

A labour of love for the Zoo's
rare and wonderful orchids

Staff go Wild
Conservation in action

Triumph and tragedy for
the Assam Haathi project

The Congleton truffle mystery

Spring 2008 Issue 33
Z magazine for Chester Zoo
Members and Adopters

Year of the frog



Welcome to the Spring issue of Z.

As I write, the Zoo year is well underway. I am delighted to tell you that we ended the year on a high with, most notably, **record visitor figures of more than 1.2 million.**

This is a first in the Zoo's history and, as I am sure you can appreciate, we were all delighted with the news.

We also celebrated picking up a magnificent four awards and four commendations from the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA).

The awards and commendations were for a number of projects including best enclosure for *Elephants of the Asian Forest*, a wildlife medicine award for a chimpanzee project, an education award for *The Secret World of the Okapi* and best conservation project for the Assam Haathi project, more of which you can read about on page 13.

These successes in recent months means we have set the standard for 2008 and we are aiming for bigger and better things yet again.

Our focus during the next few months will also be on more new zoo projects and developments and you will be able to discover more through the pages of Z as the year goes on.

For now, our immediate focus is on all things amphibian.

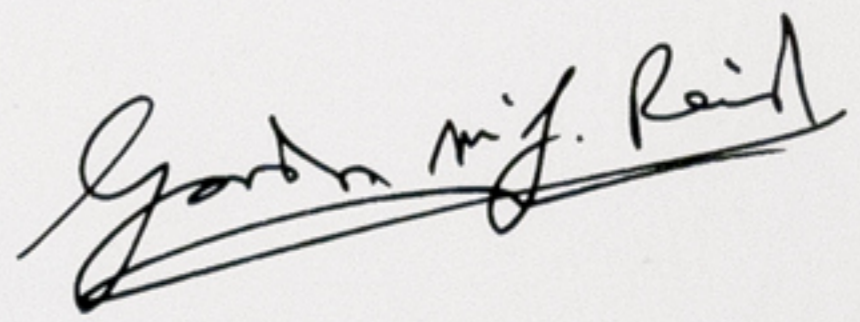
2008 has been declared the *Year of the Frog* to raise awareness of a looming, mass extinction of amphibian species – the most significant since the dinosaur.

One-third to one-half of all amphibian species are in danger of disappearing in our lifetime. Amphibian Ark is a campaign supported by zoos to rescue the 500 most endangered species that cannot be saved in the wild. It is the most urgent component of a comprehensive effort to protect the future for amphibians, and is supported by the IUCN/Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, IUCN/SSC Amphibian Specialist Group, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) of which I am president.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Sir David Attenborough who has pledged his support to the world-wide campaign. We will be lending our support in many ways, including exhibitions here at the Zoo.

On New Year's Eve, we took part in a global 'leap frog' event to launch the campaign. More details of our events and on the *Year of the Frog* campaign can be found on our new website www.chesterzoo.org I hope you will help us in our amphibian effort over the next 12 months.

Thank you in advance for your support.



Gordon McGregor Reid
Director General





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Z is published by:
North of England Zoological Society,
Upton-by-Chester, Chester CH2 1LH

Founded in 1934, the North of England
Zoological Society is a registered charity
and receives no government funding.
We need your help and support to raise
funds for the care and conservation of rare
and endangered animals both in the Zoo
and across the world.

Registered charity No. 306077
Designed and produced by www.jacksonhammond.co.uk



Don't forget!

Visit our new website at
www.chesterzoo.org for more
info on all the latest zoo news.

Zoo additions

Pied Tamarin

After three years of holding a single sexed group of Pied Tamarins (*Saguinus bicolor*) we received a recommendation to breed and obtained new animals late in 2007 and now have a pair of animals. Pied Tamarins are one of only three Critically Endangered marmoset and tamarin species and so it is particularly pleasing to be in a position to be able to breed this species. Although still in quarantine the new pair of tamarins can be seen in their public enclosure at *Miniature Monkeys*.

Northern Babirusa

Following the death of our old male Northern Babirusa (*Babirusa celebensis*) in June 2007 we were delighted to obtain a new four year old male during the winter to go with our female. Although they have moved temporarily from the Cattle House they can still be seen across the canal at the back of the giraffe area.



Zoo additions continued...



Caiman Lizard

Our young pair of lizards were bred at Prague Zoo in the Czech Republic during 2006. Chester Zoo is the only zoo in the UK to currently hold and exhibit this spectacular species. They are fussy feeders as their diet consists exclusively of snails – shells and all. As they are currently crunching their way through over 100 of these a week, we have to buy them in from a snail farm in Devon that produces them for UK's French restaurants. Caiman Lizards (*Dracaena guianensis*) come from the Amazon basin of Peru and Brazil where they live in swampy forest areas. They can grow up to 1.2 metres in length.



Azara's Agouti

The pair of Azara's Agouti (*Dasyprocta azarae*) in the macaw aviaries have given birth to three young, a first for Chester Zoo! Both parents and all three youngsters can be seen on the floor of the Blue-throated Macaw aviary near the back of the *Tropical Realm*. This species is one of the most threatened of the 11 species of agoutis.

Rancho Redondo Frog

This incredibly rare species of frog was thought to be extinct in its native Costa Rica until a single small population was rediscovered in 2003. They have been brought to Chester Zoo as part of our commitment to the global Amphibian Ark initiative – where zoo breeding populations may well offer the last chance of survival for many hundreds of amphibian species. Our Rancho Redondo Frogs (*Lithobates vibicarius*) will be permanently housed in our specialist off-show amphibian conservation breeding unit. Chester Zoo is the only zoo in the world to hold this species. We are working with the Manchester Museum on this vital *ex situ* conservation breeding programme and with museum staff, will be involved in the conservation of this species in the wild during 2008.



Tapir

Her name owes more to science fiction than anything else, but this tiny Tapir is out of this world in her own right. *Shadow*, who is named after a character in the hit 1990's American science fiction series *Babylon 5*, made her debut at Chester Zoo on December 28, weighing around five kilos. All of the Zoo's new-born Tapirs and Capybaras get their names from the TV series. With her distinctive humbug stripes, *Shadow* is the sixth surviving baby Tapir born to mum *Jennifer* and dad *Cuzco*. Both parents, together with *Shadow's* big brother *Zak* who was born in August 2006, are proving to be attentive to their new charge. *Shadow* and her family are now on-show at the Zoo.



Giraffe

She is one of the smallest giraffes ever born at Chester Zoo but pint-sized *Margaret* will soon be an animal to look up to. Little *Margaret* is being hand-reared by her dedicated keepers. The first calf for six-year-old mum *Fay*, *Margaret*, who was born two weeks early, tipped the scales at just 34 kilos and is a mere 5ft tall. Tim Rowlands, team leader of the Giraffes section, said: "*Margaret* is potentially one of the smallest giraffe calves we have ever seen. *Fay* isn't the largest of giraffes and *Margaret* was also early which might go some way to explaining her size.

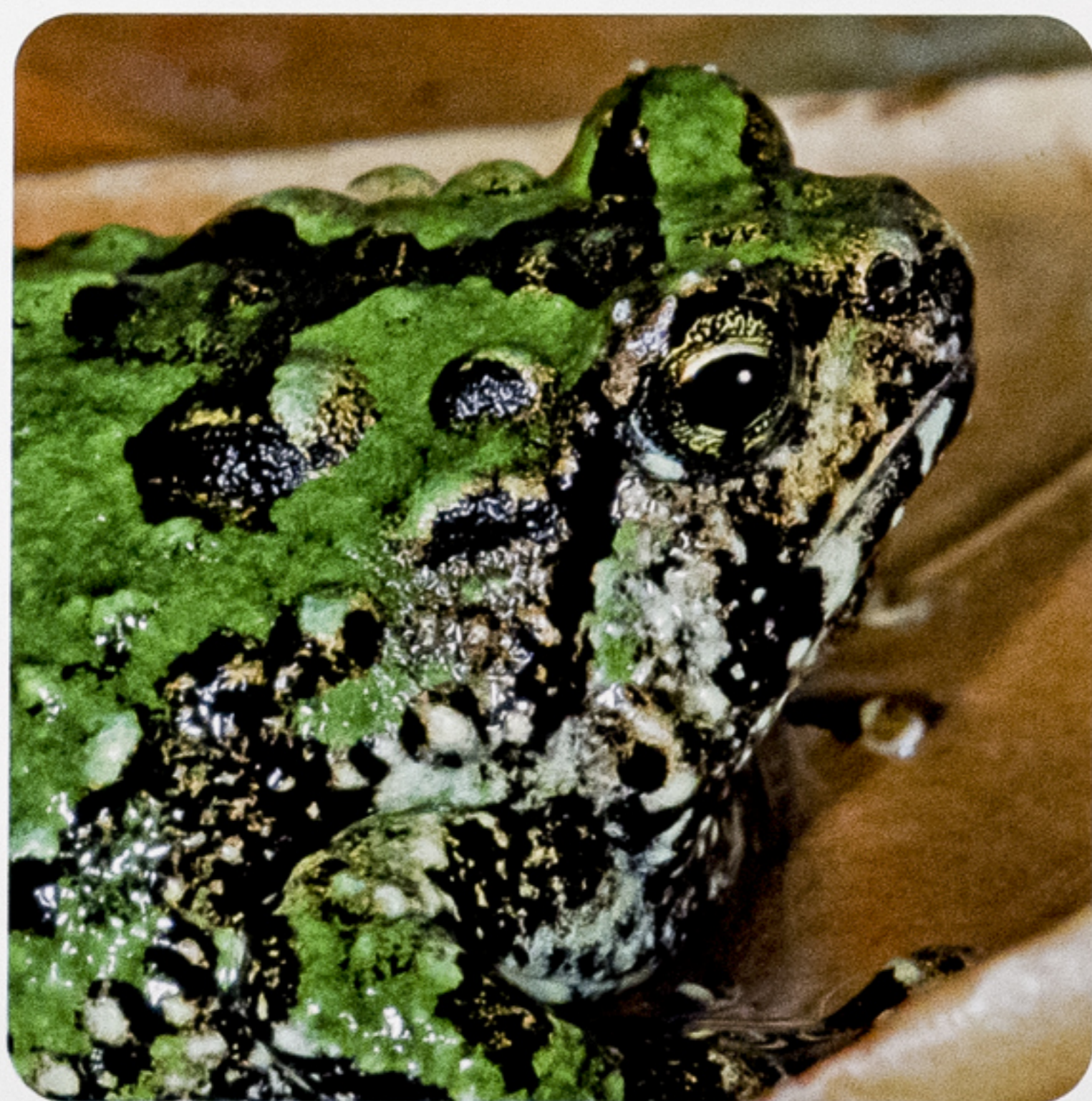
"*Margaret* was having difficulty suckling so our keeping team are now hand-rearing her and she is going from strength so strength. We have a good track record when it comes to breeding giraffes and we are delighted to welcome another to the fold."

The birth of *Margaret* – who is named after Tim's mum – is all the more welcome as there are only 600 Rothschild giraffes left in the wild in Kenya and Uganda. The giraffe house is open to the public, where zoo visitors can see the new addition. *Margaret's* story will also feature in the new series of *Zoo Days*, which takes viewers behind the scenes at Chester Zoo. *Zoo Days* starts again on Five on March 3, showing weekdays at 6.30pm.



Year of the frog

An exhibition at Chester Zoo will bring to life the plight facing amphibians across the globe.



2008 Year of the Frog will come under the spotlight when *Life on the Lily Pad* launches in the Zoo's Joseph Banks Room at Easter.

The display will focus on amphibians and the reasons for their dramatic declines.

One-third to one-half of all amphibian species are in danger of disappearing in our lifetime, largely through the spread of chytrid fungus.

The IUCN Amphibian and Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) of which Chester Zoo's Director General Gordon McGregor Reid is President have launched The Amphibian Ark project to support *ex situ* projects around the world.

The 2008 Year of the Frog global campaign – supported by Sir David Attenborough – aims to raise public awareness and understanding of the amphibian crisis. Funds raised will also help support Amphibian Ark co-ordination and will raise awareness of the problems facing amphibians and help with fundraising.

Life on the Lily Pad will celebrate the diversity of amphibians and their amazing lifestyles in a fun, interactive way. Find out about their quirky habits and skills. Come face to face with beautiful poison arrow frogs and wonderful work-like caecilians.

Large colourful photographic panels will highlight the problems facing these fascinating creatures and ways in which we can all help them. As always, our knowledgeable Presenters will be on hand to answer your burning questions. The exhibition is included in normal zoo entry and runs throughout the year.

For more information on 2008 Year of the Frog visit
www.amphibianark.org

“One-third to one-half of all amphibian species are in danger of disappearing in our lifetime...”



Orchids

A labour of love for two of the Zoo's longest serving employees

With 38 years service behind him, Keith Done, is the longest serving employee of Chester Zoo's Botany and Horticulture department and the Zoo's third longest-serving employee.

For most of his 38 years, Keith, 53, from Chester, has specialised in tending to some of the Zoo's rare and wonderful orchid species. And he is joined in his fascination by Steve Manning, an orchid expert who has donated half of his 1000-strong orchid collection to the Zoo.

It is a shared passion that may now have led to them possibly discovering a rare and as yet unnamed orchid.

As Keith says: "One thing you can say about orchids is that they are unpredictable. They can give you good times and they can give you bad times. They can be very tricky plants to care for."

Keith's fascination with orchids – his favourite is the Slipper – started not long after he started at the Zoo, following in the footsteps of his father, Tom.

For Steve – who specialises in the group Pleurothallidinae which accounts for 12 per cent of all known orchids – his interest grew after a chat with a neighbour who also kept them.

Steve, 69, and from Nantwich has three orchids named after him and one named after his wife.

His fascination with the plant is as strong as it was when he first started out and he says: "It is the case that orchids chose me rather than me choosing them."

Steve's donation of his orchids to the Zoo means the Zoo collection is the most extensive public display of orchids in the North West.

Chester Zoo's annual orchid festival will be held again next year from Tuesday February 12 until Sunday February 17. Displays will be on show in *Realm of the Red Ape*, *Tropical Realm*, *Oakfield Manor* and *Grow Zone*. The show will be one of the highlights of Cheshire Year of the Gardens 08 which aims to celebrate the best of Cheshire's gardens.

On a recent trip to Germany, Steve picked up a species of orchid that, as yet, can't be identified. Over the next few weeks, parts of the plant will be pickled in a special preservative before being shipped to Florida to the home of world-renowned orchid expert Carlisle Luer. If he confirms that it is a new species, he will make a full botanical description of it but the choice of names will remain with Steve.

"What appeals to me about Pleurothallidinae is the sheer diversity of the plants – some have larger

flowers, some flowers are just a millimetre in size. I enjoy their history, finding out how some of them came about and were discovered. After all this time, every day I am still learning something new about them and, as it seems, finding new species" said Steve.

Steve frequently visits the Zoo to review his collection, but it is Keith who tends and cares for them and the myriad of plants growing in the Zoo's specially constructed greenhouses.

Keith started at the zoo at a time when the greenhouses were used largely for growing some of the 80,000 bedding plants then used around the Zoo each year.

As the Zoo developed, Keith began working with some of the more tropical plants used in and around the animal houses before specialising in orchids which he describes as 'tricky.' Self-taught, Keith soon learnt about

potting techniques, composting and the temperatures and conditions orchids need to flourish. Keith and Steve swap advice and tips but the best advice Keith ever received came from his father.

"My dad worked at a nursery for 30 years before coming to the Zoo and I followed in his footsteps when I left school. He's instilled in me certain things like always keep your workplace tidy and invest in quality not quantity but his best tip was always about watering. Watering is the most difficult thing to grasp and get right," he says.

When he is not tending the orchids, Keith grows and nurtures plants for use around the Zoo – not that the planting always works out as planned.

"Sometimes our plants will end up in the animal enclosures, such as *Realm of the Red Ape* which opened Last year. It can be hard to see animals

such as orang-utans dig up something you have worked hard at producing. That's why we always make sure we have more than one of the same species of plant as a back up!" he laughs.

For more on Chester Zoo's gardens visit chesterzoo.org
For more on Year of the Gardens, visit yearofgardens08.com



Leap ahead

Thanks to a three year funding partnership with the Oglesby Trust, Chester Zoo is now able to purchase a second A-pod, an off show facility for our work with frogs and amphibians.

The A-pods are based on modified international shipping containers, and have previously been used successfully for frog conservation by the Amphibian Research Centre in Australia. They are fully self-contained frog breeding facilities and adhere to strict quarantine rules, where the species are managed in isolation from the outside world to prevent any chance of disease cross-contamination.

Each A-pod will be able to house both frogs and tadpoles in a system of racked tanks with facilities for staff to work alongside.

The A-pods will unfortunately be off show to the general public although interpretation and information about this vital work will be on show in the wider zoo as part of an on going amphibian awareness campaign. The inaugural A-pod is on site now and is being prepared for its first inhabitants.

We are delighted that the Oglesby Trust is able to support this project for the next three years and hope to be able to report on its success in the fight against chytridiomycosis the fungal disease which has swept through frog populations in North, Central and South America, Australia and Europe.



Rural Enterprise funding comes to an end

Rural Enterprise, a grant initiative which aims to support a range of regeneration activities in rural Cheshire, Warrington and Halton is coming to a close at the end of March 2008. However during its lifetime this NWDA initiative has given around £300,000 in grants to Chester Zoo to support new developments and capital builds.

Under the 'Green Fingers' programme both the *Elephants of the Asian Forest* and *Realm of the Red Ape* received sizeable grants and under 'Kerching' the redevelopment of the *Ark Shop* and the development of the first *Frost Fair* were supported. Finally a Water Voles reintroduction project was given support and you can now see groups of water voles around the Zoo's water ways, particularly by the Elephant Reed bed and *Monkey Islands*.

Our thanks go to Rural Enterprise and the NWDA for supporting these projects over the last three years.

Pictured right: Rural Enterprise Programme Director Nicola Lavin with Melanie Cowieson Development Manager at Chester Zoo (outside Realm of the Red Ape, one of the Rural Enterprise funded Projects).



Let saving species be your legacy

Chester Zoo relies on donations from generous supporters to help fund our various projects at home and abroad. A growing area of support is from generous members, adopters and donors who are concerned about the future of the planet and as such, pledge to leave a donation in their will to Chester Zoo. This money makes a huge difference to our vital work and the donations we received last year alone were enough to fund our important Asian Elephant conservation project in Assam for a whole year. So it really can make a difference.

For more information about leaving a gift to Chester Zoo in your will, call 01244 650292 or email development@chesterzoo.org

'Eggstraspecial' support!

If you're looking for something different this year instead of an Easter Egg why not buy a Chester Zoo *Wildest Wish* – they're not fattening and you can be sure that your money is going to a good cause!

Wildest Wishes is our new gift range and is perfect for people who care about wildlife. From an 'elephant pedicure' to 'a purrrfect gift for cat lovers' you can buy a gift for your friends, your family and even yourself.

Of course we don't actually send you an elephant, you'll get a gift card to give to the recipient and a warm glow from the knowledge that your gift is helping to save animals and plants from extinction.

Money raised from *Wildest Wishes* will go towards supporting conservation, education and outreach work of the North of England Zoological Society at home and abroad.

Simply go online to www.chesterzoo.org, phone 01244 650229 or call into the Guest Services Pavilion when in the Zoo.

**Wildest
Wishes**

Raffle results!

This year's Winter Raffle has been a huge success with many people taking part to try and win some of our fabulous prizes. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who bought and sold tickets to help raise vital funds for Chester Zoo's worthwhile conservation work. Special thanks go to all the staff and volunteers who gave up their time to make this a success and helped us raise just under £4,000! The winning tickets were drawn at random on Monday 7th January by Liz Child, Head of Visitor Services here at the Zoo. **Lucky winners and prizes are as follows:**

1st Prize Winner

Keeper for a Day Experience

E A Parry, Altringham
Ticket 07241

2nd Prize Winner

Girls Raleigh 'Krush' Bike

M Whitaker, Leigh
Ticket 18667

3rd Prize Winner

Boys Raleigh 'Zero G' Bike

Mr & Mrs Austin, Runcorn
Ticket 18376

4th Prize Winner

Marks & Spencer Luxury Hamper

A B Pearson, Kelsal
Ticket 02864

5th Prize Winner

Special Guided Tour of the Zoo

M Peters, Ellesmere Port
Ticket 07541

100 club

The winners of the prize draws held recently were:

October 2007

| | |
|------------------------------|------|
| Martin Laidlaw, Tarvin Sands | £100 |
| Mair Green, Ellesmere Port | £100 |
| Ivy Bentley, Chester | £50 |
| Nigel Jones, Wrexham | £50 |
| Linda Taylor, Rochdale | £50 |

November 2007

| | |
|--------------------------|------|
| Gerard Milan, Rhyl | £100 |
| R. W. Grice, Neston | £100 |
| Catherine Jones, Wrexham | £50 |
| June Moore, Chester | £50 |
| K. J. Sims, Norfolk | £50 |
| Angela Nolan, Liverpool | £50 |

December 2007

| | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Chris Lavender, Chester | £1000 |
| Liz Roberts, Mickle Trafford | £100 |
| Kenneth Day, Chorley | £50 |
| Margaret Wake, Tarporley | £50 |
| Lauren Evans, Ewloe | £50 |

Membership of the 100 Club is still invited. All prize winners will be notified by post and will be listed in the next edition of Z. Please inform us as soon as possible if you change address.

If you wish to participate, please contact the Development Office on 01244 650 292



Staff update from around the world

China Shaoxing City

Gordon McGregor Reid
Director General

Gordon travelled to China on invitation to give a keynote address to the symposium on Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People, sponsored by Wetlands International and hosted and organised by the People's Government of Shaoxing City, in November. He also participated in a workshop on 'Wetlands and Climate Change' – a dialogue in preparation for the Climate Summit, December 2007 in Bali Indonesia.

Cameroon Yaounde

Steve Unwin and Scott Wilson
Veterinary Officer and Conservation Officer

In November Steve and Scott travelled to Cameroon for the PASA Primate Health Care Workshop. This workshop brought together veterinarians from primate sanctuaries throughout Africa providing training and networking opportunities. As a member of PASA, Steve helped organise and facilitate the workshop, whilst both Scott and Steve were involved in presenting workshops concerned with the use of GIS mapping to monitor emerging infectious diseases.

Kenya Laikipia Wildlife Forum

Maggie Esson
Education Programmes Manager

Maggie made a visit to the Laikipia Wildlife Forum in late November/early December. The aim of the visit was to make decisions on how to approach a review of the Environmental Education programme that we support in collaboration with Save the Rhino International. There were a series of planning meetings and visits to those conservancies that service the education programme. The training of Ephantus Mugo, the EE Officer also continued with lesson planning being the focus for this visit.

Bhutan and Assam

Alex Zimmerman
Conservation Manager

Alex Zimmerman travelled to both Bhutan and Assam in December. In Bhutan she was involved in assisting the Bhutanese government in the development of a national strategy of human-wildlife conflict and visited Assam to assist with and report back on the progress of the Assam Haathi Project.



Kidz Zoo

Spring 2008 Issue 33

Events

Puzzles

Workshops

Competitions



Puzzles

Find out which paths the marmot must take to find shelter and food, and which one leads to danger?



WIN!

We have two £10 gift vouchers to spend in the zoo shops. To be in with a chance of winning, complete the puzzles and send your answers to Kidz Zoo competition c/o Marketing Department, Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Chester CH2 1LH by Monday April 14.

A

B

C



Can you join together the pieces of words to find 10 animals?

ELE
HIPPO
RHINO
FLAM
SEA
CHIM
PYT
GIB
MONI
VUL

POTAMUS
CEROS
TOR
PANZEE
HON
PHANT
LION
TURE
INGO
BON

Congratulations to last month's winners:
Darcey Caine, aged 8 from Northwich, Cheshire
Peter Clough, aged 7 from Bromborough, Wirral.

Summer School Workshop

Mon 11 to Fri 15 August 2008
9.00 am to 5.00 pm daily

(Drop off at 8.30 am and collection at 5.30 pm can be arranged)

The aim is to enhance the 'service' offered to Junior Members and fulfil the needs of the 'older' Juniors (ages 12-17) at a time when they tend to have been joining in with events for a few years, have a real interest in zoos, but the regular monthly events cannot provide the more detailed zoo and animal knowledge that youngsters need to make informed decisions about careers, school GCSE subject choices.

Above all, it should be great fun and a rare opportunity to become much better acquainted with the real work involved in zoos - you will be surprised what you find out! We will

provide 'full days' so that this is accessible to as many children as possible, including those who have working parents, ie. 8.30 - 5.30 pm. Juniors will be required to join in for the full week, rather than dipping in and out on different days.

A maximum of 25 - 30 places have been offered, on a first come, first served basis. Priority will be given to those of 13+ and those who have not attended before.

The Summer School is not designed to fulfil school syllabus criteria but is entirely tailor-made for Juniors who want to know more about the

purpose of zoos, our conservation objectives, animal welfare, nutrition, veterinary work, enrichment, plant displays etc. We will use the Education classrooms as our base, but will spend much of our time out and about in the Zoo and the Zoo's wider estate.

A charge will be made to cover the cost of all provisions and materials used. The full cost will be £130 for the week, and while we will provide drinks and snacks during the day. The Juniors should bring their own picnic lunch.

Penny Rudd
Junior Members' Club Leader

Summer School Indoor Events Programme

Columbus Classroom
(Provisional, so subject to change)

Mon 11 August 2008

Morning

Introduction
To explain the Programme of Events, behavioural expectations, housekeeping etc.

Why Zoos?
Powerpoint and Discussion Session
Zoo Library visit, Zoo Tour,
Behind the Scenes and Picnic Lunch.

Afternoon

Botany in Zoo
Indoor Greenhouse session
2.00 pm - 4.00 pm

Starting the Summer School 'Craft Project'
To be continued through the week.

Tues 12 August

Morning

Animal Records
The Dating Game and
Personal Passports
Zoo Nutrition
(The Balloon Game)
11.00 am - 1.00 pm

Afternoon

Zoo Tours
(Aquarium, Parrots, Giraffes)
Zoo Enclosure Design
Outreach Conservation
Projects Overseas
4.00 pm - 5.00 pm

Weds 13 August
Day Out

Visiting Meadow Bank Farm, Broxton, Cheshire, to discuss organic farming practises and see how this works to benefit local wildlife. Our particular mission will be to walk the farm boundaries looking for signs of the benefits gained on this beautiful farm which specialises in rearing Hereford cattle. This visit is subject to animal health restrictions in the area at the time!

Thurs 14 August
Native Species Day

Morning

Live Mammal Trapping
(Early morning start)
Harvest Mouse Project
Brief Powerpoint
Visit to Water Voles
Visit to Sand Lizards

Afternoon

Native Species
Powerpoint presentation -
Black Poplars, Pearl Mussels,
Water Voles and Sand Lizards
Making Bird Boxes, Bat Boxes,
Dormouse Boxes, Barn Owl Boxes

Fri 15 August

Morning

Environmental Enrichment - Why?
Animal Behaviour
and Observations
Chimps, Elephants and Big Cats

Afternoon

Where being a Zoo Junior Member can help your Career?
Careers in Zoos
Tour of Veterinary Hospital
Being a Zoo Vet or Veterinary Nurse
Close
Workshop Scrapbooks,
craft project display and zoo quiz

Junior members programme of events 2008

Tracks and signs

Sat 29 March

(Please note that this is a change of date from that issued in the last Z magazine so as to avoid 'clashing' with an early Easter weekend)

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 bear 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, when we meet outside Oakfield House at 11.00 am, returning there for collection at 4.00 pm. You will need a picnic lunch, and it is important that you wear clean, very old clothes and clean wellies please.

Monkey Forest at Trentham Gardens

Sat 19 April

This will be a 'new' trip for Juniors – to experience a unique opportunity to visit 'Monkey Forest' in Staffordshire. You will be able to walk amongst 140 free-roaming Barbary Macaques. You will discover this amazing species as they exhibit their natural behaviour with no bars or cages to hinder your view. The Forest offers a safe place for the monkeys to live and provides acres of space for them to develop in freedom.

The bus will leave the staff car park at 10.00am and return at 4.30 pm. Over eights are invited to join us and you should bring a picnic lunch.

Lower Moss Wood Nature Reserve and Wildlife Hospital

Sat 17 May

This is a very special opportunity to experience a much-loved and cared-for woodland near Knutsford in Cheshire, and to hear about the wildlife within it when we have a guided tour with Ray Jackson. We also hope to meet some owls and other birds of prey there, as well as have a quick peek at the active Wildlife Hospital on site which is a vital resource, rescuing and re-habilitating many of our native species. We may also get the chance to do some pond-dipping while we are there.

The bus will leave the staff car park at 10.00am and return for 4.30pm. Over eights are invited to come along, and you should bring a picnic and wellies.

Anglesey's Stone Science Museum and Pili Palace

Sat 21 June

We usually try to visit Anglesey during the summer and the Stone Science Museum is a fascinating place to start this event. After visiting there in the morning, we will travel on to the amazing Pili Palace (Butterfly Farm) to learn more about how these beautiful animals can be bred and exhibited in our climate.

Juniors of eight and over are strongly advised to come along and find out more! We will be leaving the Staff Car Park at 9.30 am and returning at 5.15 pm.

Day with a Keeper Weds 23 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 10.30 am, and the day will finish for Juniors at 4.00 pm. Please bring a packed lunch. Also please note that bookings for this event will not be taken before 9.00 am on Wednesday 9 July 2008, and will be strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.**

The Junior Members' Summer Barbeque

Thurs 7 August

Our summer barbeque has become a regular feature for the Juniors' diary as it has proved immensely popular. Perhaps this is because because it is our chance to be in the Zoo when there are no other visitor noises 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 finding it relaxing. **We would like to invite eights and over to join us for a 7.00 pm 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 9.45 pm please.**

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 Pages in each issue. A 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.

8



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Making a difference

NEZS conservation outreach update

Over the last three months of 2007 Chester Zoo supported the following conservation programmes and projects:

Mascarenes Programme

The Mascarenes Programme partners the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and funding was awarded for four of the main constituents of this programme: Survey and monitoring of the Rodrigues Fruit Bat population, Conservation of the Mauritius Fody and Mauritius Olive White Eye – the establishment of a translocation population on the predator free island of Ile aux Aigrettes, Conservation of the Echo Parakeet, and Conservation of the Critically Endangered plants of Mauritius. The hard work and investment into this programme was rewarded this year by the downgrading in IUCN Red List status for the Echo Parakeet from Critically Endangered to Endangered.

Philippines Programme

Chester Zoo has been supporting work in the Philippines in association with Flora and Fauna International since 1994 when projects initially focused on the endangered Philippines Spotted Deer. Since then the partnership has grown and we now support a wide range of projects, these include the Alcoy Forest & Wildlife Protection Programme, Polillo Islands Ecology Stewardship Project, Biodiversity Conservation Education Programme in Alcoy, West Visayan Threatened Endemic Species Conservation Programme, the Philippine Hornbill Conservation Programme and the Polillo Butaan Project. These projects work to protect threatened species such as the Philippines Spotted Deer, Visayan Warty Pig and Visayan Writhed and Tarctic Hornbills, as well as capacity building with local agencies to enhance the continuation of these projects and strengthening local communities to ensure the long term protection of these species and the habitats they live in.

Rhino Programme

The Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, Tanzania, is an important part of the country's Black Rhino conservation strategy. Funding was provided to the sanctuary for essential fence maintenance which will serve to keep poachers out and keep the rhinos in the ideal habitat of the reserve. Chester Zoo has also helped develop, and fund, an Environmental Education Programme at Mkomazi, this will be based on a highly successful education programme which Chester Zoo supports in Laikipia, Kenya. Continued support was also provided for the Community Conservation Programme, in partnership with the Laikipia Wildlife Forum, which provides capacity building and education awareness in the wildlife rich Laikipia District of Kenya. This was additional to support provided earlier in the year to assist Black Rhino conservation in the Chyulus, Kenya.

Jaguar Programme

Several projects have been funded within our Jaguar Programme: Rancher outreach and human-jaguar conflict mitigation, Designing a protocol for the rapid assessment of Jaguar density using mark-recapture and index based camera trapping methods, Belize Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Project and Spatial Ecology and Conservation of the Jaguar in Belize.

Other grant support

Lots of other projects have been awarded funding over the last quarter including:

- Conservation of the Grey-breasted Parakeet, Brazil
- Building a robust framework for monitoring the St. Lucia Amazon
- The Wadi Fish of Eastern Arabia – ecology, distribution and conservation status
- A collaborative initiative with Manchester Museum for the effective future conservation of *Lithobates vibicaria*
- Intensification of the search for the Miss Waldron Red Colobus and other endangered monkey species in the Ehy forest, Cote D'Ivoire
- Snare removal in Kibale National Park, Uganda
- Northwest Lowlands Water Vole Project, UK
- Facilitating management of an African savanna landscape, Kenya

News on conservation from around the world

Good

We are incredibly proud to have received a major award for the Assam Haathi Project at the BIAZA 2007 awards ceremony held at Marwell Zoological Park. Mark Pilgrim, Conservation and Education Director, collected the award for Best Field Conservation Project. The Zoo also collected awards in other fields.

Bad

We received sad news from Assam in December. Dibakar Barua, Field Team Coordinator and one of the key researchers on the Assam Haathi Project, was tragically killed in a road accident. Dibakar was a key member of the AHP team, and was proud to have been involved with the project from the very start. He will be greatly missed.



Triumph and tragedy for the Assam Haathi Project

In Assam lies a village called Deepaline. Nestled next to a tea garden, Deepaline villagers know the habits of elephants far better than they would like. Elephants don't like tea. But they do like tea gardens, which provide shade and refuge for them during the day and make excellent bases from which to venture out into the crop lands, feeding on the rice paddy, emptying grain stores in houses and generally creating a great deal of havoc at best, and injuring people at worst.

Deepaline's unlucky location makes it terribly prone to such nightly elephant crop-raids, and the villagers had begun to take to desperate measures to protect themselves. Fearful of sleeping in their houses, they had built platforms into the trees in their villages, where they would keep vigilance and sleep at night when elephants were near. They had also stopped cultivating crops altogether, their rice field having laid fallow for over four years, reducing this community's income to complete dependence on occasional day labourers' wages from the tea garden.

Hearing of this desperate situation, the Assam Haathi Project offered its help. Our district Site Coordinator, Dibakar Barua and his field team, and Project Manager Nandita Hazarika installed a trip wire system – a simple one-strand wire fence strung at elephant-shoulder height between bamboo poles, around the periphery of the village. This wire is attached to an alarm, such as a loud doorbell. When an elephant bumps into the fence, it triggers the alarm and the villagers have time to get up and shine the searchlights we have given them at the elephants, which invariably makes them go away. Dibakar continued to work with the villagers of Deepaline and a number of other villages in his district, while also overseeing the field tracking team – community members who follow and record the locations of elephant herds, so that we can anticipate their presence, study their ecological needs, and plot and analyse their movements with computer-based mapping tools here in the UK. He showed the villagers further tricks and ideas, helped them grow chillis for chilli smoke and fences (also effective methods for keeping elephants at bay) and answered their questions about elephants. The trip-wire alarm was a success and the villagers were able to sleep in safety in their houses again.

“The core concept of our project is to combine direct, practical and innovative outreach to communities while at the same time monitoring and studying elephants and planning solutions for the long-term.”

The next step was to find a way to protect their fields. Under Dibakar's guidance, villagers and the project team together built a two-strand electrified fence and for the first time in years, this community has been able to harvest rice again.

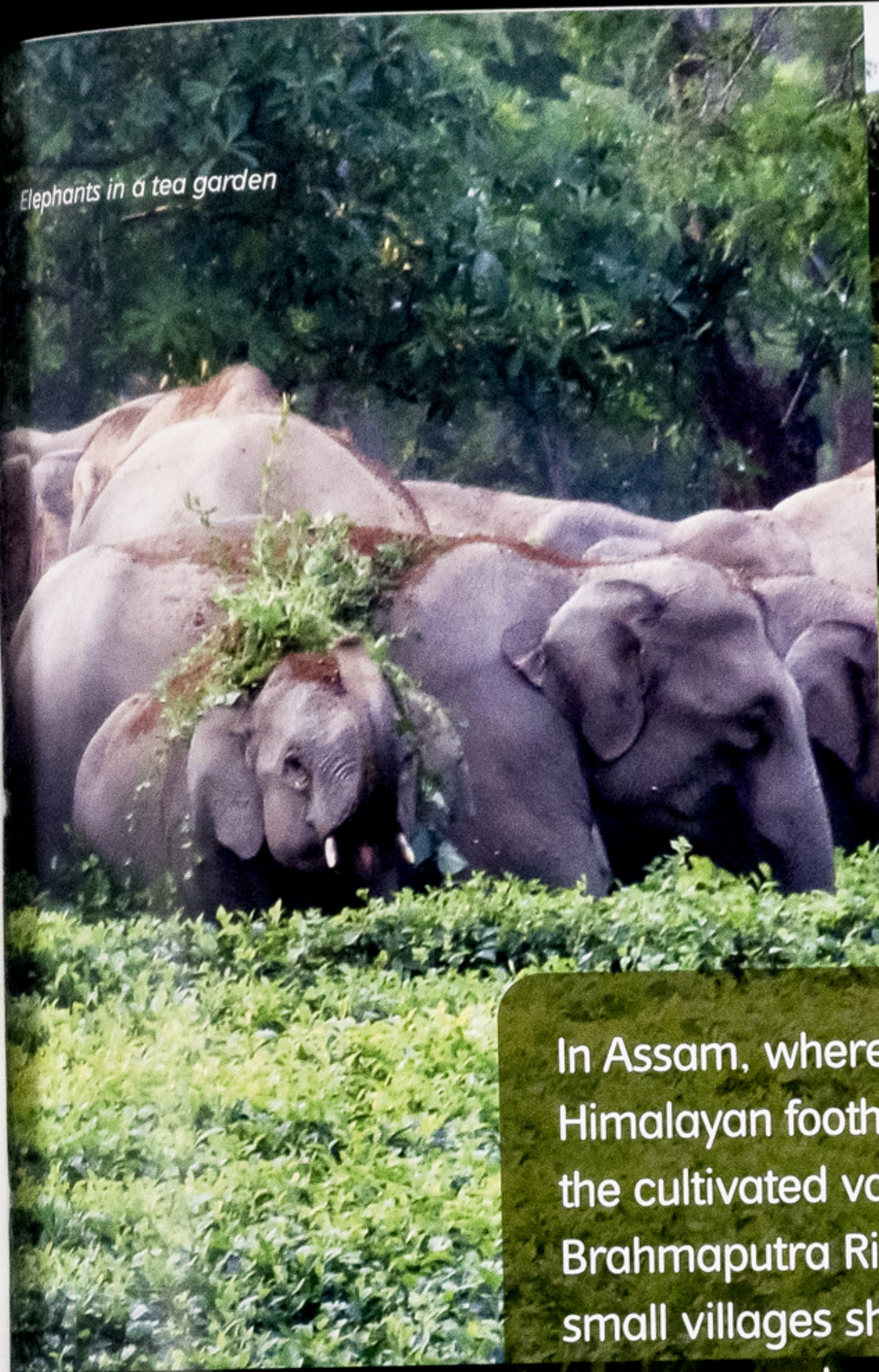
The core concept of our project is to combine direct, practical and innovative outreach to communities while at the same time monitoring and studying elephants and planning solutions for the long-term. Key to our success is that we do not separate science and community-based work, villagers get involved in everything from building a fence to tracking elephants, and discussing the results of our analyses later on. It is perhaps this concept and the little successes like those at Deepaline that earned the Assam Haathi Project two major awards in 2007 – first, one of the most prestigious grants in conservation, the Darwin Initiative award, which ensures that the project can continue and expand its work for at least another three years, and second, the top award from the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), a recognition that appeared even in the Assamese local press and brought tremendous delight and pride especially to Dibakar, his colleague Joy Chakrabarti, and their field teams.

In the midst of jubilantly enjoying the recognition of the BIAZA award, tragedy hit the project team. On 15 December we received the unbelievable news that Dibakar had died in a terrible road accident near his home. All of us in the project family were devastated. Dibakar had been one of the earliest members of the project, he helped to build it, and had worked tirelessly with those communities worst-affected by elephants and begun to make real progress in re-building their tolerance and respect for these animals. He also meticulously collected a vast amount of information about elephants and crop-raiding and was certainly one of the most knowledgeable people about elephant conflict in Assam. His dedication, patience and hard work were exemplary and brought great hope to the communities struggling to co-exist with elephants. Dibakar's community leadership has left a legacy, his work achieved international recognition and, foremost, his efforts not only in Deepaline but also in other villages undoubtedly saved lives. He is very much missed by all of his colleagues in Assam and at Chester Zoo.

Alexandra Zimmermann

*Conservation Manager
Coordinator, Assam Haathi Project*

Elephants in a tea garden



Dibakar and the Deepaline villagers building an electric fence.



In Assam, where the forested Himalayan foothills descend into the cultivated valley of the Brahmaputra River, hundreds of small villages share the land with vast tea gardens that produce one sixth of the world's tea; and they share the land with wild elephants, which roam between the forests and the river.

Dibakar being honoured by the villagers of Deepaline



Electric fence protecting crops



(Photos: Dhruva Das, Assam Haathi Project)

Conservation conversation

Another voyage through the world of conservation with our diverse talks especially arranged for you

Back to Life: The role of museums and zoos in conservation

**Thursday 10th April
7.30 pm**

Andrew Kitchener

There is an increasing need for museums and zoos to work closely together for the benefit of endangered species. Museums bring animals back to life through taxidermy for educational displays in order to show behaviours that are difficult to see or rarely seen in the wild and zoos. By creating research collections of specimens, museums also bring life back to endangered species through research on anything from DNA to bone diseases that contributes to conservation and welfare in the wild and captivity.

Andrew Kitchener is the Principal Curator of Mammals and Birds in the Department of Natural Sciences at the National Museums of Scotland. The Museum in Edinburgh receives many of our animals for their study collection following post mortem. In this interesting and insightful talk Andrew will include some case studies from Chester Zoo.

Lost Land of the Dodo

**Tuesday 13th May
7.30 pm**

Anthony Cheke

Chester Zoo holds, breeds and helps fund the local conservation of a number of rare endemic species from the Indian Ocean islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues. This illustrated talk will look at the background to the endangerment of animals from these isolated volcanic islands. They escaped human interference until the 1500s and, because the first visitors were pen-wielding Europeans, we have an unusually detailed history of human impact. The colonists ate the native wildlife and introduced pigs, goats, cattle and deer for food, together with, accidentally, rats and monkeys – followed by cats to catch the rats. Slowly the endemic wildlife disappeared: the big lizards and flightless birds first; then ground-nesters; then anything vulnerable to rats and cats. Finally, in the 19th Century forest was extensively cleared for crops, so only the hardiest species persist now – a few happily; some on the edge of extinction; others only recently dragged back from the brink by intensive conservation programmes.

Anthony Cheke has been involved with the islands and their ecology since the early 1970s and is the co-author with Julian Hume of Lost Land of the Dodo, an ecological history of the Mascarene Islands, due for publication in March 2008.

Chester Zoo's newest battlefield: The Realm of the Red Ape – Sabah, Borneo

**Wednesday 4th June
7.30 pm**

Mark Pilgrim

Mark brings you up to date with the vital orang-utan conservation initiatives in Borneo which Chester Zoo supports.

Mark Pilgrim is Chester Zoo's Director of Conservation and Education



Refreshments and a chat

After each talk, you are invited to join us for light refreshments where you will have an informal opportunity to ask questions and to chat to staff and guest speakers. At selected talks, there will be items for sale from our projects overseas – perfect gifts, supporting vital work. All of our Members' Talks are held in the Geraldine Russell Lecture Theatre (near the Zoo's Main Entrance off the A41) at the times stated. The talks are free of charge and are provided to keep you abreast of Chester Zoo's conservation work which your membership supports.

Conservation trip

**Conservation in the City:
London Zoo and the Wetlands Centre, Barnes**

**Saturday 12th and
Sunday 13th July 2008**

Gorilla Kingdom is London Zoo's new enclosure and home to a colony of majestic Western Lowland Gorillas. Walk through the forested, atmospheric pathway to the African birds' aviary before emerging next to the clearing where the stunning gorillas live side by side with the Black and White Colobus Monkeys.

Sunday will be spent at the 43 hectare London Wetland Centre – the best urban site in Europe to watch wildlife, an international award winning visitor attraction and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Barnes is the showcase site of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust whose work deals with the restoration of wetlands and the wildlife that depends on them.

For further details and a booking form, please contact Kate Brankin at k.brankin@chesterzoo.org or telephone 01244 389 444 Completed booking forms and deposit to be received by Friday 28th March 2008.

*price based on twin/double room occupancy. Single room supplement of £25.00 payable.

For more information visit:
zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo and
wwt.org.uk/visit/wetlandcentre

£117.50* per person

The cost of this trip includes:

- return coach travel from Chester Zoo
- overnight stay at the four star Crowne Plaza Hotel (crowneplaza.co.uk) at Heathrow
- dinner on Saturday night and full English breakfast on Sunday
- admission to attractions
- all coach transfers within London
- two members of Chester Zoo staff to accompany the tour

How you can book: Please call Kate in Education on 01244 389 444 or e-mail k.brankin@chesterzoo.org

Members' days

Special
events

Following on from the success of last year's Members' Days, more have been planned for 2008.

The special events will be held on Sunday 27th April, Tuesday 8th July and Saturday 8th November. Members will be given the opportunity to bring a friend/family member along at a reduced rate on these days. The first Adopter day which will take place on Sunday 16th March 2008 with the second on Saturday 4th October.



Flushed with success

Chester Zoo scoops two awards for award winning toilets!

The award-winning zoo – holder of the Visit Chester and Cheshire Large Visitor Attraction of the Year award – has been given a five-star gold award for its main entrance toilets and a four-star silver award for the *Café Tsavo* toilets in the Loo of the Year 2007 awards.

The main entrance toilets were given an overhaul as part of the *New Beginnings* project which saw a revamp of the main entrance at the start of the year.

Liz Child, Head of Visitor Services, said: "We do all that we can to ensure the Zoo experience is a great day out from beginning to end.

"That attention to detail extends to every service that we offer our visitors from the animal enclosures they visit, to the restaurants they dine in and, as the awards prove, all the other facilities our guests use. We are delighted to have been given these awards."

The Loo of the Year awards were set up in 1987 with the aim of highlighting the best possible standards in all types of 'away from home' toilets.

Our busiest year!

Chester Zoo saw out 2007 celebrating the busiest year in the Zoo's 73-year history.

More than 1,233,000 visitors passed through the gates over the last 12 months. At least seven months of 2007 were record-breakers for visitor numbers.

The Zoo's *Frost Fair* – which runs until January 13 – also kept visitor numbers up throughout November and December.

Chester Zoo's Head of Marketing and Development Sharon Leeson said: "2007 was a bumper year for the Zoo and we welcomed more visitors than we have ever done.

"The Zoo has established itself as a year-round attraction in recent years and not somewhere just to visit on sunny days. Our off-peak admission rates provided an added incentive for visitors this winter as did our ice rink.

"We would like to thank all our visitors and members and adopters for their support over the last 12 months. 2007 has set the standard for 2008 and we are looking forward to another bumper year."



Fauna & Flora International

North
West
Group

A huge 'thank-you' to the many Zoo Members who have supported FFI (NW) over the years, and for those of you who have not yet 'tasted' one of our evenings, please come along and share a bit of the hope and magic that is hearing about conservation in action!

Spring
programme
2008

Lemurs & Fevers and Projects & People: Conservation in Madagascar

Friday 14 March

Charlotte Whitham

FFI has long been a platform for both well-established 'names' and the up-and-coming young conservationists of the future. Charlotte, an Environmental Biology graduate, is someone we are surely going to hear a lot about in due course, and she is welcomed to FFI in March to talk about her experiences during the Autumn of 2007 volunteering with the 'Explore! Youth Volunteer Programme', the main goal of which is to 'provide participants with a powerful, direct experience of the unique challenges developing nations face in protecting nature'. Selected from amongst huge competition by the WWF (the World Wide Fund for Nature) as the only UK representative, of a group of 6 comprised from six nations, Charlotte was based in the north of Madagascar involved with practical conservation issues with Sifakas and other Lemurs, as well as surviving and living in one of the poorest countries in the world. Her talk will describe the realities involved in living with the Malagasy people and how conservation can actually work and be justified in a developing country.

Cheetah Future: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?

Friday 9 May

Dr Laurie Marker

A most welcome return for Laurie Marker, from the Cheetah Conservation Fund cheetah.org in Namibia. Dr Marker will be giving us



an up-date on the Cheetah Conservation Fund's very significant and unique research and activities – including the cheetah census, cheetah reproductive research, farmers' training courses, Livestock Guarding Dog Programme and the international activities of the CCF in Kenya and Algeria, as well as the regional strategies to save this species. Not only a brilliant speaker as we know, but Laurie Marker is a remarkable person, completely dedicated to cheetah conservation and she has just been selected as one of 6 finalists for the 2008 Indianapolis Prize, a major component of its mission being to 'inspire local and global communities to celebrate, protect, and preserve our natural world through conservation, education and research'. This biennial award brings the world's attention to the cause of animal conservation and the brave, talented and dedicated people who spend their lives saving the World's endangered animal species. This talk will also tie-in very nicely with the opening during 2008 of the Zoo's lovely new cheetah exhibit!

Bear Farming and the Moon Bear Rescue

Friday 20 June

Jill Robinson, MBE

Asiatic Black Bears (affectionately called Moon Bears because of the beautiful yellow crescent moon found on the bears' chests) are a CITES Appendix I species, whose Asia-wide population may only total around 25,000. Habitat loss and fragmentation, and the commercialisation of bear parts and bile juice for Traditional Chinese Medicine, are the major threats to the long-term survival of these intelligent animals. It is estimated that there are over 13,000 bears on bear farms across China and this is now a major threat to the species' survival as 99% of these are wild-caught. Jill Robinson, MBE, spent 12 years from 1985 working with the International Fund for Animal Welfare in Hong Kong, and a chance visit to a bear farm in 1993 changed her life when she saw the desperate plight of these animals. In 1998 she founded the Animals Asia Foundation www.animalsasia.org now working closely with the Governments in China and Vietnam to eliminate bear farming, and setting up sanctuaries to rescue and re-habilitate bears (around 700 so far) and to educate people about the herbal and synthetic alternatives to bear bile. Anyone who heard Jill speak on Radio's 'Midweek' last Autumn will know that this is not an evening to be missed.

Tickets

Tickets may be available on the door, but advanced booking helps us to keep costs down and guarantees a seat so please ring Penny Rudd on 01244 650215 to reserve tickets. Lectures are held in the Russell Allen Lecture Hall, and doors open at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm start. Members and non-Members of FFI are welcome to attend. A buffet and wine are served, and tickets cost £8.00 for FFI Members and £8.50 for non-Members of FFI, with a concession of £5 for students.



Bornean Orang-utans

CHESTER Zoo's Bornean orang-utans go about their daily lives with the luxury of food and shelter and a safe place to call home.



The orang-utans live naturally in a new environment, *Realm of the Red Ape*, and are ambassadors for their species. Visitors flock to the Zoo every year to visit the orang-utans in a new exhibit that enables the visitors to see and learn more about orang-utans.

However, a world away, their counterparts face a struggle just to survive in shrinking habitats devastated by deforestation.

The future for Bornean orang-utans – endangered in the wild – is bleak and their numbers continue to fall as they increasingly come into contact with many threats, including man. Pollution, forest fires and the devastation of forest areas for palm oil all pose a serious threat as does human/wildlife conflict.

The orang-utans' difficulties are particularly prevalent in the Sabah area of Borneo, most notably in the

Kinabatangan region. The state of Sabah is home to some 11,000 Bornean orang-utans – about a fifth of the entire Bornean orang-utan population. Sadly, the number of orang-utans in the region has declined by almost 50% in the last 20 years.

However, a unique project – the *Realm of the Red Ape Field Programme* – is to be funded by Chester Zoo with the long-term aim of protecting the orang-utans' habitat areas.

Up to £30,000 will be dedicated to the project annually with the support coming from the Zoo's *Keeper for a Day* fund. *Keeper for a Day* enables visitors to pay to work alongside the animal teams and in turn raises funds for the Zoo's conservation projects.

Roger Wilkinson, the Zoo's Head of Field Programmes and Research and Mark Pilgrim, Director of Conservation and Education, visited Sabah last year.

Roger said: "There is a wealth of potential in Sabah for supporting and working with orang-utans to secure their future. Currently though the area faces a real crisis; a total of 26,000ha of forest were destroyed in one month alone and many species, not least the orang-utans, are being pushed further and further away.

"Our *Realm of the Red Ape* enclosure is a showcase for both Sumatra and Bornean orang-utans and now we are using our expertise and increasing funding to support the orang-utans in the wild where the difficulties facing them are immense."

The *Realm of the Red Ape Field Programme* will be an international effort with several agencies involved and Chester as the core funder. The financial support will be put towards research investigating the distribution, conservation status, health and genetics of the orang-utan population, will pay for wildlife wardens in the area and also help develop eco-friendly tourism projects.

There will also be an educational element to the programme with local schools becoming involved in the project.

"This is a very much a holistic programme, aimed at providing long-term solutions not just for the orang-utans but also for the communities who live alongside them".

"Although the Bornean orang-utans are the focal species for this project, there are other species – including other species of primates – living in that area which would benefit from the area's conservation. Chester Zoo is a conservation charity and we aim to help turn this area around and provide a better future for the orang-utans in the region," added Roger.



Count Me In: Big Bug Day

Following the success of Big Garden Birdwatch at Chester Zoo in January the next local wildlife recording event here will be on Saturday 28th June during National Insect Week. Meet local experts and find out about the insects in your garden; learn how to recognise bumblebees, butterflies and other fascinating species. Did you know there are more than 40 different ladybird species in Britain? Come and see some of them at the Zoo. With activities for all ages this promises to be another fun event for the whole family.

More information will be available on the Zoo website from early June.

For more information on National Insect Week see:
www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk/index.htm

The Congleton truffle mystery

Sarah Bird
Biodiversity Officer

Rita Cook
North West Fungus Group

I quite often receive enquiries from zoo members and visitors about unusual wildlife. Things like big hawk moth caterpillars and odd plants growing from bird seed are quite common, but a call from a friend last autumn proved particularly challenging and interesting. The photograph provided showed what looked rather like bits of discarded chewing gum, but close inspection showed pink 'flesh' inside, with a complex structure. The friend who found this 'thing' growing in her garden in Congleton wondered if it could be a fungus, perhaps a truffle.

I had no experience of this group of fungi at all, but, thankfully, I know a person who does. I met Rita in my previous job at Liverpool Museum and immediately warmed to her – she is one of those experts with a lifetime of experience whose knowledge and enthusiasm is infectious; she is always helpful and encouraging even to people like me who know very little about fungi. (She's a bit crazy too – having celebrated her 80th birthday zip-lining through the Costa Rican rainforest!).

The fact that Rita didn't immediately recognise the strange fungus made this mystery even more exciting – it had to be something unusual! Local and national experts were contacted, literature searched, and Kew Gardens and the British Mycological Society consulted. Eventually the vital clue came from the plants growing in the border with the fungus. Most truffles grow in close association with particular plant species. Our truffle, (*Hydnangeum carneum*), (no common name I'm afraid!) comes from Australia and grows with eucalyptus trees. So, can you see the clue in the photograph (right) which shows the area where the truffles were found?

The large tree at the back right is a eucalyptus. This is the first confirmed record of this species for the north of England. The fungus was introduced to Europe from Australia with eucalyptus trees a long time ago, it is in fact quite widespread now, but generally goes unnoticed. The 'Congleton Truffle' is now famous as there is a sample in the herbarium at Kew Gardens.



What you may or may not know about truffles!

- Truffles are generally known as edible fungi; expensive additions to gourmet meals.
- There are far more species of truffles in Australia than in Europe. About 250 have been described so far, but there are probably another 1000 to be identified. They occupy a wide variety of habitats from rain forest to arid scrub.
- Truffles are hypogeous fungi. This means their fruit-bodies (the part that produces spores like a mushroom) grow and stay underground.
- The spores are spread either by the natural breakdown of mature fruit-bodies, or when the fruit-bodies are eaten by invertebrates or small mammals that are attracted by smell.
- Though popular food for marsupials, Australian truffles aren't generally eaten by people.
- Relationships between truffles, plants and animals are complex and vital to the survival of whole ecosystems.

To learn more about fungi in the region contact the North West Fungus Group, the group organises regular identification sessions and walks: fungus.org.uk/nwfg.htm



The 'mystery' truffle.

Events 2008

Bats and Dragons

Thursday 29th May

£32.50 pp

Informative evening tour to *Twilight Zone* and *Dragons in Danger* followed by a hot buffet in *Oakfield Manor*.

Monkey and Realm of the Red Ape Evening

Thursday 12th June

£33.95 pp

Interesting tour with our primate keepers followed by a delicious BBQ upon return to *Oakfield Manor*.

Father's Day

Sunday 15th June

£28.75 per adult;

£18.50 per child

(under 11 years of age)

Three course lunch, price includes admission.

Carnivore Evening

Saturday 28th June

£34.25 pp

Enjoy a tour with our keepers, visiting red pandas, sealions and some of the big cats. Evening concludes with a buffet in *Oakfield Manor*.

Booking and pre-payment required for the above events. For further details and to book please contact:

The Events Office on

01244 650209

events@chesterzoo.org

The Oakfield Manor also caters for weddings, conferences, seminars, private safari/BBQs and private events.



Mixed Sources

Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources
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