Society's three annual education program brochures (fall, winter-spring and summer) for \$3 per family, will receive the fall brochure during the first week of August. To join the mailing list, send \$3.00 to: Education Mailing, 10005 W. Bluemound Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226.

KIDS DAY OUT

Thanks to sponsorship by the NFL Alumni, the Zoological Society is able to offer Kids Day Out, daylong workshops held Oct. 3 & 4 or 24 & 25 during teacher conventions. Parents can drop off children at the Zoo early in the morning for daylong activities, including animal studies and environmental games. The Wisconsin Education Association convention is Oct. 24th and 25th and affects public schoolchildren. The convention for private-school teachers is Oct. 3rd and 4th. Register your children early with the Zoological Society Education Department, (414) 256-5421.

Save the Snakes

It's not that Chris Danou doesn't like wolves and bears and deer. It's just that the young researcher has always found snakes and frogs and lizards more interesting.

"Everybody seems to want to study bears or wolves," Danou says. "But I've always been interested in reptiles and amphibians. I guess I just like creepy crawly things. Maybe, in part, it's because I know they're a little easier to study. You know they're not going to get up and run 20 miles like a wolf. If they can only crawl, it makes finding them and monitoring them a lot easier."

So when Danou, 29, was introduced to the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, a match was made. Danou, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, needed a research topic for his master's thesis. And the federally endangered and poorly-understood massasauga required study.

Massasaugas once fetched a bounty of 50 cents and were hunted continually. The drainage of wetlands for farming and development also eliminated prime breeding and hibernation grounds. In Wisconsin, only three small populations of the snake, which was once widespread in throughout the eastern United States, now exist. "Their numbers are so low, they're really just hanging on," he says.

With a \$1,200 conservation grant from the Zoological Society of Milwaukee County, Danou head-



photos courtesy of Chris Danou



The Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake is being studied in Juneau and Monroe Counties, Wisconsin.

ed to the Yellow River watershed near the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Juneau County and another site in Monroe County. There, he studied the habits of the two-and-a-half foot venomous snake, one of only two species of venomous snakes found in Wisconsin (the other is the Timber Rattlesnake).

Danou's goal: capture the snakes, fit them with tiny radio transmitters and track their movements.

He looked under old logs and railroad ties, anywhere the snake might hide.

Grayish-brown with dark saddle-like patches on its back and side, the massasauga is remarkably inconspicuous. "They're really hard to see," Danou says. "A lot of times, we were standing right next to them before we knew they were

hunts, the massasauga would have trouble biting through a hiking boot, Danou says. "They are venomous, and you have to respect them," he says. "But they're not looking to bite you."

To capture the snakes, Danou used a long pole with an attachment that gently grips the snakes. The reptiles were taken to a federal wildlife laboratory in La Crosse where they were anesthetized and surgically fitted with small radio transmitters. Funding from the society paid for the electronics, Danou says. "It worked out quite nicely," Danou says. "The student research grant was very helpful."

Danou ultimately captured and tracked 10 adult massasaugas. He found that the snakes favored scraps of civilization—such things as discarded sheet metal scraps—for cover.

The snakes at the two sites showed differing habitat preferences. The Yellow River population favored dry uplands, while the Monroe County band spent more time in a low-lying tamarack swamp. Both, however, chose hibernation sites in the underground fissures created by tree roots. All of which, Danou says, points out the importance of conserving wetlands and watching out for the massasauga.

"They're an endangered species," Danou says. "They deserve more study and deserve to be protected."



Zoological Society conservation grant recipient Chris Danou captures a snake to be fitted with a small radio transmitter for tracking.

there. Of course, they have the rattle. Once you hear that, you know where they are."

Although lethal to the mice and voles it

GETTING TO KNOW

the bonobo

When Jo Thompson arrived in Zaire's Luenga Forest to study bonobos on the southern edge of their range, she was something of an oddity. Blonde and fair-skinned, Thompson, by her own admission, "stuck out like a sore thumb" she says, speaking by telephone from her home in England.

But rather than seclude herself, Thompson says she intentionally became a visible, helpful and interested member of her community. Getting to know and being involved with the people, she believes, ultimately could prove invaluable

in convincing local residents about the need for conservation efforts to save the elusive bonobo, the most endangered of the great apes.

As part of her research for her doctoral degree, Thompson went to Zaire to study the feeding ecology of bonobos living in an area where they had been thought to be regionally extinct. Thompson, a native of Ohio, currently is in



photo courtesy of Jo Thompson

Through her conservation work with the bonobos of Zaire's Luenga Forest and the people of her village, Thompson hopes to help preserve the elusive bonobo, the most endangered of the great apes.

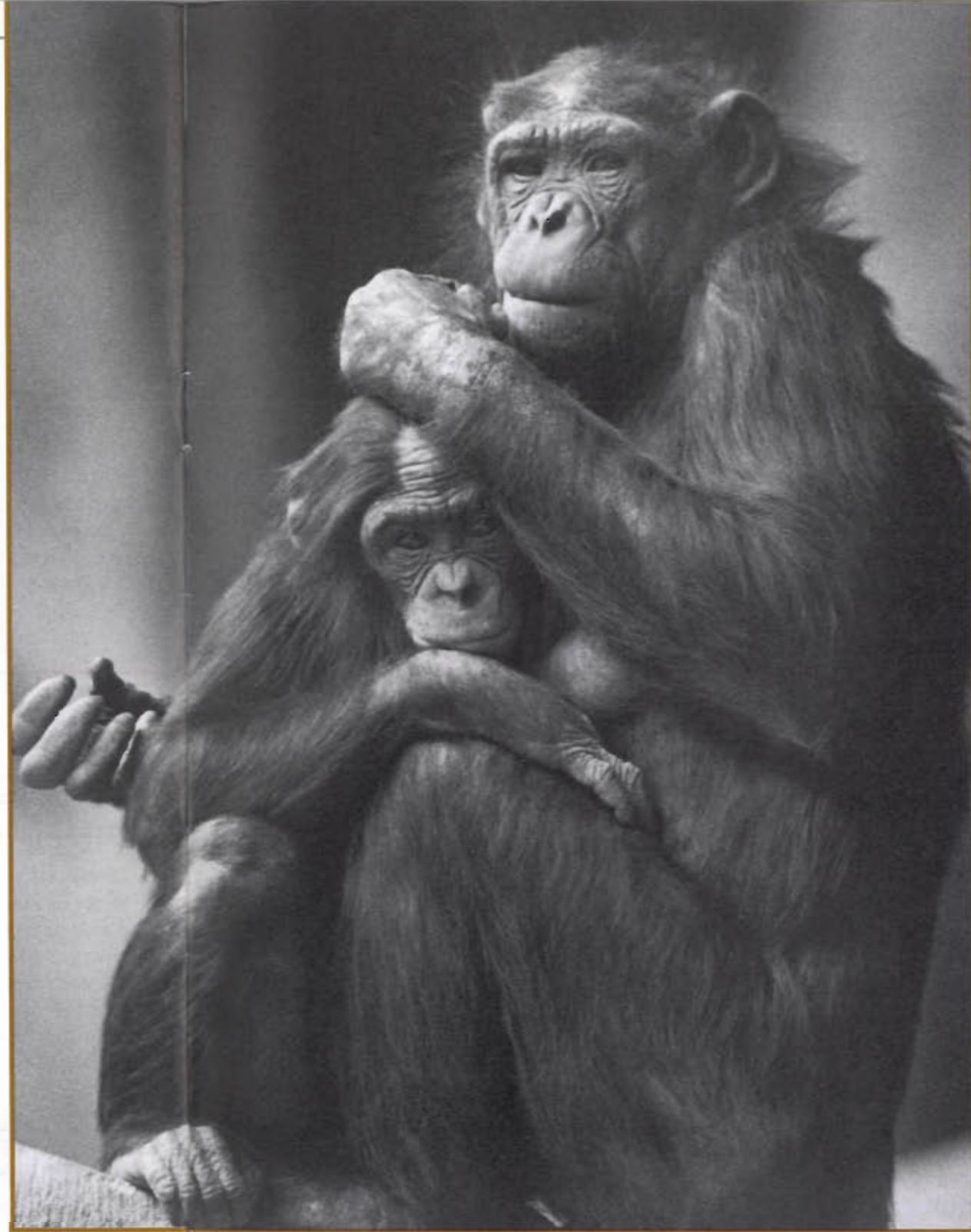
England finishing her dissertation at Oxford University. She plans to return to Zaire to continue her conservation work with bonobos after she completes her doctorate.

What differentiates Thompson's research is that bonobos previously had been thought to live only in rainforest habitat. Research on the apes' life in a mixture of savanna and rainforest does not exist. "Her work is going to be very, very significant," says Gay Reinartz, conservation coordinator for the Zoological Society of Milwaukee County, which has funded part of Thompson's research. "We didn't know about bonobos in this habitat." Thompson's research focuses on how bonobos utilize plants in this transitional habitat.

Learning more about bonobos in a different, more general habitat, both Reinartz and Thompson point out, might suggest that the apes have a greater ability to survive outside the primary rainforest where they are known to dwell. The land area of the primary rainforest is ever-diminishing due to the worldwide demand for forest resources.

Although historic documents show the presence of bonobos in the area as early as the 1890s, Thompson says influential research from the 1970s stressed the importance of rainforest habitat to apes.

"Ever since 1973, we've all acted as though rainforests were the only place where bonobos live," she says. "The current literature equates the absence of reporting to the absence of bonobos. It was as though since no Europeans had seen them,



they didn't exist."

Conservation plans for the long-term survival of bonobos must take into account all types of habitats in which bonobos are found. "One of the things that really came home to me is that we took limited research and based all of our theories about bonobo behavior and ecology on that. I've dug deeper."

Easier said than done, however.

Thompson, who arrived in Zaire in 1994, was regarded immediately with suspicion. "You have to remember that I was one of the only white people they had ever seen," she recalls. "I must have looked like I was 50 feet tall."

Thompson chose to live in the village of Yasa, even though it was about six miles

GEOGRAPHY



ZAIRE, AFRICA

Bonobos at the Milwaukee County Zoo

from her research site. She remembers overhearing villagers' murmurs about her. "They were very suspicious," she says. "They simply couldn't fathom why a woman would come all the way to their village to study animals. Very quickly, many people in the village said, 'We don't like this.'"

And they were aghast when she announced plans that she would be going unarmed into the wild. Only a fool, they told her in no uncertain terms, would do such a thing when dangerous forest hogs lurked about. Thompson and her tracker did confront the animals, but were unharmed.

"I can laugh about it now," she says. "But I can still hear the voices of people in the village sitting around their fires at night talking about me. That was hard."

Thompson knew that in order to get her work accomplished—much less lay the groundwork for conservation—she had to win the confidence of the villagers. The bonobos and villagers live in fairly close quarters, she says. Ensuring the cooperation of hunters, trappers and gardeners and other rural people who depend on the forest is vital to the bonobos' survival.

"It's a unique place, and not just for bonobos," she says, noting that large grassland cats and birds also live there.

continued on next page

"Unfortunately, it's not protected in any way, shape or form." She takes pains to explain to villagers why she collects data and what her work means not only to the outside world but to the residents themselves.

Becoming a contributing member of their community has also meant introducing such time-saving technology as a system to collect rainwater; sharing small-scale soap and candle making techniques; providing income by paying road workers to keep the main road clear for passage to the southern market village; and even



Living in the Zairian village of Yasa, researcher Jo Thompson depends on the help from people in her village. The villagers pictured here are wearing t-shirts that declare: "Bonobos: Rare and at Risk." The shirts are sold through the Zoological Society's Conservation Department to raise funds to support bonobo conservation, habitat protection and conservation education. The t-shirts also are exported and donated to field researchers like Thompson and to Zairians who help spread the conservation message in habitat areas.

teaching at the village school. "I've tried to show them that I'm concerned about their needs, too, needs that are unrelated to the animals," she says. "I think that's a different approach than many researchers take. It has shown them that I'm committed to them as well."

Her sincere interest in commu-



photos courtesy of Jo Thompson

Thompson's research focuses on how bonobos use plants in a transitional savanna and forest habitat. Prior to Thompson's work, bonobos had been thought to live only in rainforest habitat.

nity development hasn't gone unnoticed.

"They told me, 'You came in the front door, you didn't come in through a window,'" Thompson says. "They appreciated that I was honest with them and tried to be helpful. They've learned to trust me. It's really been a wonderful experience."

Her effort has been well received in Milwaukee as well as Zaire. Reinartz says that Thompson's approach was a key reason that the Zoological Society supported her with a grant of more than \$6,000. "That is one of the reasons we were so interested in working with Jo," Reinartz says. "Conservation will only work if the people of the region buy into it. Jo is very sensitive and works hard for that community."

Thompson is also grateful to the

Zoological Society, which, she said, was willing to fund research in an unstable region when others were reluctant. She noted that the society's support allowed her to complete one phase of her four-phase doctoral research project.

"It's difficult to get funding in Zaire," Thompson says. "A lot of funding agencies want to wait until things get better. To get

the society funding in bulk, I can't explain how good that really is. It has allowed me to focus on my research."

Research that, in the beginning, drew suspicion from the local people because she was a lone, white woman who trekked out into the forest alone and unarmed to study the animals. "They've known white people for a century but primarily through missionary and explorer work and certainly not white women interested in wildlife," Thompson says.

After learning of the local people's concern for her safety in the forest, Thompson hired a man from the village named Mvula to work as her tracker/assistant. "That alleviated the people's fear—in part for my safety—and their suspicions subsided."

Her research also has Thompson pedaling her bicycle through the village each day, an open invitation to the local people to stop her and Mvula at the end of the work day and ask about what she saw in the forest. "They were curious and interested, especially in Mvula's stories of our exciting, dangerous or dramatic events," Thompson says. "The occasional evening stories I overhear from neighboring cook/night fires not only tell of our adventures but also keep the issues of conserving wildlife and nature on a common level, at the family level."

Thompson says the villagers' embrace of both her work—in the forest and in the village—and her presence has been one of the more gratifying aspects of her work.

"They call me 'Mama Tofuku,'" Thompson says. "Tofuku is plural for bonobos. To them I'm the mother of all the bonobos. I like that."



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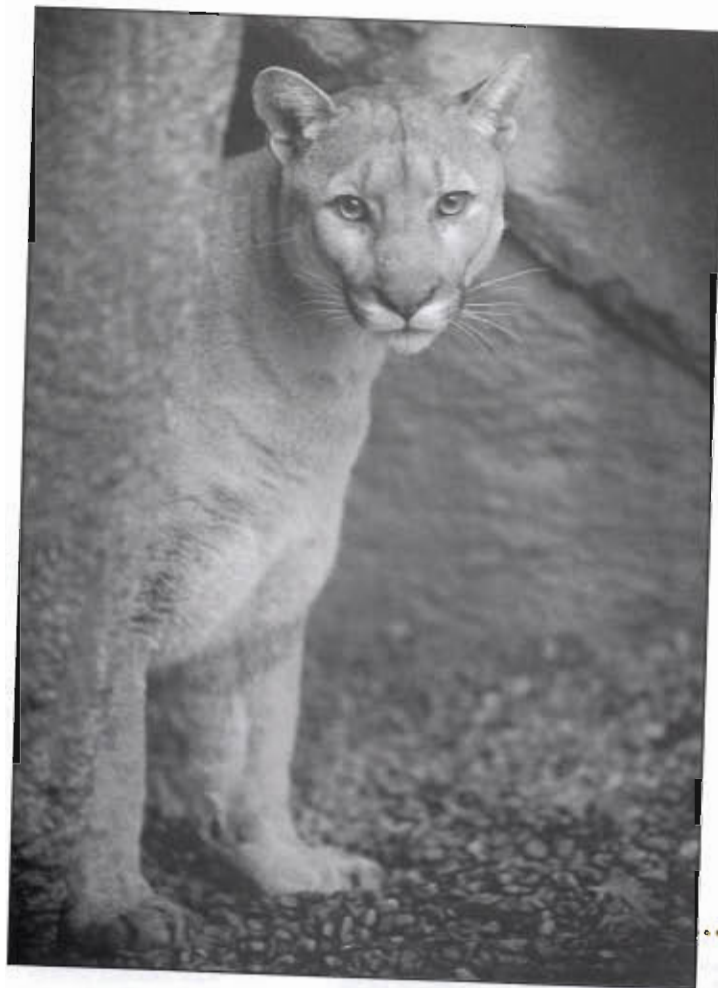
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◀ Cougars

Feline Building

Arrived: March 28, 1996

The Zoo's three new Texas cougars that came from the White Oak Conservation Center in Yulee, Florida, have never been on display. "They grew up in a fairly large enclosure with limited human contact," says Neil Dretzka, feline area supervisor. They were raised to be released into the wild. "Rocky (pictured here), now 3 years old, was part of a study to see if Florida panthers, a subspecies of cougars, could survive if relocated into Florida's Osceola National Forest. He had a transmitter surgically implanted into his abdomen and was released into this forest. He didn't work out because he was turning up in people's backyards. Cougars are supposed to be secretive. He was recaptured six months later." Rocky and his half-sisters, Trixie and Colleen, both age 2, have been slow to adjust here and are easily upset. "They're very aggressive and they're not taming down quickly," says Dretzka. Their exhibit has lots of trees and hiding places.



Asian black bears ▶

Pachyderm Building

Born: Dec. 15, 1995

George and Gracie, the baby Asian (or Himalayan) black bears, are a playful pair. "Bear cubs play all the time. They're constantly moving, climbing up a tree or running around the exhibit," says Dave Sorensen, Pachyderms area supervisor. But they were an unexpected surprise because their mom, Hot Lips, had a birth-control implant. Their dad is Hawkeye. These bears, which weigh 300 to 400 pounds when adult, have a large range: from southern China north to Manchuria, throughout the Himalayas, west to Iran and south to Laos. They're also called moon bears because of a crescent-shaped white patch on their chest. No matter when the egg is fertilized, baby bears are always born in winter because a bear's reproductive system can delay implantation. The babies are born hairless and Mom holds them until the weather warms up, which happens about the time that the babies get fur and are able to move.



Mexican porcupine ▶

Small Mammal Building

Born: March 19, 1996

"This is the first birth of this kind of porcupine in the Zoo," says Nina Schaeffer of little P.T., named after his (or her — gender is uncertain) prehensile tail. Dad Poncho and Mom Poggles both were born elsewhere and came to the Zoo in 1995. This was Poggles' first birth, and she had no milk. So P.T. was fed outside of the exhibit from small plastic dishes. If P.T. were fed in the exhibit, the parents might eat the dishes, says Schaeffer, small mammal supervisor. P.T. has grown fast, though, and even managed to climb through the wires in the shift cage once. "He's a mass of wrinkles with these little quills sticking out everywhere, and he has a nose like W.C. Fields." Mexican porcupines are forest rodents that range from Mexico to northern Argentina.



◀ Blacksmith plover

Herbert and Nada Mahler Family Aviary

Born: April 26, 1996

The sharp, staccato, squeaky sound of the blacksmith plover parents increases dramatically as anyone comes near their downy little chick. They seem to be warning him to run and hide. He does, zipping very fast across the sand in his savannah-like exhibit. Plover parents have been known to drive away animals as large as a cape buffalo. Even though chicks are born precocial, or already covered with feathers and able to walk, they can't fly yet. "A chick must be agile enough to stay near its parents if a predator approaches," says Kim Smith, aviary curator. Blacksmith plovers are shore birds that live near lakes or water holes on savannahs in Africa. This chick's sibling died May 3rd, but the healthy survivor, with its agile little legs, might be named Speedy.



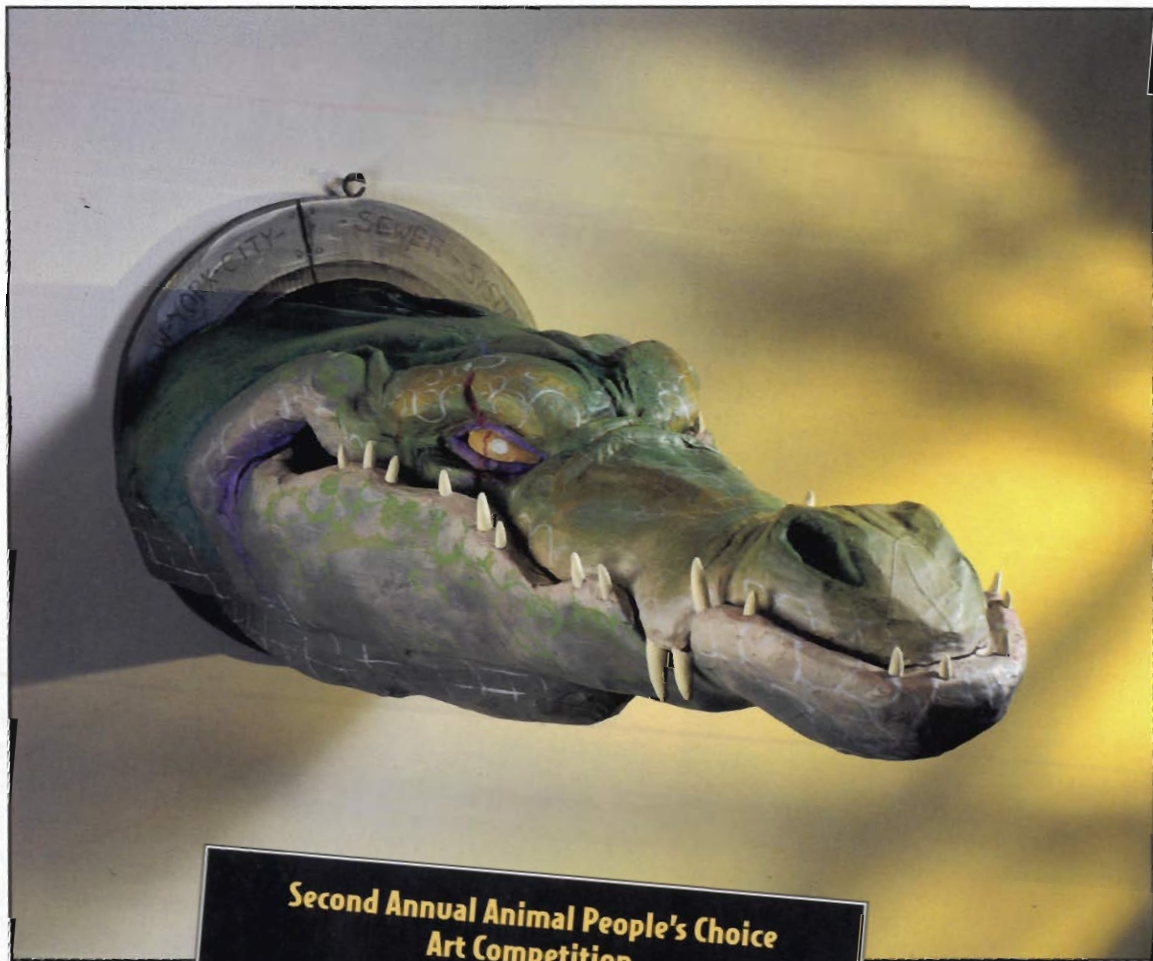


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**Second Annual Animal People's Choice
Art Competition**

"Big Joe," an alligator of foam, papier-mache and acrylic, was one of four top award winners in the Second Annual Animal People's Choice Art Competition, sponsored by the Zoological Society of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee County Zoo.

By Jeff Wright
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee