

Spring 2006 Issue 25

The official magazine for Chester Zoo
Members and Adopters



Pretty as a picture

Rare birds take flight



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Director's Pen

By Gordon McGregor Reid
Director General

A happy new year and a warm welcome to 'Z', the new-look magazine for you, our valued members and adopters. We have chosen 2006 to launch a fresh, new look for the magazine and we hope you will enjoy reading more about the Zoo.

There is also a special pull-out for our younger readers where they can learn interesting facts about our animals and enter some great competitions. In this issue, junior members can even help us name some very special additions to the Zoo – our Galapagos tortoises – and win an adoption.

The Zoo has been very busy in the period since the last magazine – we achieved the magical one millionth visitor figure again and would like to say a big thank you to you all for your continued support.

We have also welcomed many more new animals to the collection and you can read about them on the next few pages.

I was also proud to present one of our prestigious Gold medals to Dr Desmond Morris, famous lecturer, broadcaster and the author of **The Naked Ape** and **The Human Zoo** in recognition of his valued work. I was fortunate enough to spend a very interesting afternoon with him and he was delighted to receive his medal.

On the Zoo front, we are in the final stages of building work on **Elephants of the Asian Forest** and the new **Tsavo café**, both of which we look forward to opening soon.

In the meantime can I wish you all of the very best, we hope you enjoy reading 'Z' and look forward to seeing you in the Zoo over the coming weeks.



News

Big intentions

October saw the arrival of four young Galapagos tortoises from Zurich Zoo in Switzerland.

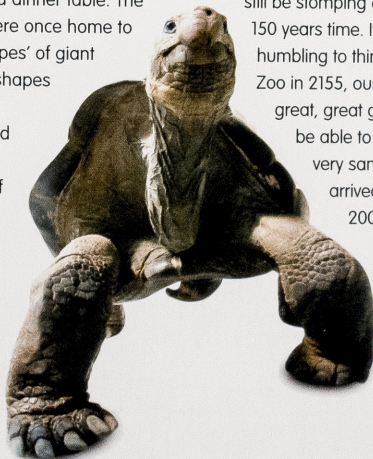
The as yet unnamed foursome are currently in quarantine but will be on-show in the **Tropical Realm** at the Zoo from Spring 2006 and will far outlive any of the Zoo's other 7,000 animals, potentially living up to the ripe old age of 200.

Galapagos tortoises are among the largest tortoises on earth. They can reach sizes of 150cm (59 inches) and weigh over 200kg (32 stone). The young Chester animals are currently the size of a dinner plate. In 20 years time, however, they should be the size of a dinner table. The Galapagos Islands were once home to at least 15 different 'types' of giant tortoise, the different shapes of the animals on the different islands helped Charles Darwin formulate his theory of evolution by natural selection. Many thousands of giant tortoises were captured and killed for food by whalers in the 19th and early 20th century. Introduced goats,

cows and horses also destroyed much of the tortoises' plant rich habitat and drove them close to extinction. For the last 30 years Galapagos tortoises have been the focus of intense conservation efforts and it is hoped that their future in the wild is now more secure.

Kevin Buley, the Zoo's Curator of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates, said:

'These four Galapagos tortoises hatched in March 2001 – all being well, they should still be stomping around the Zoo in 150 years time. It is actually quite humbling to think that, at Chester Zoo in 2155, our great, great, great, great grandchildren might be able to come and visit the very same animals that arrived at the Zoo in 2005.'

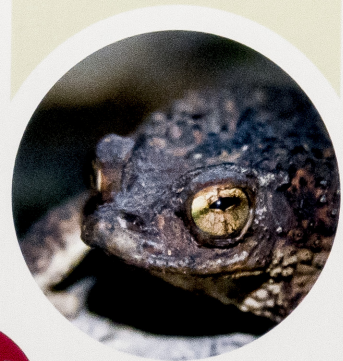


A first for the Zoo

The Zoo has also marked a European first with the breeding of the Crested Toad from the island of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean.

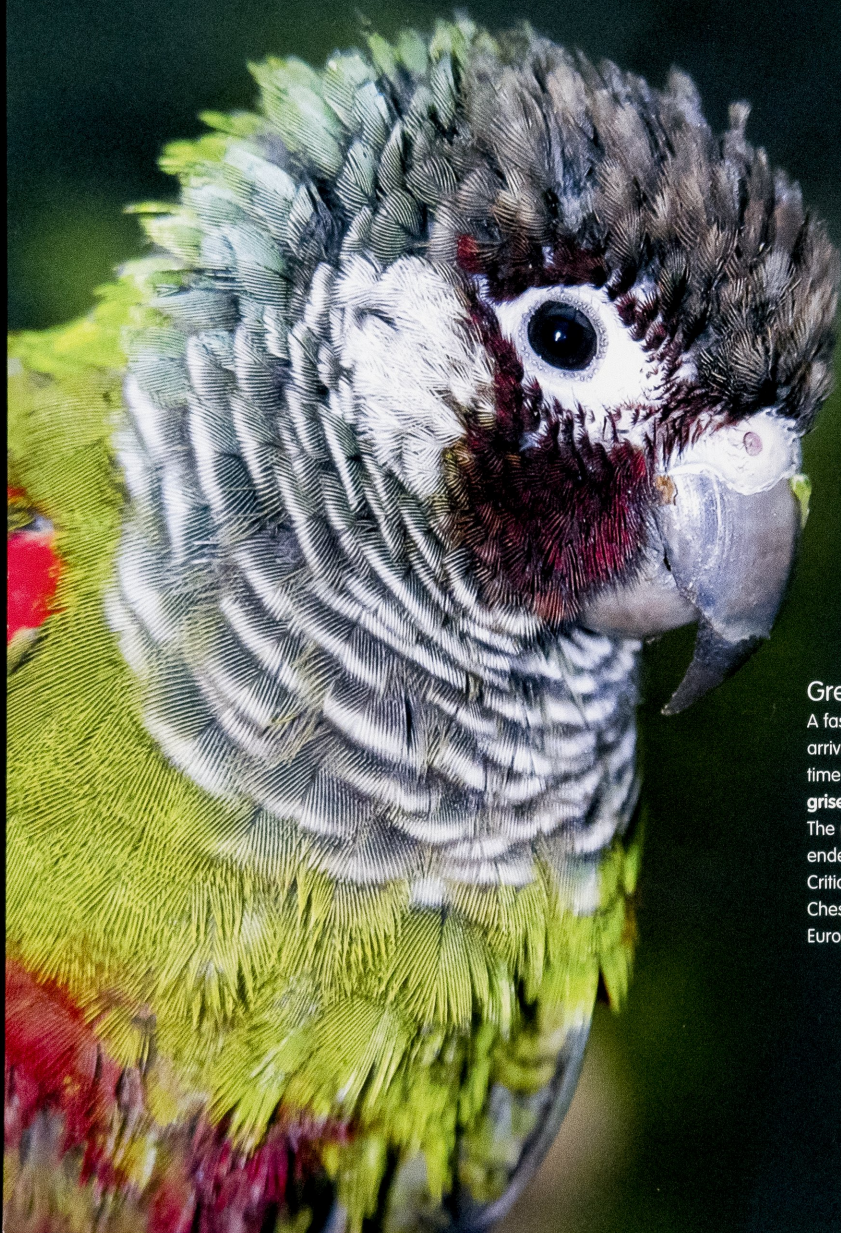
The Zoo has held the toads for five years and this marks a first for the Zoo and indeed for zoos in Europe.

In the USA, toads bred in zoos are released into the wild every year as part of a co-ordinated conservation programme.



To be in with a chance of naming the tortoises, see Kidz Zoo

Zoo



Grey-breasted Conure

A fascinating parrot species has recently arrived here at Chester Zoo. It is the first time that Grey-breasted Conure (*Pyrrhura griseipectus*) has been kept at the Zoo. The parrot is a recently recognised endemic to North-East Brazil where it is Critically Endangered. It is thought that Chester is now one of only two zoos in Europe keeping this species.

additions



Java Sparrow

Sharp-eyed visitors to **Dragons in Danger** will notice that the Komodo Dragons have been joined in one of the inside areas by a flock of Java Sparrow (***Padda oryzivora***). Although a common pet species, the Zoo keeps birds of wild origin 'unpolluted' by captive-bred colour forms and the species is now Vulnerable in the wild with a declining population of less than 10,000 birds!



Red-billed Curassow

An unexpected surprise late in the season for the bird team was a Red-billed Curassow (***Crax blumenbachii***) chick from a second clutch egg. Sadly their first clutch chick died earlier in the year and so the parents re-nested late. The egg was artificially incubated and the chick is being foster-reared by a chicken!

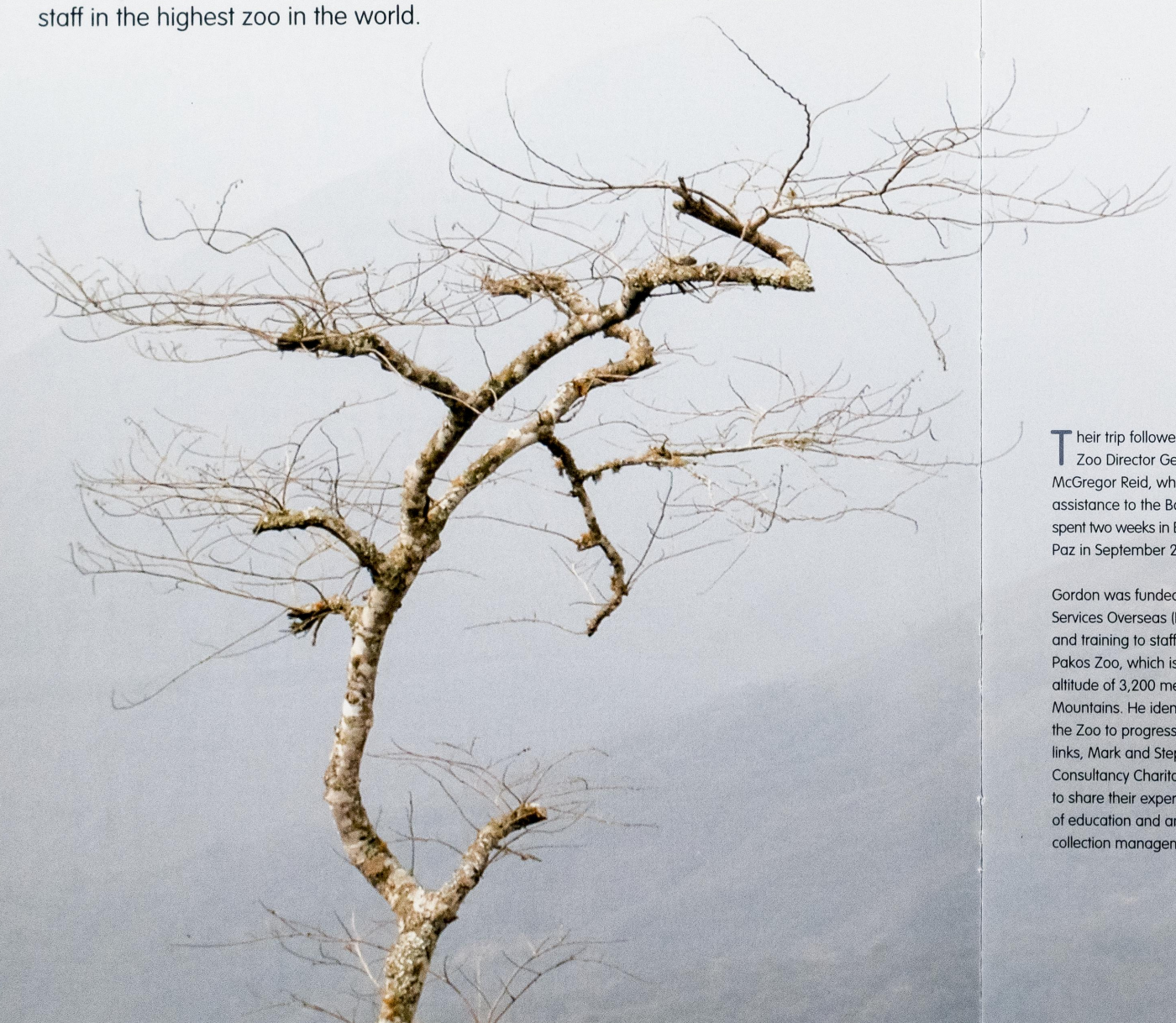


Philippine Spotted Deer

After several years of hard work by the Giraffe and Rhino teams we are now having great success with our Philippine Spotted Deer (***Cervus alfredi***). All three females here at the Zoo currently have youngsters. The species is a Critically Endangered endemic to the Philippines and the Zoo supports both captive breeding here and in the Philippines, as well as assisting with reintroduction plans.

Reaching new heights

Director of Conservation and Education Mark Pilgrim and Head of Education Stephen McKeown spent ten days in Bolivia, working with staff in the highest zoo in the world.



Their trip followed on from a visit by Zoo Director General Gordon McGregor Reid, who was asked to provide assistance to the Bolivian Government and spent two weeks in Bolivia's capital city La Paz in September 2004.

Gordon was funded by British Executive Services Overseas (BESO) to give advice and training to staff at the national Vesty Pakos Zoo, which is based at a breathless altitude of 3,200 metres in the Andes Mountains. He identified opportunities for the Zoo to progress. To further develop links, Mark and Stephen, funded by British Consultancy Charitable Trust, headed west to share their experiences and knowledge of education and animal and plant collection management.

Mark and Stephen were joined by Reinaldo Niebles, Head of Education at Barranquilla Zoo in Columbia, (which incidentally is the only Zoo in Latin America with an elephant), and Covadonga Talavera, the Curator of Mammals at Madrid Zoo.

Stephen explains: 'Our visit was co-ordinated by the former British Ambassador to Bolivia, Alan Shave. We looked at all aspects of the Zoo's operation, including animal and plant collection planning, animal health and welfare, education programmes, marketing, strategic planning, interpretation in the Zoo and how best the expertise in Chester and other zoos can be used to work with the team in La Paz. →

"The Zoo is an incredible haven for Andean flora and fauna, including condors, llamas and alpacas, which give it a unique appeal."

'The setting is incredible and it takes a couple of days to acclimatise to the altitude. We had a workplan for the ten days but the first thing we needed to do was take a good look around the Zoo, both from the public perspective and behind the scenes. We split into two teams – Mark's looking at the animal and plant side of things and with me looking at education. It was really important to talk to people and to look and learn.

'The Zoo is in a beautiful setting with some very exciting animals. It is a wonderful haven for Andean flora and fauna, including condors, llamas and alpacas, which give it a unique appeal. The fruit and veg dishes served to the animals made my mouth water.

'There are plans to develop it into a valuable national attraction, ultimately appealing to large numbers of international tourists. The Zoo is near to Lake Titikaka and one idea is to have a lake in the Zoo and theme it with an island of the sun and an island of the moon, looking at how animals relate to the native Inca people.



'The link between the Zoo and the local community is really important. One day we visited a 'Witch's Market' which sold some startling items, including a guitar made from an armadillo and decorated dried frogs. Wildlife in Bolivia is still being affected by trading in traditional medicine too, so there is quite a bit that needs to be done to educate people on the impact their actions have on animal and plant conservation, while suggesting alternatives.

'Another important thing for the Zoo to consider is identifying who its audience is. They currently have educational parties visiting but they don't count their visitors and don't have any insight into where they are coming from.'

On a day off from Zoo work, Mark and Stephen went on an adventure to Coroico to see indigenous species on the edge of the jungle. To get there they had to experience what Stephen describes as 'the most terrifying journey of my life – on the Road of Death!' With a 3,000ft sheer drop and no barriers, they took their lives in their hands on the road, which has allegedly notched up more accidents than any other in the world!

'It was a beautiful drive, high in the cloud forest and home to the likes of Spectacled Bears, toucans and vultures,' says Stephen. 'I admit it was a bit difficult to appreciate though when you are trying to give way on crumbling passing places looking down at wrecks of lorries, buses and cars at the bottom!

'Once down in the jungle, we could breathe more easily and it was a whole new world of macaws, porcupines, birds, frogs and some incredible insects. At one point I felt a bit unwell, so our guide peeled a piece of bark from a nearby tree for me to eat and within a few minutes I was as right as rain!'

Mark and Stephen arrived back safely and have left their hosts with plenty of new ideas to work on. Chester Zoo continues to be in regular touch with La Paz, offering advice, information and support. More exchange visits are planned for the future. ■

"The Zoo is near to Lake Titikaka and one idea is to have a lake in the Zoo and theme it with an island of the sun and an island of the moon..."

Browsing benefits

Have you ever visited the Zoo and seen the branches hanging in the giraffe house and wondered what they were? These are not just any old branches, they are part of a cycle that benefits the giraffes as well as being environmentally friendly.

Where it all begins

At Chester Zoo we have our own willow plantation for the giraffes to make sure they get a constant supply of browse throughout the year. However we also rely on a source of browse that is donated to us by two local agencies in particular, Ecological Land Management and The Woodland Trust. These organisations clear areas of land, carrying out practical conservation

work for the enhancement of habitats or species of local and international importance. Prior to donating it to the Zoo, the browse was either chipped or burnt, both having negative environmental impacts, one due to the resources used to make, transport and run the chipper, the other by releasing pollutants into the atmosphere. This way it is reused and forms the start of the cycle. →



g



Did you know

With full grown males weighing in at over 1000kg, giraffes are the largest of all the ruminants, plant-eating mammals which have a stomach with four compartments to digest the leaves they eat. When giraffes aren't eating, they are chewing their cud. After they swallow the leaves the first time, a ball of leaves will travel all the way back up the throat into the mouth for more grinding. They are highly selective feeders 'browsing' on succulent young shoots and leaves, with acacia being the preferred plant with up to 66 different species being recorded as food items in wild giraffe diets.

Trees such as the acacia are very thorny and the giraffes have to be careful how they feed. They bite off individual shoots and bunches of leaves in-between the thorns. They use their lips and their tongue (which can be up to 45cm long), to pull leaves off into their mouth. Once in their mouth they are coated in sticky saliva, which makes them safe to swallow. Leaves on the trees with fewer thorns can be stripped by pulling smaller branches through their modified canine teeth like a comb.

Browse benefits

Animal welfare is our top priority at the Zoo. This starts with the basics of hygiene and nutrition as well as attending to both physical and mental welfare. It is up to us as keepers to ensure our animals are mentally stimulated by trying to encourage a wide range of natural behaviours wherever possible and the best place to start is by studying their behaviour in the wild.

In the wild, giraffes spend about half the day feeding. At Chester Zoo we must feed our giraffes a dry pellet feed twice a day to ensure they obtain a balance of essential nutrients. By also providing regular browse from our own plantation we can supplement their nutritional requirements and satisfy their behavioural needs. In our UK climate it is not possible to supply acacia but the giraffes enjoy a variety of browse we can grow, including willow, birch and sycamore to name a few. We also present them with brambles and hawthorn which, with their prickly stems, require more care to consume with their tongues, much like they would in the wild.

Quite apart from the nutrients, browse is also full of fibre that keeps the giraffes' complex, four-chambered stomach functioning properly.

Environmentally friendly!

Recycling starts with the donation of browse from the land management companies but doesn't end there! After the giraffes have removed the leaves and bark, the remaining branches can be used again.

Our Animal Supplies Department take away used branches, which the horticulture department then chips. The resulting woodchip is used either in animal enclosures or in the gardens around the Zoo. Branches in various forms are also used as barriers both in and around enclosures – there is no waste!

Through our Environmental Policy Committee, Chester Zoo subscribes to the 'Think Global, Act Local' motto. We try to re-use and recycle as much as we can to help our environment and links with land management companies providing browse for our animals is an ideal example of this motto at work.

So next time you see branches in the giraffe house you know they are not just sticks! ■

In the wild, giraffes will spend about half of the day feeding.



Puzzles!
Great trips!

Tortoise
adoptions up
for grabs!

● The tallest
giraffe ever
lived in Chester Zoo
from 1959 – 1969.
George was just short
of 20 feet tall!

● Sharks have a
never-ending conveyor
belt of new teeth.
When they lose an
old tooth, another one
pushes forward
to replace it.

Win!

£10 to spend in the Zoo shops!

Junior Members' Programme of Events – see reverse for details

Jam-packed with competitions and fun!

Nosey Nosey!

Can you identify these animals from their noses?



COMPETITION!

This is your chance to win £10 to spend in the Zoo shops.

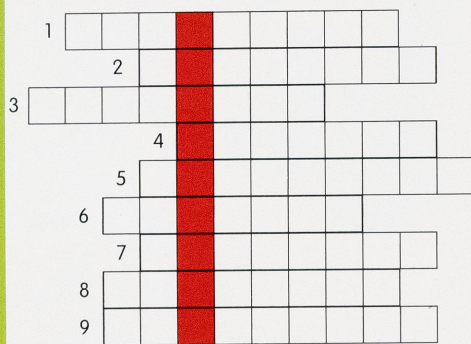
Please send your Nosey Nosey entries (photocopies are allowed) to:

Z Magazine, Junior Puzzle Page, Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Chester, CH2 1LH by Friday May 19.

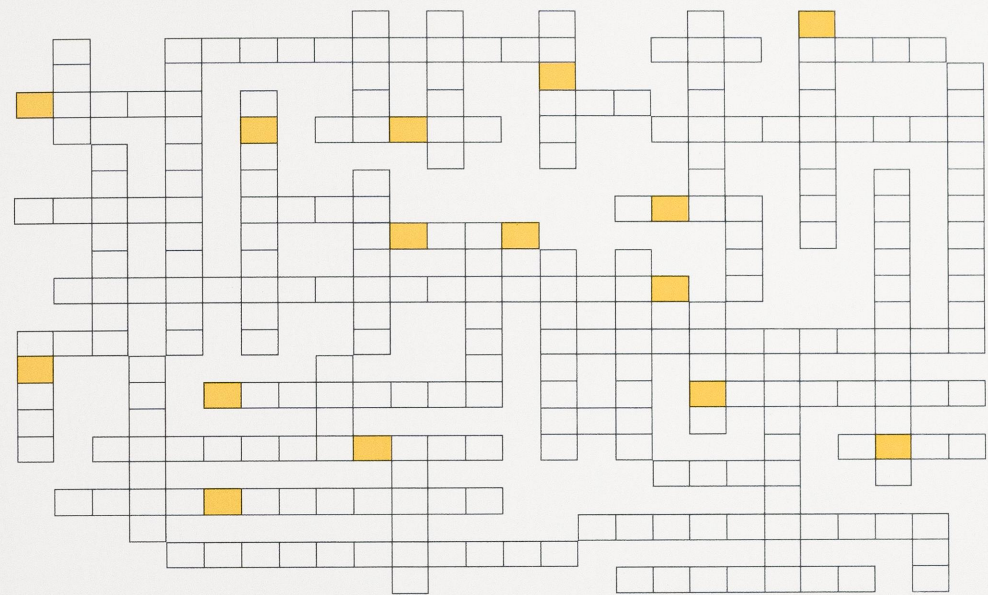
Congratulations to last month's winner, Jake Gore of Wigan.

Mystery Fish!

Match the pictures of the fish below with their names. Write the name of each fish in the appropriate place in the grid. The fish pictured are: Angelfish, Arowana, Catfish, Halfbeak, Lungfish, Seahorse, Stingray, Swordtail, Clownfish and the mystery fish. When you have filled in all the squares, the identity of the unnamed fish will be revealed in the shaded squares.



Animal Word Grid



Many of the plants and animals in this puzzle are threatened in the wild and are cared for at Chester Zoo.

Fit their names in the grid above. Tip: find where the 17 letter name fits first.

Rearrange the letters in the shaded squares to make the name of an animal critically endangered in the wild and being bred at Chester Zoo.

3 Letters

- Boa
- Emu
- Gnu
- Kea
- Owl

4 Letters

- Anoa
- Lion
- Lory
- Oryx
- Pudu
- Rhea
- Smew
- Wolf

5 Letters

- Bongo
- Camel
- Lemur
- Macaw
- Okapi
- Panda
- Zebra

6 Letters

- Jaguar
- Onager
- Turtle

7 Letters

- Axolotl
- Gemsbok
- Penguin
- Sea Pony

8 Letters

- Babirusa
- Capuchin
- Cuban Boa
- Elephant
- Mandrill
- Sea Horse

9 Letters

- Blue Crane
- Soft Coral

10 Letters

- Cherry Barb
- Chimpanzee
- Dragon Tree

11 Letters

- Gila Monster
- Golden Larch
- Pied Tamarin
- Spiny Turtle

12 Letters

- Andean Condor
- Komodo Dragon
- Partula Snail
- Venus Fly Trap

17 Letters

- Sumatran Orangutan



Chester Zoo has made a home to four Galapagos Tortoises – the first in the UK.

Two of the tortoises don't have any names and we are looking to you to

help. They will be going on-show in the Tropical Realm at the Zoo from Spring 2006 and will need names – male and female – for then. We have two animal adoptions, which include a certificate, your name on a plaque and invites to our adopter days, up for grabs for the best entries.

Send your suggested name – one per person – to: Tortoise competition, c/o Marketing Department, Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Chester, CH2 1LH by Friday May 19. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.



Junior Members' Programme of Events

Tracks and signs

Saturday 25 March

This is probably one of our most popular events that includes the wide age range we cater for. This is your chance to see the Zoo from the animal's view of the visitors as you will be going inside some of the enclosures to search for footprints from which to make plaster casts. March is the best time of year for this as it is normally muddy but please keep this in mind when you dress in the morning. Hopefully, you will have a souvenir of your day to take home with you.

Eights and over can come along and join the messiness, meeting outside Oakfield House at 11am, returning there for collection at 4pm. You will need a picnic lunch, and it is important that you wear clean, very old clothes and clean wellies please.

Acton Scott historic working farm

Saturday 22 April

This will be a new trip for Juniors, when we will be heading off to Shropshire to experience daily life on an upland farm at the turn of the last Century. The waggoner and his team of heavy horses work the land with vintage farm machines, while the farmer's wife goes about her chores in the cottage. You will love the cows, pigs, sheep and poultry in the farmyard together with some rare breeds and see the hard work involved in keeping the farm going.

Eights and over are invited to join us, leaving the Staff Entrance at 9.30am, and returning for 4.30pm. Bring a picnic.

The Greenwood Centre

Saturday 20 May

Back by popular demand, this seems to be one of the Junior Members' favourite haunts! Set within the Snowdonia National Park, the Greenwood Centre is an environmental park offering fun and games as well as good education. The amazing grass slide, boat races, woodland walks, archery and den building activities to name a few always keeps everyone well occupied for the day.

Eights and over should put it in their diary early. We will leave the Staff Entrance at 9.30am, taking a picnic and returning at 5.00pm.

The Conway RSPB Reserve

Saturday 17 June

This is a beautiful reserve on the banks of the River Conway in North Wales. Do not be lured into thinking that all you can do in an RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) sanctuary is a spot of bird watching. This, of course, will form an important part of our day, when we can sharpen-up our identification skills, but we will also be pond-dipping, river-watching and trundling along on a wildlife walk to spot butterflies.

We will leave the Staff Entrance at 10am and return at 5pm. Eights and over should bring a picnic and sunscreen.

How to be a good Zookeeper!

Wednesday 26 July

This is a unique opportunity offered to Junior Members to spend a day working alongside a zoo keeper. The work can be tough and demanding so we strictly limit this event to those Juniors of 12 or over. We try to match Juniors to their favourite section, but places are limited so this cannot be guaranteed. Please arrive prepared to work hard, with clean wellies and an additional completely clean set of clothes to work in. Owing to the Zoo's biosecurity measures, it is important that the clothes you wear to work on the sections have not been in contact with any farm animals, or even your pets at home, since they were last washed.

We will meet outside the Oakfield at 10.30am, and the day will finish for Juniors at 4pm. Please bring a packed lunch. Also please note that bookings for this event will not be taken before 8.30am on Wednesday 12 July 2006, and will be strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.

Summer barbeque

Thursday 10 August

Our summer barbeque has become a regular feature for the Juniors' diary as it has proved immensely popular. Perhaps this is because it is your chance to be in the Zoo when there are no other visitors to distract you and the animals, so it is a different zoo experience. We usually aim to have a speaker to chat to you or to engage in craft activities during the evening, but you can be sure to find it relaxing.

We would like to invite eights and over to join us for a 7.00pm start, when you should arrive at the Ark Restaurant (near the Tigers) via the Zoo's Staff Entrance on Caughall Road. Parents are asked to collect Juniors from the Ark restaurant at 9.45pm please.

Walking the Wirral Way

Saturday 23 September

The 'Wirral Way' follows the route of an old railway line running from one end of the peninsula to the other which has been disused for some years now, but has been made into a wonderful footpath for walkers. The bus will drop us off near Heswall and we will walk to Thurston to have a look around the visitor centre there and await collection by the bus.

Eights and over should come along prepared for all weather conditions, and bring a picnic. We will leave the staff entrance at 10am and return there for 4.30pm.

The Hawkstone Follies

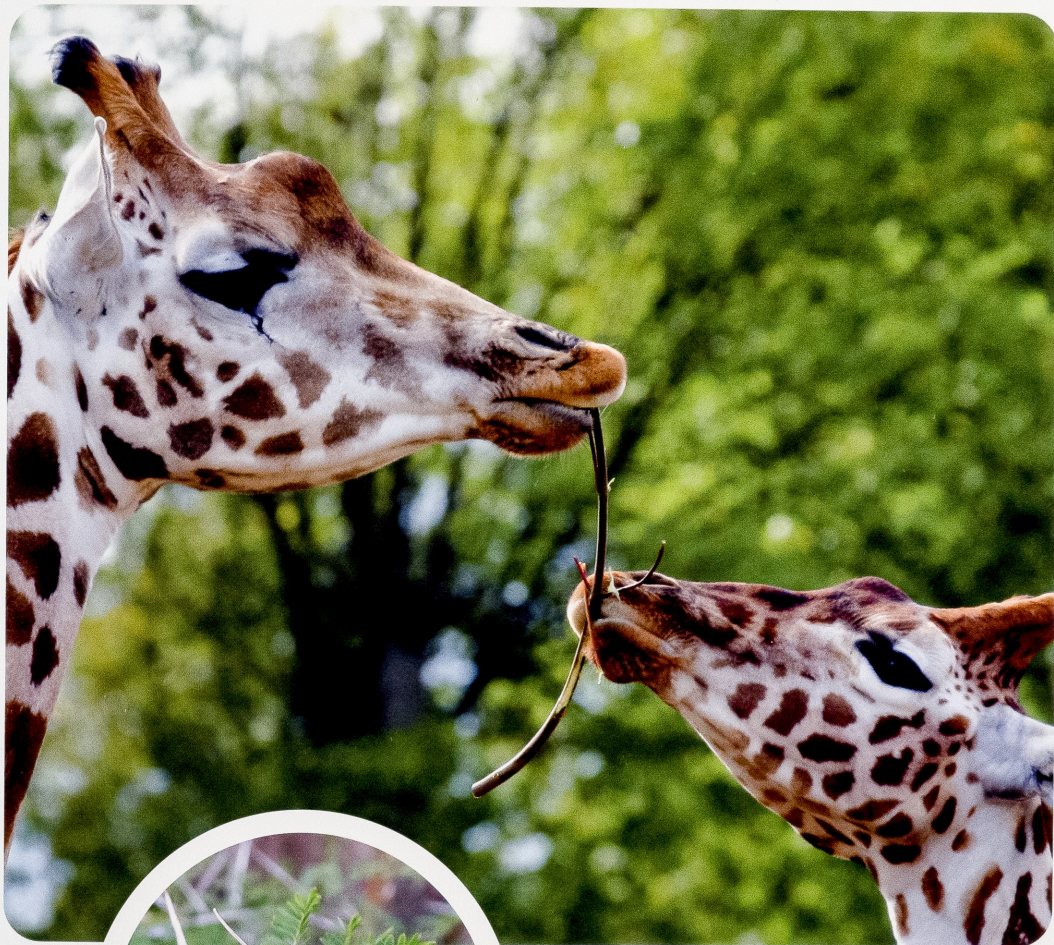
Saturday 21 October

It is a while since we visited this interesting location in Shropshire. The Autumn colours should be a lovely backdrop for the walk we will take along the paths around the 'follies' in Hawkstone Park. There is one point on this walk when you might need a torch and another point where a good head for heights might be useful if you choose to climb the tower! Good footwear will be vital, and you should bring a picnic.

Eights and over are welcome to join us, and we will leave the staff entrance at 10.30am and return at 4pm.

Please Note:

Bookings must be made for all events. Please ring Penny Rudd at the Zoo on 01244 650215, not more than two weeks before the event you would like to attend. Places are offered on a first-come, first-served basis and may be limited. This list is provisional and in exceptional circumstances we may have to alter dates and venues. You will be informed of any such changes in Z magazine and not by individual letter, so please keep up-to-date by reading the Junior page in each issue. A small charge will be made to cover the cost of those events which involve transport, entry fees, materials or the provision of food, and you will be advised of this at the time of booking.



In our UK climate it is not possible to supply acacia – but the giraffes enjoy a variety of browse we can grow, including willow, birch and sycamore to name a few.

Making a

NEZS conservation outreach update

NEZS Mascarenes Conservation Programme

Our close partnership with the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation continues with support of:

- The annual survey of the Rodrigues Fruit Bat population
- Conservation of the Mauritius Fody
- Conservation of Critically Endangered plants of Mauritius
- Conservation of the Echo Parakeet
- Plus, Chester Zoo keepers Clare Daniels and Lara Thick have been on secondment in Mauritius assisting with the conservation of threatened endemic birds.

We also continue to support Shoals Rodrigues to monitor marine reserves and assess the status of endemic marine species.



NEZS Rhino Programme

Continued support for the Black Rhino monitoring and protection programme in Tsavo East National Park, Kenya, in conjunction with Save the Rhino International (SRI) and the Kenya Wildlife Service, and for fence maintenance at the Mkomazi Rhino Reserve, Tanzania.

NEZS China Programme

Support for research at Sichuan University into the genetic diversity of South China Tigers in zoos.

NEZS Nigeria Biodiversity Programme

Continued support for the demarcation of the boundary of Gashaka Gumti National Park.



difference

NEZS Conservation and Research Grants

Several Orang-utan projects have been supported recently through NEZS Conservation and Research Grants:

- In Sumatra we have provided support for a Mobile Orang-utan education unit for the Aceh west coast, this project is co-ordinated by the Sumatran Orang-utan Conservation Programme (SOCP).
- In Borneo we are supporting two projects run by Hutan – the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary Wildlife Warden Project and the production of an Orang-utan State Action Plan for Sabah.

Other Grant support

- Creation of the "Andean Bear Defenders Club for Kids". Fostering international cooperation in the Venezuelan Andes hotspot. A project using the Spectacled Bear as a flagship species.
- Research project: Foraging distribution and ecology of the Critically Endangered Christmas Island Frigatebird.
- In Brazil, continued sponsorship of Chester Zoo's adopted Black Lion Tamarin group, and continued support for the Yellow Breasted Capuchin conservation project.
- Research at the University of Stirling into the physiological adaptability of larval fish to changing environmental parameters.
- And finally, an in situ conservation and ex situ reproduction scheme for endangered reptiles in Guatemala.

Conservation news from around the world

Good

A new mammal species may have been discovered in Borneo! Researchers obtained two images of the creature whilst conducting camera trapping in the Kayan Mentarang National Park. The animal, which is bigger than a domestic cat, dark red, and has a long muscular tail, has not been identified by scientists, or seen before by local communities. It is thought that the animal may be a new species of viverrid, this is the family which includes stoats, weasels, mongooses and civets.

Bad

Up to half of the world's coral reefs may be lost within the next 40 years unless urgent measures are taken to protect them against the paramount threat of climate change. This is the warning from a new IUCN report. Twenty percent of the earth's coral reefs, arguably the richest of all marine ecosystems, have already been effectively destroyed. Much greater losses are forecast in the next 20-40 years, largely due to climate change, if no action is taken.



Frigate found

A tropical seabird found for the first time on UK shores was cared for here at the Zoo.


The adult male Magnificent Frigatebird was being cared for by veterinary teams at Chester Zoo after it found its way to UK shores.

The bird was rescued from a farm in Whitchurch and taken to Lower Moss Wood rehabilitation centre, Knutsford, before being collected by the Zoo for emergency treatment. However despite the best efforts of all staff involved, the bird was not strong enough to survive.

Mike Jordan, Curator of Birds and Mammals at Chester Zoo, said: 'This wonderful bird was given every chance and the best care possible by the veterinary teams here but unfortunately we were unable to save it. Its exhausting flight and the extremely poor condition of the bird when it was found had left it weakened and very unwell.'

'It has been over 50 years since we last had a Frigatebird on UK shores but unfortunately, as on the last occasion, the bird was not strong enough to survive. Everyone here at the Zoo is naturally saddened by the turn of events.'

The five types of Frigatebird can be found in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.



"It has been over 50 years since we last had a Frigatebird on UK shores..."

Growing concerns

The Horticulture and Botany Department at the Zoo is striving to put together a collection of rare and endangered cacti, with the eventual aim of having it recognised as a National Collection.

As you may be aware, we already cultivate part of the National Collection of Pleurothallidinae orchids. This collection is jointly managed alongside Mr. S. Manning from Cheshire.

The first step was to select a range of species; so with the help and advice of a member of the Chester and District Branch of the British Cacti and Succulent Society, a short-list of cacti genera was put together. Using the NCCPG (National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens) handbook this short-list was checked to see which plants were not already in a National collection. The following genera were chosen: **Ariocarpus, Aztekium, Blossfeldia, Copiapoa, Denmoza, Epithelantha, Frailea, Matucana, Obregonia, Oroya, Pelecypora, Strombocactus, Turbinicarpus** and **Yavia**.

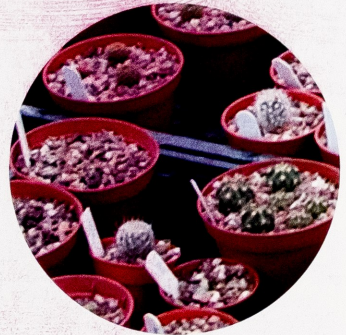
Although this seems a long list, some of the genera may only have one or two species in it. Many of the plants are on the Red List of endangered species, but most are available to grow from seed. One further consideration was the size of the plants. Most of the species we will be concentrating on are very small or are slow growers, which allow us to house a large group in a small space. We have allocated one of the glasshouses to grow the cacti collection and our nursery staff are quickly gaining the specialist skills and knowledge required to grow these tricky plants.

Two of the criteria for being recognised as a National Collection are that we have three plants of each species and at least 75% of known species from each genus, so this again had to be taken into consideration. Presently we have plants from all the genera selected, with the exception of *Yavia*. We have approximately 170 species, represented by 1074 individual seedlings or plants.

We obtain our plants and seed from reputable sources such as botanic gardens and specialist groups. This is because some of these plants are very choice and are much sort after by collectors. Illegal collection and trade in these plants is adding to their disappearance in the wild.

Yavia is one such plant; we do not have it in our collection because as yet we have not found a legal source for it. I recently went on a trip to Argentina with the express hope of seeing these plants in habitat. Our guide took us to a site where a year ago a thriving population could be seen. When we arrived there was not one plant to be found! All had been illegally removed. Luckily our guide knew of a second population which, happy to say was untouched. I got to see these remarkable little plants and photograph them.

It is our hope that at some point the Zoo will be able to support work to find more populations of this plant and have some input in seeing it protected. This again shows the importance of National Collections, as we can continue to grow species in cultivation that are seriously threatened in the wild.





The Sheriff of Chester and his Lady joined the Director General and staff of the Zoo to welcome special guests from Urumqi in China – the capital city of Xinjiang Province in the western most part of China which is the most inland city in the world.

The party of nine, which included representatives from the Urumqi Government and the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens, spent the day at Chester Zoo as part of a six day tour of the UK, learning how to go about developing a successful new zoo and wildlife area back home.

Chester's Sheriff Councillor Colin Bain and Mrs Margaret Bain, along with Zoo Director Gordon McGregor Reid, the Zoo's Head of Conservation and Science Roger Wilkinson and Head of Education Stephen McKeown, met the party.

Roger Wilkinson said: 'The people of Urumqi are developing a vast 29 square mile protected animal wilderness area and alpine meadow, combined with a large zoo and were keen to come to Chester to find out how we do things.'

The Zoo currently runs a China Biodiversity Conservation Programme, which supports the conservation of threatened Chinese birds, Red and Giant Pandas and other threatened wildlife in regional protected forest reserves in China.

Close encounters

Amongst the staff at Chester Zoo there are a number of people who are really fascinated by local wildlife which I guess isn't really surprising! However, when I heard about the incident below, it gave me an idea for a series of articles for 'Z' featuring local wildlife interests and experiences of Zoo staff. Our first 'staff star' is Joyce

Lucas who works in the cash office; she has been a keen garden wildlife watcher for many years, and also enjoys natural history holidays in Europe and further a field. Many of you may know her from Junior Members activities which she regularly helps to organise. Memories of her close encounter with a Sparrow Hawk in August this year will stay with her for a long time... "Dinner on the 25th August was rudely interrupted by a loud bang on the dining room window, the whole family turned to see what it was. Nobody expected anything more than a stunned Starling but it was a big bang. We rushed to the window and saw two

birds lying in the fern border; one was obviously dead and the other stunned. The dead bird was a Collared Dove and the other a Sparrow Hawk. We deduced that the hawk had swooped to take the dove in flight, but misjudged and flown straight into the window.

We watched, fascinated, as the Sparrow Hawk recovered and checked its surroundings, and then calmly started to pluck its prey. This was all within two yards of the window and with a spellbound human audience of five. I grabbed my camera and got a few shots, but as time went on I became bolder and even tapped gently on the window to attract the bird's attention!

The hawk stayed for over an hour and ate most of the dove. It then flew up onto the bird table, posed for a few more pictures, and moved into trees and away. I hope these pictures convey some of the excitement we felt. It was nature happening right in front of our eyes!"



If you have had any thrilling local wildlife encounters that you would like to share with readers please get in touch – perhaps we could have some members featured too!

ClickNow!

We are always looking for ways to raise funds for our vital conservation and education work and now there is a fantastic new way that you can help raise money for us at no cost to you!

We have partnered up with ClickNow to provide a websearch facility that we believe will raise £100's for our work. Start using it today every time you search the Internet and you could raise £50 a year for Chester Zoo.

Sounds too good to be true but every time you click on a sponsored link the company pays a fee to ClickNow and they give us 50%. The Chester Zoo websearch uses Ask Jeeves and Yahoo amongst others, so you still get the same results as you would on a normal search – however this way you help the Zoo raise funds for conservation! Try it and see how simple it is today – simply go to our website www.chesterzoo.org and click on the ClickNow logo. Use it at home and at work and raise funds everyday. Why not save it in your favourites or send to friends and family – remember every little helps.

Give it a try now and look out for the ClickNow blue logo!



Supporting your local charity Zoo

Have you ever wanted to help the Zoo raise funds for its vital conservation and education work but not sure where to start? The Development team have lots of ideas and are happy to help you on your way. Why not nominate the Zoo for charity of the year at your company or school? Perhaps you could organise a raffle, tombola or sell our pin badges at your place or work or social club. For the more energetic of you, have you ever

considered taking part in a fun run or even a marathon and raise funds through sponsorship? Even recycling your old mobile phones or printer cartridges can help so why not make a clean sweep for spring and clear out those cupboards now. We'd love to hear from you with your ideas – give the development office a call on 01244 650229 and we can help you to help the Zoo to a brighter future.



Recycling

Your waste could be worth thousands! Items that normally go in the bin can be recycled to raise valuable cash, so helping both the environment and our fundraising.

What's more, it won't cost you a penny! Chester Zoo is working alongside recyclers Eurosource in a scheme that will boost our fundraising. All you need to do is put your old mobile phones or printer inkjet cartridges in one of our freepost envelopes and send them directly to our recycler. If you have a large amount of items, or printer toner cartridges, a free collection can be arranged from

anywhere in the UK. To find out how, call The Mobile Phone Recycling Appeal direct on 08712 5050 50, quoting Chester Zoo – account 718100.

For more information on the scheme or to request envelopes, please contact the Development Office at developmentoffice@chesterzoo.org or on 01244 650229.

Orang-utan fundraising update

Work is now well under way for the **Realm of the Red Ape** exhibit. Fundraising is going well with just over £90,000 being pledged from various grant making bodies. We have also received a staggering £270,240 from various fundraising activities on the Zoo site. And of course thanks go to you, our members and adopters, who have contributed £4,220 toward the appeal via the direct mailing. As the project develops we shall keep you informed.

Where your money goes
You may have already received a new-look leaflet for our Lifetime Supporters' Club (formerly known as the Legacy Pledge Club). If you have been thinking about leaving a gift to Chester Zoo in your will please use the leaflet to let us know, so we can thank you properly.

To give you an example of the difference your donation could make, consider the example of a former Life Member who left a gift to Chester Zoo in her will. The £16,000 bequest was left for the benefit of the elephants and such a sum can do so much. In Assam where our conservation project is taking place, one person's generosity and foresight could fund elephant tracking equipment and also train villagers to construct and maintain crop-raiding deterrents and also to research elephant behaviour and movement. You really can make an impact.

If you would like more information on the Lifetime Supporters' Club please contact Lynsey Jones on 01244 650292 or via l.jones@chesterzoo.org.



Tsavo café

A new Chester Zoo development will be giving visitors food for thought this year.

A new cafeteria, catering for some 270 visitors in one go, will open its doors more than 12 months since development work began. The **Tsavo café**, which is based close to the main entrance, will fit in with surrounding animal enclosures including **Tsavo, the Black Rhino experience** and will include a thatched roof. Built on one of the former rhino sites, the £2 million café will boast a warm indoor area and an outside covered area for diners.

Steve O'Brien, Head of Estates, said: 'We have made sure that the majority of the works are carried out during the winter months to keep disruption to our visitors down to a minimum. The café has been sympathetically themed to fit in with its surroundings and visitors who choose to dine outside will be able to do so under the watchful eye of our rhinos and warhogs. It will be a whole new dining experience.'



The new café will bring extra catering facilities to the west side of the Zoo, whilst visitors who find themselves over on the east side during hungry times will still have the benefit of using the Ark restaurant or Oakfield Manor.

The café is just one of the projects being worked on at the Zoo. The former camel house is being refurbished to make a new home for a male Okapi – the only living relative of giraffes – and other animals.

Meanwhile, an extension to the Ark shop has been finished and a duck and crane rearing area completed. Added Steve: 'It has been a busy 12 months for the estates team and a lot has been achieved. We are very much looking forward to finally opening the new café and the Okapi enclosure.'



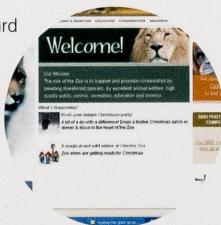
Blue badge guides

The Zoo continues to attract visitors from far and wide and 2006 will be no exception. For group visits there is a chance to see the Zoo from a different perspective. Our new 90 minute guided tours are now up and running with our professional blue badge guides. They have all been informed about conservation work and have collected 'behind the scenes' information to provide a valuable insight into the work we achieve at Chester Zoo. Booking a guided tour in advance allows the group to be met at the entrance and enjoy a highlight tour of the Zoo where the participants can return to their favourite animal for a closer inspection!

We have also hosted familiarisation trips organised by the Cheshire and Warrington Tourism Board (CWTB) with tour operators ranging from the local Cheshire region to coach operators from Hungary! By bringing these visits to the Zoo we have an opportunity to showcase our group facilities and services we can provide.

Best website of the year!

The Zoo also picked up the Best Website of the Year award at England's Northwest Tourism Awards, we fended off stiff competition from Southport Pleasureland, Windermere's Langdale Chase, Blackpool's Pembroke Hotel and Greater Manchester's The Quays Marketing Consortium. The website which was also a winner in the CWTB's awards earlier this year, will now go forward to the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence.



Elephants of the Asian forest

It stands more than 12 metres high and covers more than 2,900 square metres of ground but in a short time this building in progress will become home to some very special animals. Building a new house when your inhabitants are nine very large elephants is no mean feat but is even more complex when you have to work around them.

Our £3 million **Elephants of the Asian Forest** will open in Spring this year but in the meantime building work carries on apace on what will be a major new Zoo attraction for 2006. Split into three phases, the first part of the work has included developing a new extension and bull pen for the elephants – their new home during the remainder of the work.

Phase two included the demolition of the old elephant house to make way for the new exhibit.

Steve O'Brien, our Head of Estates, said: 'The building work has come on in leaps and bounds over the last few months and we are very much looking forward to the final phase which will be the theming of both the inside and out of the new house.

The work was made possible thanks to our Asian elephant fundraising appeal and I am sure all those who contributed towards it share our excitement at seeing the way this development is progressing.'

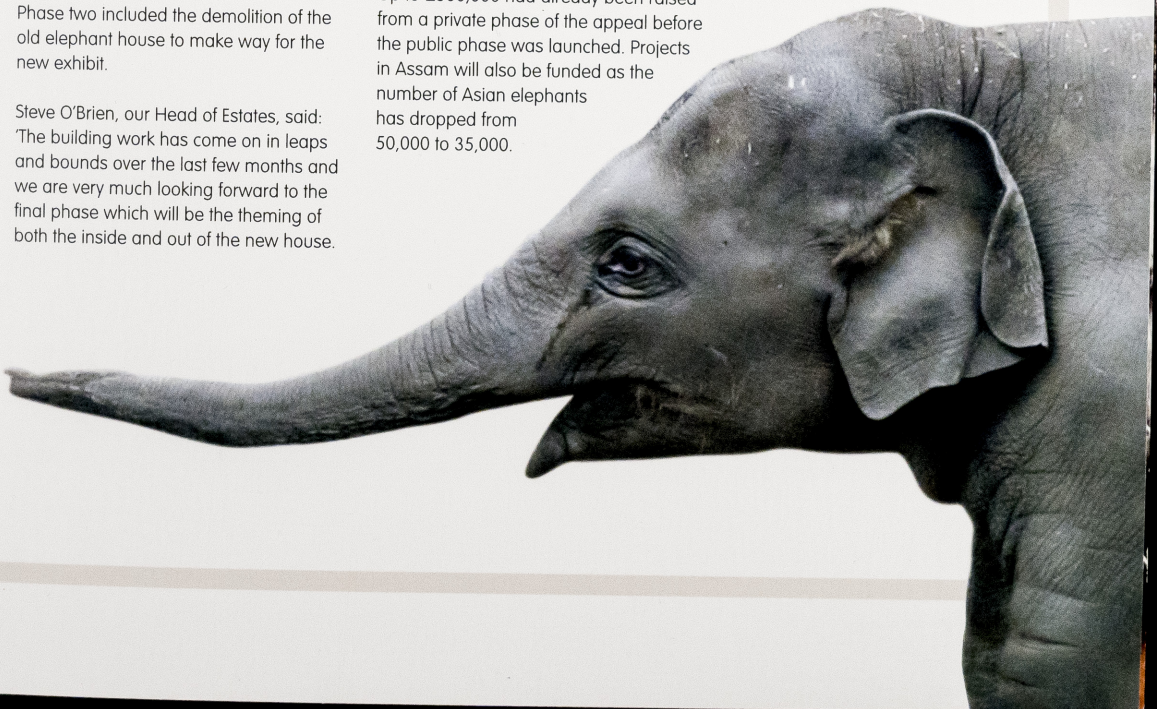
The successful £1.5 million public appeal aimed at helping Asian elephants, both at Chester Zoo and in the wild, came to a close in August 2005.

The **Asian Elephant Secure the Future** appeal, which was launched with a zoo-based TV programme by former **Coronation Street** star Chris Bisson, ended with a special Elefantasia Ball held at Chester Racecourse, which put the appeal on target.

Up to £500,000 had already been raised from a private phase of the appeal before the public phase was launched. Projects in Assam will also be funded as the number of Asian elephants has dropped from 50,000 to 35,000.

External consultants working on the project include Ellesmere Port-based ARJ Associates and theming experts Pangea, based in Denmark.

Chester Zoo's £3 million **Elephants of the Asian Forest** project will open in Spring this year.



Events programme 2006

March Mothering Sunday Lunch

Sunday 26th March

£21.50 per adult

£15.25 per child (under 11 years)

Price includes admission into the Zoo and a delicious three course lunch served in the Oakfield Restaurant.

June Chester Zoo's East Side Tour

Thursday 8th June

£24.50

Take an informative guided tour of the Gardens and Animals on the East Side of the Zoo, before returning to the Oakfield Manor for a delicious buffet.

July Family Picnic Evening

Thursday 20th July

Adults £21.95

Childrens Boxes £8.95

Enter the Zoo from 4.30pm. Picnic baskets, which include a half bottle of wine per person, may be collected from the Oakfield Restaurant at 6.30pm. There will also be the opportunity to purchase drinks from the Acorn Bar and desserts will be available from the Oakfield terrace between 7.30 – 9.00pm.

August Carnivore Evening

Thursday 3rd August

£24.50

An evening visiting our Red Pandas, Seallions and Big Cats, returning to the Oakfield Manor for a BBQ.

September Elephants of the Asian Forest

Thursday 7th September

£32.50

Take a guided tour of our new Elephants of the Asian Forest, meeting a Keeper, and finding out about our Elephants. Upon your return to the Oakfield Manor enjoy cocktails and a delicious 3 course dinner.



For further details or to
book contact: The Events
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endangered species across the world.

