

Z

CHESTER ZOO

official magazine
for members and adopters

WINTER 2017



Z MAGAZINE FEATURES



Flying high in Ecuador
Page 6 - 9



The Secret Life of the
Zoo is back!
Page 10-11



All creatures great
and small
Page 28 - 29

Member Days:
Saturday 17 March 2018

Adopter Days:
Saturday 3 March 2018
Sunday 7 October 2018

News from the zoo

with Dr Mark Pilgrim - Chief Executive Officer



If you have visited the zoo recently you will be aware we have started work on our exciting plans for the future. The strategic development plan (SDP) sets out our vision of how the zoo will develop for the next 15 years. Its purpose is to get the greatest conservation impact from our site. It brings together fantastic animal exhibits and visitor facilities to allow us to talk to visitors about the conservation work we're involved with and how they too can make a difference. The new areas will roll-out some of the ideas we tested on Islands, with a clear route, storylines, theming, and cultures and habitats being weaved into the animal exhibits. We're currently building a new Madagascar area and, as part of this, we're creating a fantastic walk-through lemur habitat. It does all mean that there will be a little disruption for the foreseeable future as we carry on with George Mottershead's philosophy of 'always building.' I do apologise for any closed off areas whilst we work on improving the zoo but I assure you it will be worth the wait.

A key storyline within Islands centres on the use of unsustainable palm oil. Palm oil plantations in South East Asia are decimating many animals' habitats at an alarming rate drastically impacting Sumatran tigers and orangutans. The demand for this oil is extremely high as it's an ingredient in many household products. We've been raising awareness within the zoo about using products that contain sustainable palm oil for some time but we now feel it's time to get out and about to get our message heard. So, in September we launched an initiative to make Chester the world's first sustainable palm oil city. We have already got lots of businesses on board and if you'd like to know more about our exciting new venture you can read more on page 23.

Sing for Songbirds is another conservation campaign we launched this year, highlighting the songbird crisis in Indonesia. In July, our Curator of Birds, Andrew Owen, and some of our conservation team travelled to South East Asia with a BBC film crew to feature on a BBC News documentary. The programme was broadcast in October and threw a spotlight on the challenging conservation issue, which is part of the culture in South East Asia. It's a sensitive issue but one that needs to be addressed if we are going to save these beautiful songbirds. Hopefully the media activity has highlighted a conservation crisis that really has reached a tipping point.

Over the past few months we've had some new arrivals at the zoo, giving a boost to the conservation breeding programme for some threatened species including an endangered Anoa calf and two critically endangered Spider monkeys. You can learn more about these in this edition (see page 22). The birth of one of the spider monkeys will also feature on the new series of The Secret Life of the Zoo, which has been on our screens for a few weeks now. This series will feature more episodes than ever before, 16 in total, and I'm often amazed by how touching the stories are. The show really does highlight the wonderful staff and animals we have here at the zoo.

As you read this we will be in the middle of our Christmas event 'The Lanterns at Chester Zoo.' This is the first year the event has been delivered in partnership with the theatre company Wild Rumpus - the people who also hosted The Enchantment at Chester Zoo. This year's lantern walk includes lanterns and performances and, of course, a sprinkle of magic. If you are coming along I do hope you enjoy it.

Finally, with 2017 almost over, I wanted to take this moment to thank you all. This year our membership has grown tremendously and we are fast approaching 100,000 members, which is truly remarkable. Without your continued support we couldn't expand our work both in the zoo and in the field so thank you so much. I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and a wonderful 2018.



Baby chameleons hatch for the first time at the zoo

Three colourful chameleons, so tiny they each fit on the end of a finger, have hatched.

It's the first time Cameroon two-horned mountain chameleons have successfully bred at the zoo. The clutch of three eggs was laid by mum, Ruby.

These chameleons have a really unusual appearance and are sometimes referred to as the Cameroon sailfin, owing to a sail-like flap of skin running along their backs. The males of the species boast two large horns just above their upper jaw which they use for jousting with rivals.

Even as babies they have their iconic large eyes which, at their current size, may appear a little too big for their body. However these give them 360° arc vision so they can see in two different directions at once and look out for predators.

As their name suggests, the Cameroon two-horned mountain

chameleon is found living at altitude in the West African nation of Cameroon.

Dr Gerardo Garcia, Curator of Lower Vertebrates and Invertebrates at the zoo, said:

“These chameleons are thought to live in just 10 locations in the highlands of Cameroon as they only thrive at a very particular altitude (between 700m and 1,900m), in very specific forest habitat. As much of the highlands of Cameroon comprise of savannah and grasslands, it really restricts their range. Sadly, with that already small amount of available habitat being affected by human activity - degradation, agriculture and climate change - it's making these chameleons more and more vulnerable.

“Another big threat to their survival is the international pet trade. Thousands of live chameleons have been taken from the wild and traded from Cameroon in the last dozen years.”

The world of competitive birdsong

Tainted love: How Indonesia's passion for keeping songbirds is driving many bird species to extinction

Taking a pampered songbird to do battle in a singing competition is a popular past-time in Indonesia. It's a multi-million dollar industry with wealthy enthusiasts willing to pay thousands for prize-winning performers.

Bird trainers, almost always young men (there is an old saying in Indonesia that a man is only considered a real man if he has a house, a wife, a horse, a dagger and a bird), carry their beautifully carved, ornate cages into a small outdoor arena and hang them alongside dozens of others, all containing chirping songbirds that are to compete in a singing competition.

The contest gets underway and the men begin to yell, scream, whistle and clap to encourage their feathered protégés into continuous song. It's a scene more associated with a crowd at a frenzied boxing match or the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

A team of judges, armed with clipboards, pace back and forth pausing momentarily under each cage to somehow distinguish individual birdsong from the cacophony. Beneath each cage is a stool upon which each of the judges places their ribbons of distinction – denoting the bird they deem to have the most impressive song. Points are awarded for melody, duration and volume.

Several minutes of frenzied chirping later and the winning trainer is declared. Promo girls step forth to pose for photos and present trophies and cheques and then it's on to the next category. More birds are brought in and the noise begins again.

Contests like this one are regulated and will only permit entry to captive-bred birds, with organisers insisting on seeing paperwork proof and breeding licenses before allowing entry.

However, given the huge prize-pots, and glory, at stake, some bird singing enthusiasts stop at nothing to get their hands on the birds they deem to be the best. Most of the bigger contests, which draw competitors from as far afield as Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam and which can offer top prizes of \$50,000, will often be filled with birds taken illegally from the wild.

Many believe the wild caught birds sing more loudly. And, even in competitions where the prize money isn't as big, the value of a bird can rise dramatically on the back of a win. The 'sport' is increasing in popularity and is endangering already threatened species that have been pushed to brink by a culture of bird-keeping that is deeply embedded in Indonesian society.

Trends for keeping certain birds mean that a number of species are in real danger of being wiped out. Some are now more readily found in bird markets like Pramuka in Jakarta – than in the forests.

The trade in songbirds in Indonesia has reached a tipping point that threatens to drive many species to extinction. Millions are captured illegally every year. It's a conservation crisis that's largely being ignored.

We won't stand back and let these beautiful birds disappear from our planet. It's now or never. It's time to act for songbirds.

BBC science reporter, Vic Gill, recently visited Indonesia with our Chester Zoo team to discover more about the songbird crisis, the threats these precious birds are facing and what's being done to save them.

She spent time with our project partners, Cikananga Conservation Breeding Centre, and the experts that are working around the clock to protect some of the rarest species on the planet.

Find out how you can help save songbirds on our Act for Wildlife website here:

WWW.ACTFORWILDLIFE.ORG.UK/SINGFORSONGBIRDS



FLYING HIGH IN ECUADOR

We're working right now to protect the amazing wildlife found in the unique region of Latin America. With a variety of different habitats and environments, ranging from mountains to dry forests, the diversity of wildlife found in this part of the world is like no other place!

WE'RE LEADING THE WAY

We're at the forefront of the conservation work needed to help save the endangered Ecuador Amazon parrot from extinction. Following years of research carried out by Chester Zoo's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Mark Pilgrim, the bird was only officially recognised as a species in its own right in 2014.

Chester Zoo first started working with the endangered Ecuador Amazon parrot back in the 1980s when a collection of individuals were confiscated at customs and distributed to a number of zoos across Europe to be cared for.

Chester Zoo's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Mark Pilgrim's interest in the species was sparked when he first started working at the zoo as a Bird Keeper. He spent time tracing the birds that came to the UK which later developed into the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria Endangered Breeding Programme for the parrot; which Chester Zoo now manages. The conservation breeding of the species in zoos is vital in ensuring there's a physically and genetically healthy insurance population, should the species go extinct in the wild.

In the wild the Ecuador Amazon parrot faces a number of threats, including habitat destruction, disturbance and the pet trade. We started working with Fundación Pro Bosque, a forest protection NGO based in the Cerro Blanco tropical forest of west Ecuador, over five years ago. Together with our partners at Fundación Pro Bosque, we've been carrying out vital research to gather enough data about the parrot in order to develop a long term conservation action plan to protect it from further threats.

TRACING PARROTS



Technical Assistant to the CEO and Chester Zoo Conservation Scholar, Rebecca Biddle, has spent several years researching this species as part of her PhD to answer questions about this secretive bird. She has spent many hours, trekking through the forests of Ecuador on the search for sightings of this little green parrot to discover how many there are, how big their range is and what habitat they depend on.

One element of Rebecca's work is to organise a staff expedition every three years to the Cerro Blanco forest as part of long term research into the Ecuador Amazon parrot population. The first expedition took place in 2014, which led to the IUCN listing the species as 'Endangered'.

Earlier this year a team of twelve Chester Zoo staff members went back to the tropical dry forest of Ecuador on the lookout for this parrot species; continuing the ongoing, long term research that started over five years ago. The team's main objectives were to gain sightings of the parrot, collect data on their habitat, conduct roost counts and trial the first community surveys.



2017 expedition team



Communities often keep them as pets

ROOST COUNTS

Every morning the team would be up and out before sunrise to count the parrots as they left their communal roost. They also counted the birds as they returned to their roost each evening. Having a team of twelve also meant more data could be captured as the group split into smaller teams to get counts from different roosts at the same time. This is important as we're trying to determine whether the parrots change their roosts throughout the year or stay loyal to the roosts.

While doing the roost counts the team also noted whether the parrots were flying in pairs, on their own or in triplets. By capturing this information as well as the total amount of birds spotted, we can now investigate whether roost composition can provide us with an idea of the reproductive success of the population. The species can live up to 40 years, so this information is extremely important, as if we can't see any reproduction happening, it's possible to end up with an aging population that suddenly crashes.

HABITAT

One of the things so unique about this parrot species is that it's a specialist dry forest feeder. Habitat loss is the biggest threat for the survival of the species, only 1% of the dry forest's original coverage in Ecuador remains.

Therefore the team carried out habitat surveys to understand more about the environment the parrot uses and what a dry forest has to be like in order to sustain the species. The team surveyed 178 quadrats of 400m² each collecting loads of data; including the density of forest, species of trees found there and whether there were any human disturbances, allowing us to track any trends about the areas of forest the parrot is using. The team identified 64 different trees, and which of these the parrots use for feeding, roosting and nesting. This information will help us to predict other forests across the country that the parrot might be found in and identify which areas need protecting for the species to survive into the future.

COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Speaking to the local communities is a really important part of the project as they're a fountain of knowledge! The parrots are so loud and fly in big groups so it's quite obvious to the local communities where these parrots can be found. And because the parrots use the same flight path each morning and evening, the local people have a good idea of how many there are, their habitat preferences and other behaviour traits that can help us in mapping the species distribution. It became apparent through these surveys that some people keep Ecuador Amazon parrots as pets.





EXCITING DISCOVERY

A small group of three Chester Zoo staff members split from the expedition team to head further inland to a small remote village. The team spent five days here to investigate the possibility of a new population of Ecuador Amazon parrots.

It didn't take long for the team to make the exciting discovery that, not only was there a population of Ecuador Amazons there, but it was a big roost too! As soon as the team stepped out of the truck after arriving, they heard the distinctive call of the parrot in the distance making its way back to its communal roost. It was perfect timing after a two hour, bumpy drive through rivers and dirt tracks. It was an incredible experience for the team to see this unique bird fly right above their heads as the birds flew back to their roost for the evening.

It was thought that the population in total was around 400-600 birds, so to witness another big roost of at least 300 birds that was unknown to the zoo is a significant amount for this species! And on top of that it has now raised more questions about a species we thought relied on dry forests and mangroves to survive. This is extremely interesting as they seem to be occurring in an area where there's a different species of tree too, which they're roosting in. This opens up a whole new area of potential habitat for them, meaning there could be more populations inland! We're now going to research into this further to determine exactly what habitats they need.



WHAT'S NEXT?

As part of her PhD research Rebecca Biddle is continuing to work through the data captured from the expedition and the community surveys that have been ongoing since the team left Ecuador. She's working closely with Ivette Solis, a local independent biologist to develop the surveys and design a new set of more in depth questions. This will provide more information about where the pet Ecuador Amazon parrots identified in the local communities came from – whether they were poached directly from the wild or whether they were brought from different areas.

The new survey will help Rebecca measure the level of threat poaching poses to the population, and will assess knowledge and attitudes towards the species, which is endangered but locally common.

This information will then be used to help create educational materials to highlight the importance of this species, raising awareness of the role it plays in the ecosystem and how people can help to protect it.

There are a lot of different elements to this project, and this article only just scratches the surface! Discover more from the expedition team, what they got up to in field and more about the project by heading over to our Act for Wildlife blog.

WWW.ACTFORWILDLIFE.ORG.UK/NEWS

Facebook.com/ActforWildlife

Twitter: @ActforWildlife

Instagram: @ActforWildlife





The Secret Life of the Zoo is back!

The fourth series of the charming documentary filmed right here at the zoo is back on our TV screens, putting a focus on some of the most endangered species on the planet!

This latest Channel 4 series, created by production company Blast! Films, features more animals than ever before – from elephants to jewel wasps, and the mysterious tenrecs to the critically endangered Javan green magpie.

Our keepers, as ever, are on hand to provide an insight into how we care for some of the world's most endangered species and reveal some of what they do to keep the animals happy and healthy.

Here's just a taste of the species and keepers from series four.

Meet Heather

Heather has worked at the zoo for nine years. She works on the invertebrates section and specialises in many of the creepy crawlies we care for, including: tarantulas, praying mantis, stick insects, beetles and snails - to name but a few!

Some people are scared of the species Heather cares for but part of our role as a zoo is to help educate visitors in the important role they play. Heather's passion for these incredible critters is plain to see for all viewers of The Secret Life of The Zoo.

She has a particular soft spot for insects that use camouflage or mimicry to avoid predation, and the two species that most interest her are the giant leaf insect and the Indian leaf butterfly. They've evolved to accurately mimic leaves in their habitats: the perfect camouflage.

Heather also cares for the jewel wasps, which featured in the first episode of the series and captured the attention of millions. The way a jewel wasp lays its eggs is absolutely fascinating, here's what happens in a little more detail...



The jewel wasp and the cockroach

Jewel wasps are very small - just 22mm long to be exact. They're not dangerous to humans, but they certainly are to cockroaches! They're able to subdue cockroaches nearly twice their size to then lay their eggs inside them. These little insects

are also known as emerald cockroach wasps because of the way they use cockroaches for part of their lifecycle.

Once a wasp has found what she deems to be a suitable cockroach, she proceeds to sting it in the thorax with her ovipositor. The venom from this sting paralyses the cockroach's front legs. This helps the wasp to carefully deliver her second sting which goes through the cockroach's neck, into its head. The effects of the second sting are much longer lasting than the first.

The venom blocks a particular neurotransmitter called octopamine which normally helps the cockroach to initiate walking. But what this means is that the cockroach is still able to walk but it's not able to start moving itself. So the wasp can make the cockroach move anywhere she wants but she doesn't have to drag it; it will walk itself as long as she guides it! That's why the cockroaches are often referred to as 'zombie cockroaches'.



The wasp will lead the cockroach into her burrow and then lay a small egg on its abdomen. She then fills up the entrance to the burrow and leaves her egg to hatch. After two days the hatchling comes out of the larvae and eats its way through the exoskeleton to the inside of the cockroach. Here it continues to eat through the cockroach while it's still alive, but unable to escape. After six days of eating, the larvae are large enough to pupate and they do this inside the cockroach too. After its finished pupating, the wasp hatches out of the cockroach as an adult ready to find a mate and continue the life cycle. It sounds pretty brutal, but it shows the important roles each animal plays – no matter how small they are!

Meet Peter

Peter works on our Twilight section - the keepers who care for a range of small mammal species, from red panda to rock hyrax. He's been part of the zoo family for three years and has quite a memory - he can pluck an animal's birth date or ID number instantly off the top of his head! By his own admission, he's quite the Chester Zoo geek and has a collection of memorabilia, guide books and zoo magazines from throughout our 86 year history.

His favourite species is the round-eared sengi as they are a unique animal with fascinating behaviour, but he loves anything small and unusual like the lowland streaked tenrec which also featured in the first episode of series four of The Secret Life of the Zoo.



The lowland streaked tenrec

They may look like a hedgehog but this spiky creature bears no relation to the loveable UK animal. They're found in Madagascar and parts of Africa and they communicate in a variety of ways, through smell, touch and sound. Particularly unusual is the lowland streaked tenrec's ability to communicate through stridulation, in which it rubs specialised quills on its back to make an ultrasonic call.

Populations of the lowland streaked tenrec are steadily declining and sadly the tenrec, like much of the wildlife in Madagascar, is coming under more and more pressure for survival as their forest habitat disappears to make way for fields of rice and other crops. Chester Zoo is working with field partners in Madagascar to protect habitats for a range of wonderful wildlife.



If you've missed any episode of The Secret Life of the Zoo you can catch up now on All4. The series continues on Channel 4. Follow @ChesterZoo live on Twitter during each episode using #TheZoo.



WILD WORLDS at

Next year, we're inviting
you to see things differently
at Chester Zoo...

Turn the world on its head. Look. Laugh.
And learn. Let your mind wander and your
imagination roam wild.

Wild Worlds will be a festival like no
other. Inspired by the worlds of nature
and wildlife, this is a whole new dimension
to Chester Zoo and one we'll be creating in
partnership with artists, landscape designers,
scientists and entertainers.

This one of a kind celebration will be full of
inspiration, cultivation and conservation.

We're providing you with a unique
opportunity to discover new worlds
and explore inspiring spaces set within
the zoo's most amazing places!

Discover something new at every turn –
art, sculpture, entertainment, music or
just quiet contemplation.

Keep an eye on our website for
more updates coming soon.

chesterzoo.org

Moving forwards in Mauritius

Bats are the only mammal native to the Mascarene islands. There are now only two species of bat found in the region after one went extinct. One of the remaining species, the Mauritius fruit bat, was once widespread across Mauritius but is now vulnerable to extinction as a result of habitat loss, cyclones and hunting.

The species has also recently faced threats as a result of human-wildlife conflict sparked by damage done to fruit orchards by the bat species. Pressure from orchard owners increased which led to controversial culls of the fruit bat in 2015 and 2016.

Together with our partners the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Human-Wildlife Conflict Task Force we joined forces with the Government of Mauritius to bring together conservationists, fruit growers, netting experts for the first time to develop new solutions to resolve conflict between farmers and crop raiding bats.

By bringing these stakeholders together we could share ideas and work towards ways of reducing the conflict generated by damage done to fruit orchards by Mauritius fruit bats. The endemic species is known to cause damage to lychees and mangos across the island.

Dr Vikash Tatayah, Conservation Director of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation tells us:

“It is a very complicated issue but one we must address; this species is very vulnerable to sudden population reductions that may be caused by culls or cyclones.”

A jointly organised workshop, the first of its kind in Mauritius, has taken place at the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute to discuss potential alternatives to reduce the conflict without resorting to a further cull. The conservation community has become increasingly concerned about the fate of this bat species despite the efforts of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, the Food and Agricultural Research Extension Institute, and the National Parks and Conservation Service to address the issue.

Chester Zoo's Head of Conservation Science and Chair of the IUCN Task Force on Human-Wildlife Conflict, Dr Alexandra Zimmermann, explains:

“The recent workshop was another positive step towards finding new solutions. At the heart of conflicts like these is usually a history of tensions between parties, so a crucial first step in addressing them is to bring people from different backgrounds together to find common ground. In this regard, our workshop was an important and encouraging success.”

A wealth of experience was shared – from the management of lychee orchards to the additional benefits of nets, which can also prevent damage by insects. For the very first time, fruit growers and other interested parties had the chance to discuss such advice jointly and work together to identify the best ways to move forward.

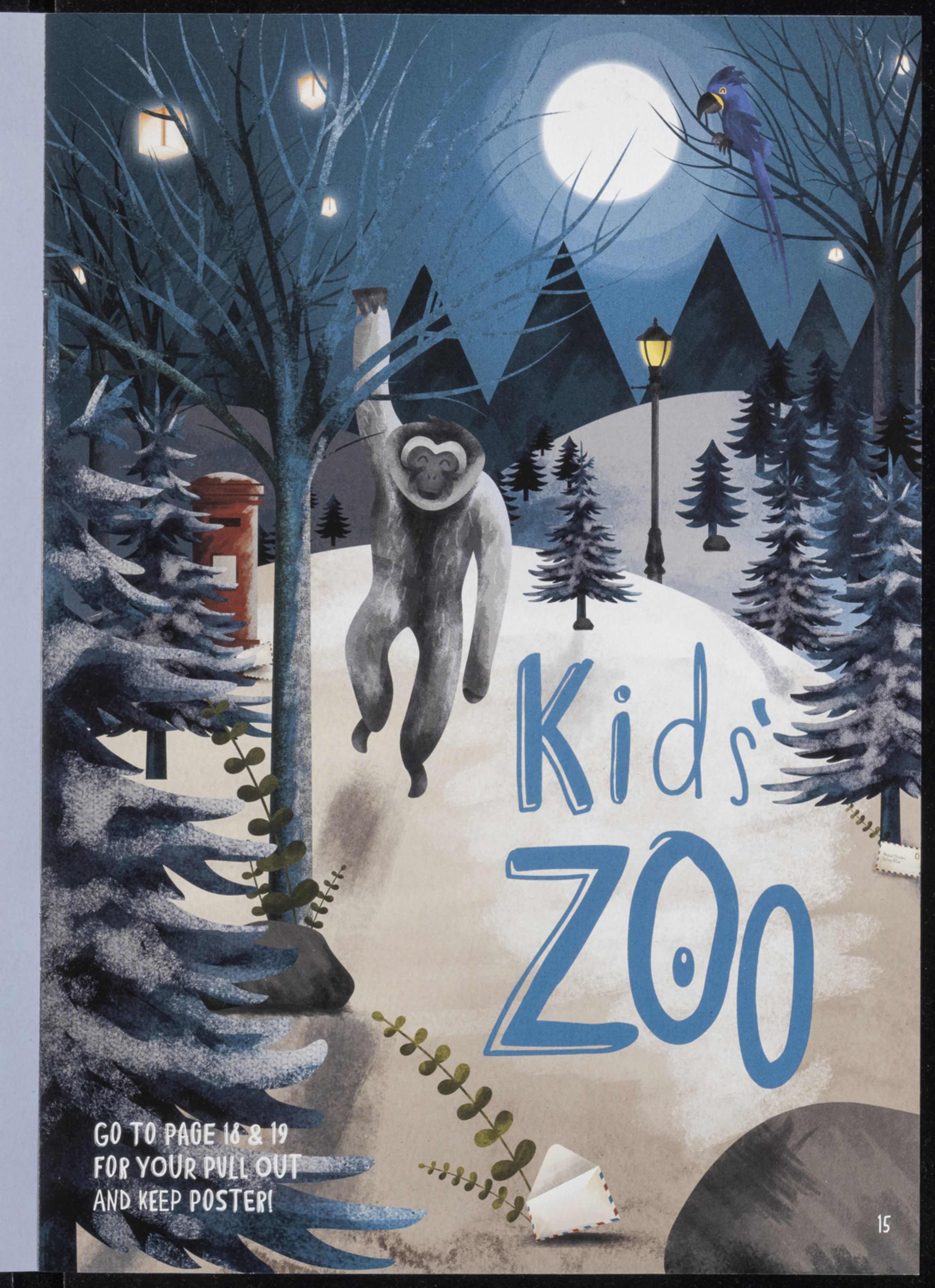
Danand Seetaram, marketing manager of a leading fruit exporting company, said:

“After this workshop, all planters should adapt to change ways of doing things, thus we shall be able to protect our fruits and at the same time protect our bats. Together we can make it happen!”

In what will be a continuing effort, Chester Zoo, the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation and the Government of Mauritius are now looking forward to working together to develop the next steps towards the implementation of alternative solutions to mitigate the conflict.

These very productive and encouraging discussions wouldn't have happened without working together, showing the importance of collaboration in conservation projects.





Kids' ZOO

GO TO PAGE 18 & 19
FOR YOUR PULL OUT
AND KEEP POSTER!



This Christmas, as twilight falls across Chester Zoo a magical Christmas sorting office comes to life. The zoo will be transformed into an enchanting world full of illumination and spellbinding theatrical adventure.

The lantern route will be filled to the brim with sacks of lantern toys and boxes of lantern presents piled high. You'll be able to post your own letters to Father Christmas and imagine what our precious animals might wish for too.

To celebrate The Lanterns at Chester Zoo we wanted to share some interesting facts about one of the incredible animals that will feature in the magical event, the beautiful hyacinth macaw.

These stunning parrots are the biggest in the parrot family, reaching up to 100cm long. They're native to South America, mainly Brazil. These are very intelligent birds and have a very powerful beak which means they are brilliant at cracking open the very hard palm nuts they eat. Most parrots are vegetarian, eating mainly fruits, berries and seeds; however, there are a few species that are omnivores, which means that they can eat meat, insects and vegetation.

Parrots are very intelligent, in fact a relative of the hyacinth macaw, the Lears macaw, has been seen to use 'tools' in the wild, selecting the frond of a palm leaf to help secure the slippery palm nut in their beak, this helps them crack it open. Once the bird has been successful, they tend to keep their favourite tool and use it again and again!

Quiz

1. Where do our hyacinth macaws live in the zoo?
2. What threats are these birds facing in the wild?
3. How big do they grow to?
4. How many different species of Macaw are there?
5. Colour our Macaw in and send it back to us.



If you'd like to be in with a chance of winning a 'Guess Who at Chester Zoo' game, send your entry together with your contact details to:

Z magazine, PR department, Chester Zoo,
Upton-by-Chester, Chester, CH2 1LH by Monday 1
January 2018

Congratulations to our previous winner Neve Newby from Aberdeenshire.

JUNIOR MEMBERS' PROGRAMME

EVENTS 2018

Here are all the events available to our Junior Members throughout 2018. Most events on our programme are open to all Junior Members aged 8-18, so if you fancy coming along please book onto an activity.

DISCOVERY SESSION SATURDAY 27 JANUARY

This is your opportunity to get to know your own zoo even more! Can you create a brilliant home for our animals? Let your imagination run wild and test your animal knowledge to design your own habitat for a species here at the zoo, with the help of our experts! Store-up some questions about the animals and the way we look after them to ask your guides! **Meet outside Oakfield House at 2pm, and we'll return there at 4pm. Free to join-in.**

WORLD MUSEUM - LIVERPOOL SATURDAY 24 FEBRUARY

Liverpool Museum is huge and fascinating! The 'special attraction' display when we visit will be the famous Chinese Terracotta Warriors which is very exciting, and because we have pre-booked tickets, places will be limited to 32 Juniors on this trip. There will be so much to see and do that we will spend an action-packed cold February day, warm indoors! **The bus will leave Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 10.30am and return at 4pm. Bring a packed lunch. Cost £15, payable on the day.**

TRACKS & SIGNS SATURDAY 24 MARCH

One of our most popular events each year! See the zoo from the animal's point of view. We will give you the opportunity to go inside some of the habitats to search for footprints and then make them into plaster casts. Hopefully, you will have a souvenir of your day to take home with you.

We'll meet outside Oakfield House at 11am, returning there for collection at 4pm. You'll need a picnic lunch, and it is important that you wear clean, very old clothes and absolutely clean wellies please. Cost £10, payable on the day.

STOCKLEY FARM - NORTHWICH SATURDAY 21 APRIL

There's always lots to do at Stockley Farm, whatever the weather! Hop onto the tractor and trailer ride, meet the farm animals, help to bottle feed the baby goats, meet the ponies and Ivan the enormous Shire Horse, watch the birds of prey and visit the milking parlour for Stockley's 200 dairy cows. **We'll meet at Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 10.30am and return at 4.30pm. Bring a packed lunch. Cost £15, payable on the day.**

TWYXCROSS ZOO SATURDAY 19 MAY

We'll be taking a summer visit to Twycross Zoo, in Warwickshire to see the many different species of wildlife there. It's always nice to see how our colleagues at other zoos do things. Be prepared for a fairly long bus journey but it will be well worth it! **The bus will leave Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 9am and return at 5.30pm. Bring a packed lunch. Cost £15, on the day.**

THE GREENWOOD CENTRE SATURDAY 23 JUNE

Back by popular demand! The Greenwood Centre, situated in the foothills of Snowdonia, is an amazing park that offers fun and games outdoors; including den-building, and various self-propelled 'rides'. Definitely one not to be missed! **We'll meet at Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 9.30am and return at 5pm. Cost £15, on the day.**



CHESTER ZOO

HOW TO BE A GOOD ZOOKEEPER THURSDAY 26 JULY

This is a unique opportunity offered to Junior Members to spend a day working alongside a Zoo Keeper. Come prepared for a hard day's work. The activities can be tough and demanding so we strictly limit this event to those Junior Members of 12 years old or over. We try to match juniors with their favourite section, but places are limited so this cannot be guaranteed.

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 Oakfield House at 10.30am, and the day will finish at 4pm. Please bring a packed lunch. Please note: bookings for this event will not be taken before 9am on Thursday 12 July 2018, (01244 650215) and will be strictly on a first-come, first-served basis. Cost £15, payable on the day.

JUNIORS' SUMMER BARBEQUE THURSDAY 2 AUGUST

This is your opportunity to be in the zoo when there are no other visitor noises to distract you and the animals. We usually aim to split into groups and tour the collection at night – a unique experience to see the animals during the evening. We aim to have zoo tours during the evening (whatever the weather!). Join us for a 7pm start, at the main entrance. Parents are asked to collect Junior Members from the main entrance at 9.45pm. Cost £10.

THE JUNIOR MEMBERS SUMMER SCHOOL MONDAY 6 - FRIDAY 10 AUGUST INCLUSIVE

Would you like to work with animals when you're older? Join us for a full programme of events during an informal, action-packed week, including a wide variety of theoretical and practical training. Including a mid-week field trip, live mammal trapping, tours of the zoo and talks from our experts. This is a great opportunity to get to know the real workings of a zoo.

Please note that the two week booking rule does not apply to this event and early booking is advised (anytime from December 2017 onwards).

The Summer School is open to junior members aged 13-18 years old. Participants must be able to attend all five (full) days and the cost will be £190 for the week, payable in advance.

SHUGBOROUGH HOME FARM SATURDAY 22 SEPTEMBER

Enjoy an autumnal visit to a beautiful stately home in Staffordshire - visit their Home Farm to see the rare animals and shire horses. There will also be wonderful displays of cheese-making and old-time bakery skills. We'll leave Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 9.30am and return at 5pm. Bring a packed lunch. Cost £15, payable on the day.

BLACKPOOL ZOO SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER

It's always great to visit our colleagues at other zoos and to see how they do things. We plan to have a guided walk so that we do not miss any of the highlights. We'll leave Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 9.30am and return at 5.15pm. Bring a packed lunch and wrap up warm. Cost £15, on the day.

RSPB BURTON MERE WETLANDS SATURDAY 24 NOVEMBER

Burton Mere Wetlands is a unique landscape of wetlands and beautiful woodlands. It's a perfect haven for birdwatchers, whether you're new to it or an avid Twitcher, the entire reserve has been designed to get you closer to nature. Some of the birds you may spot here include little stints, curlew, wood sandpipers and little egrets. Also, small numbers of wild geese begin to arrive. We will have a guided walk which should be excellent! We'll leave Cedar House (second staff entrance on the left as you are coming up Caughall Road from the Upton traffic lights) at 11am and return at 4pm. Bring a packed lunch and wrap up warm. If you have binoculars bring them along, but we'll have some you can borrow. Cost £15, on the day.

CHRISTMAS PARTY FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER

Enjoy an evening of games, disco music, and a great hot-dog and beef burger supper. You will need to bring along a cushion to sit on – and a torch to find us! The venue will be June's Food Court. You should arrive at the Main Entrance at 7pm, with your cushion and a torch, and we will guide you to the venue. Parents should arrange to collect you from the Main Entrance at 9.45pm. Cost £10, payable on the night.

Please Note: Bookings must be made for all events. Please ring Penny Rudd at the zoo on 01244 650215, or email on PennyR@chesterzoo.org, 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 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 and entry fees, materials or the provision of food, and you will be advised of this at the time of booking. No event should cost more than £15 per child.



JUNIOR MEMBERS - WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

With more junior members than ever before we're growing the events and activities we run for them. Alongside the familiar favourites, regular trips, Summer School and our ever popular Junior Rangers Training Camps, throughout 2018 we'll be offering some new activities and we want our junior members to help us design them.

LET US KNOW HOW YOU'D LIKE TO TAKE PART


Is there something you've always wanted to know about the zoo, a zoo career you'd like to know more about or a conservation activity you've always wanted to try? Send us a message that describes the kind of events you'd like to see, please include your name and age, and feel free to share a photograph or an image that may also help to highlight the type of event you have in mind. Either email us at juniormembers@chesterzoo.org or send it by post to:

Junior Members Ideas
Chester Zoo
Discovery and Learning Division
Upton-by-Chester
Chester
CH1 2LH

Or you can pop along to one of our drop in sessions and tell us in person. Join us in the Joseph Banks Room at the zoo on Saturday 13 January and Saturday 3 February 2018 11am – 2pm. Drop in, meet the team, try out some activities and tell us what you'd like to see in a future Junior Members programme.

We'd love to hear from all junior members, but we're particularly interested to hear from junior members aged 12 and over. For details of new events based on your ideas, keep an eye on the Junior Members pages of website:

www.chesterzoo.org/juniormembers



TWO RARE SPIDER MONKEYS BORN!

We've been celebrating with the birth of two critically endangered female spider monkeys within two weeks of each other providing a vital boost to the conservation efforts to save this species from extinction.

Our primate keepers first spotted a tiny new-born spider monkey clinging tightly to its mum, Christine, then exactly two weeks later they were delighted to find first-time Mum Kiara cradling her new born. Since then keepers have discovered that both babies are females but are yet to name the youngsters.

The rare South American primates – found mainly in Colombia and Panama - are listed as critically endangered on the International Union of the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list of endangered species. They have been pushed to the edge of extinction by deforestation and hunting for their meat, with 80% of its population estimated to have been lost in the last 45 years.

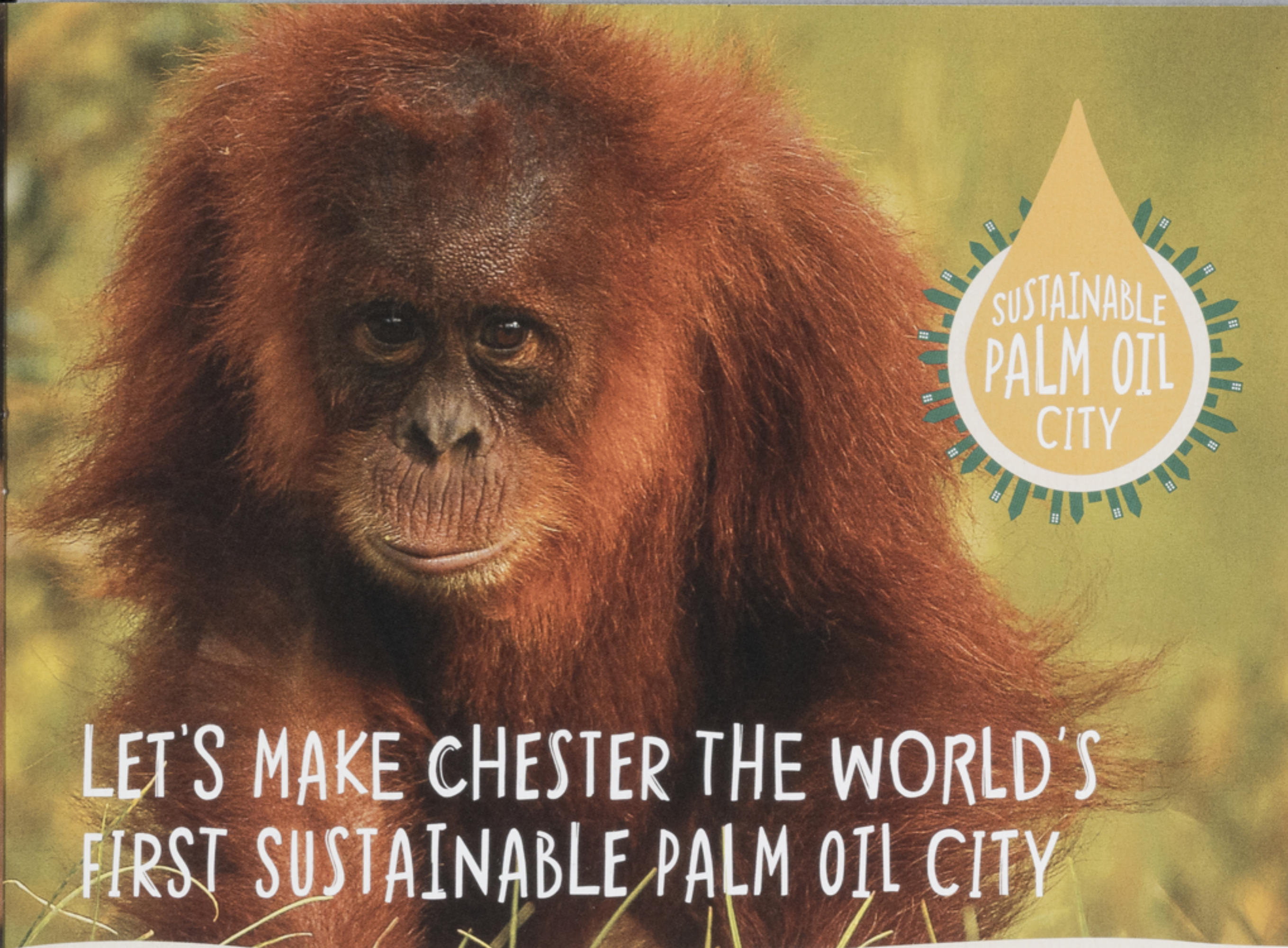
Dr Nick Davis, our Deputy Curator of Mammals, said:

"We're very happy to have two new spider monkeys to add to our troop. Spider monkey babies are very dependent on their mums, being carried almost exclusively for the first six months before they start learning how to climb.

"Spider monkeys have an interesting social system – more similar to chimps than other monkeys. Our group are very important in terms of our scientific understanding of the species and many conservationists have spent time studying them here, learning how to record behavioural data, before heading out to their habitat in Latin America to study them in the wild."

Chester Zoo has supported spider monkey research in Latin America for many years and, in tandem with its conservation partners, has identified a need for more awareness of conservation and environmental issues amongst local communities.

The zoo is currently expanding its conservation support for the threatened primates and, working with the Mexican NGO ConMonoMaya, is inspiring Mexican schoolchildren about the species in a bid to build their rapport with the wildlife around them.



LET'S MAKE CHESTER THE WORLD'S FIRST SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL CITY

Chester Zoo is striving to make Chester the world's first sustainable palm oil city to help protect rainforests across South East Asia and the incredible wildlife found within them.

Palm oil is in over 50% of products found on supermarket shelves and the growing palm oil industry is one of the BIGGEST threats facing wildlife in Sumatra and Borneo.

So, what can we do right now in UK that will make a positive impact? Buy, and create a demand for, sustainably produced palm oil which doesn't harm wildlife.

The city of Chester is leading the efforts to become the world's first 'Sustainable Palm Oil City'. Conservation experts are leading the way and Chester-based restaurant Chez Jules is

the first to commit to the project and has already adopted a palm oil policy and audited its supply chain.

Chester Zoo is hoping that a range of businesses in the city will join the campaign – from restaurants, cafes, hotels and fast food outlets to workplaces that offer staff catering services; schools and education providers; council and hospital food outlets; visitor attractions; manufacturers and retailers.

Together we can make sustainable palm oil the norm.

The Chester Sustainable Palm Oil City campaign, led by Chester Zoo, partners with Chez Jules, the Orangutan Land Trust and the Sumatran Orangutan Society, is endorsed by key conservation organisations and supported by a host of industry advisors.

Find out more about the initiative and how you can get involved at WWW.ACTFORWILDLIFE.ORG.UK/SUSTAINABLECITY

ACT FOR WILDLIFE

LED BY **CHESTERZOO**

Facebook.com/ActforWildlife
Twitter: @ActforWildlife
Instagram: @ActforWildlife

MAKING A SPLASH IN MEXICO

We're working to protect wildlife of all shapes and sizes around the world, including rhinos, tigers and elephants but the smaller, lesser known species also need conservation action!

We've been working with the Mexican Fish Ark in the beautiful and historic city of Morelia in Mexico since 1996 to help prevent the extinction of a type of fish called the goodeid. Goodeids are live-bearers, meaning they give birth to live young making them a fascinating group!

Mexico is home to all but one species of goodeid, but sadly due to threats including pollution, introduction of invasive species and draining of wetlands, numbers have fallen dramatically resulting in many species of the group being classified as either endangered or critically endangered.

We've been supporting the Fish Ark project to help stabilise the conditions in the wild alongside a conservation breeding project of around 40 species of goodeid for reintroduction to the wild. And it was this work that two members of our aquarium team recently visited the project to support with.



Tequila splitfin

Nadia Jogee and Steve Chester travelled to Mexico to share their knowledge and skills with the reintroduction of the tequila splitfin (*Zoogoneticus tequila*), a species the team are used to working with at the zoo.

Here they tell us more about their field trip and the incredible work of the Mexican Fish Ark.



Parasitic sampling



NADIA JOGEE, CHESTER ZOO AQUARIST

"Steve and I were lucky enough to be sent to visit the Mexican Fish Ark, one of the long standing conservation projects that Chester Zoo supports. The state we visited lies within a volcanic region, giving the area a dramatic backdrop of mountains and lakes as well as creating an interesting natural history of the area which has led to many endemic species being found here.

"We were both astounded by the extent of work that goes into the project, from collecting and describing species, identifying areas for possible reintroduction in the wild and then, of course, taking small groups back to the wild for release to boost population numbers. It was this final aspect of the project that we were mainly in Mexico to be a part of.

"From their extensive work they selected the tequila splitfin as the first species to be reintroduced as it's one of the hardier species of goodeids. They can then use this project as a framework for reintroducing other types of goodeids. The team breed the fish in semi natural ponds, which is a great way to expose them to natural selective pressures.

"It was a real honour helping to release such a fascinating species, that both is endemic and critically endangered, back into the wild. Knowing the amount of work the team in Mexico are putting into the project was a real eye opener, especially when you consider the obstacles they are constantly up against.

ACTFORWILDLIFE.ORG.UK
Facebook.com/ActforWildlife
Twitter: @ActforWildlife
Instagram: @ActforWildlife



STEVE CHESTER, CHESTER ZOO LEAD AQUARIUM KEEPER

"One morning we were collected from our hotel at 5am and drove five hours to the town of Teuchitlan - incidentally the fish did not get its name from the alcoholic drink produced in this area; it received its name from the nearby volcano - Volcán de Tequila. The Rio Teuchitlan, a short river around 1.5 miles long, is the right habitat for the tequila splitfin and the location of the reintroduction.

"The site has been developed as a park for local residents to relax and swim in and the crystal clear waters are an ideal reintroduction site. The residents of area also have a vested interest in protecting this site from pollution.

"Our first task for the day was to sample the river in five separate locations along the length of the river as scientists are particularly interested in the parasite load within this river. The most important part of the day was the reintroduction of 700 project bred tequila splitfin that we had brought with us from Morelia, these were released successfully into the Rio Teuchitlan which was great to be a part of!

"The tequila splitfin reintroduction is nearing the end after almost five years of hard work and dedication, the first fish have now been reintroduced and only time will tell if this project is successful. The planning has been meticulous and the ground work is finished, now it is time to start to think of the next project! Many other species of goodeid are critically endangered and using the knowledge gained from this project, future reintroductions will certainly be possible. None of this could be possible without the generous support of Chester Zoo funds and encouragement - just another reason I am so proud to work for the zoo!"

This is just one element of the project, to read more from Steve and Nadia, head over to our Act for Wildlife blog to find out more.

ALWAYS BUILDING AT CHESTER ZOO

If you've visited the zoo recently you'll have spotted that we're making some exciting developments across the zoo.

As part of our ongoing long-term plans for the future, and continuing the 'always building' philosophy of our founder, George Mottershead, we've announced our long term plans that will see us create new environments across the zoo.

George Mottershead created the UK's first zoo without bars and focused on animal wellbeing and conservation and the plan is designed to enhance our position as one of the world's best conservation, animal and leisure attractions, between now and 2030.

The new developments will allow you to explore a huge grassland Savannah and trek across treetop forest walkways. The new environments will build on the success of our ground-breaking Islands habitats, sensitively transforming the remainder of the zoo through the creation of large scale themed zones.

By creating environments for the conservation of highly threatened species not currently at the zoo, from pygmy hippos to Western lowland gorillas, new habitats will help us make an even more positive impact on the living world.

We are already the UK's most visited tourist attraction outside London, according to figures from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA). As a centre of excellence renowned for breeding some of the world's most endangered animals, we currently contribute more than £50m a year to the regional economy in the North West of England.

The new developments will provide significant additional economic, social and environmental benefits not only for Chester but at a regional, national and global level.

We're looking forward to sharing more development updates with you as we progress.

We couldn't do it without your continued support. Thank you!



All creatures GREAT and small

The Tripa peat swamp forest, in the north of the Indonesian island of Sumatra, is known to be an important habitat for Sumatran orangutans. Yet, if you look more closely, a wealth of smaller, lesser known species can be found!

Here at the zoo, we can all be explorers and conservationists. No adventure through our Islands habitats is complete without a stop at our Tripa Research Station in Monsoon Forest. This incredible stopping point on your Islands Journey is named after the real Indonesian forest where much of our conservation work takes place and is designed to replicate a conservationist's field office.

As well as an insight into some of the vital tools our teams use when working overseas – from the binoculars to research papers and maps – here you'll also find a variety of smaller animals that demand your attention. They may be tiny in size, but these creatures are crucial for biodiversity!



Vampire crab

Small, brightly coloured, and highly mysterious; relatively little is currently known about the stunning vampire crab by conservationists working with the species. Named because of their glowing yellow eyes, they are native to Indonesia, living in and around tropical rivers on the island of Java. Eating whatever they can find on a forest floor, they are important part of the ecosystem there, but are threatened by the pet trade as well as habitat loss due to human activity. This freshwater species has flourished at the zoo, where we are studying them closely to learn more about the species and help them breed. The babies look exactly the same as their parents, except tiny, with a body size of only 2mm!



Asian buffalo leech

Thriving in tropical rainforest conditions, this incredible, fascinating species is something to behold. They are hermaphrodites, have 5 pairs of eyes and possess a tripod like jaw with up to 450 teeth! They can grow to 140cms in length and reach a width of around 13cm. We have cared for them at the zoo since 2014, during which time have been highly successful in breeding the species and studying its behaviour. Stop to take a look next time you pass through Monsoon Forest!

Giant walking leaf stick insect

The world's largest leaf-insect is a master of camouflage! Found in the tropical forests of Malaysia, the species even moves like a leaf in the wind. They are a parthenogenic species, meaning that females can reproduce without a male – every animal is a clone of its mother! The newly hatched nymphs are brown and look like miniature versions of the adult. The insect's wings are so weak that the species is unable to fly but they are fast, and climb upwards as high as they can to hide from predators on the ground.



We regularly change the species on display in this section of the zoo so be sure to keep coming back to check what is new! Whatever you spot on your next expedition, you can be sure it is playing its own unique role in the biodiversity of South East Asia.



FUNDRAISING NEWS

Airbus and Chester Zoo team up to give youngsters a Flying Challenge

We've been teaming up with Airbus as our Conservation Partner to protect black rhinos from extinction for years and now we're working with them to educate the next generation of flight engineers, concentrating on the evolution of birds.

Our Safari Ranger, Bella, recently visited Airbus' new Flying Challenge programme to work with the participants to understand the theory of flight. The workshop involved an introduction to the natural theory of flight and how animals have adapted to fly.

The students looked at skulls, feathers and skeletons to help fully understand these adaptations. The students were also then introduced to biomimicry and how we have included the natural world in man-made engineering and objects.

Their knowledge was then put into practice as they had to then design a plane based on what they'd learned throughout the day. They presented their design to the rest of the group afterwards, developing their confidence and public speaking skills.

We're really pleased to be able to support such a great project with Airbus and look forward to working with them again in 2018.



CHESTER ZOO "100 CLUB"

We're embracing new ways of fundraising and the time has now come to close our 100 Club lottery scheme. The final prize draw has now been held. All the prize winners will be notified by post, in addition to appearing in Z magazine.

July 2017

- £100 – Mrs Suzanne J Cheetham, Wallasey
- £100 – Mr Nicholas S Morgan, Winsford
- £50 – Mrs Kathleen Oakes, Manchester
- £50 – Mr Andrew Stevens, Bridlington
- £50 – Mrs Annie Blake, Northwich
- £50 – Mrs Linda Joy Abbott, Winsford

August 2017

- £100 – Miss Linda Joy Ash, St. Asaph
- £100 – Mr James Howard Jones, Flintshire
- £100 – Mrs Cerian Jane Graham, Chorley
- £50 – Mrs Fiona Bailiff, Chester
- £50 – Mrs Molly Jane Price, Birkenhead
- £50 – Miss Margaret Harris, Birkenhead
- £50 – Miss Christine Parker, Wallasey

September 2017

- £100 – Miss Nancy Williams, Chester
- £100 – Mr Antony Sykes, Huddersfield
- £50 – Miss Emma Highton, Bolton
- £50 – Mrs Beverley Anne Grisenthwaite, Prenton
- £50 – Mrs Sandra Soul, Northwich
- £50 – Mr Wilfrid Nightingall, Wirral

Congratulations to all our prize winners and thank you to all our 100 Club members!

Own a piece of zoo history

With big changes happening at the zoo, we've been busy creating lots of new signage to let our visitors know what's what. But we haven't forgotten about the old signs you've come to know and love! We have a huge collection of used signage saved up, and we'll be giving you the chance to own your own piece of zoo history.

From species profiles to conservation messages, there's something there for every fan of Chester Zoo in our collection. In all shapes and sizes; from mammals to birds to plants. You name it, we've got it. Probably.

We're planning to launch our online auction in spring 2018, so keep your eyes out for further information. Best of all, every penny we raise from the sale of the memorabilia will go straight towards our conservation work.

Keep an eye on our website for more details - coming soon.



Christmas is just round the corner....

...but don't worry if you've still got some shopping to do, there's still plenty of time to get your Christmas gifts from Chester Zoo!

We have a huge array of festive goodies in our shop at the main entrance. And with all purchases supporting our vital conservation work around the world, what's not to love?!

We've hand-picked a few of our favourite gifts below for you...

Personalise your gifts

Give your gifts an individual touch this Christmas with our instant personalisation service. From Santa sacks, stockings and a wide range of gifts for all the family in hundreds of different designs – personalise with lettering, photos or a combination of both. You can arrange to have it done while you're exploring the zoo or while you wait!



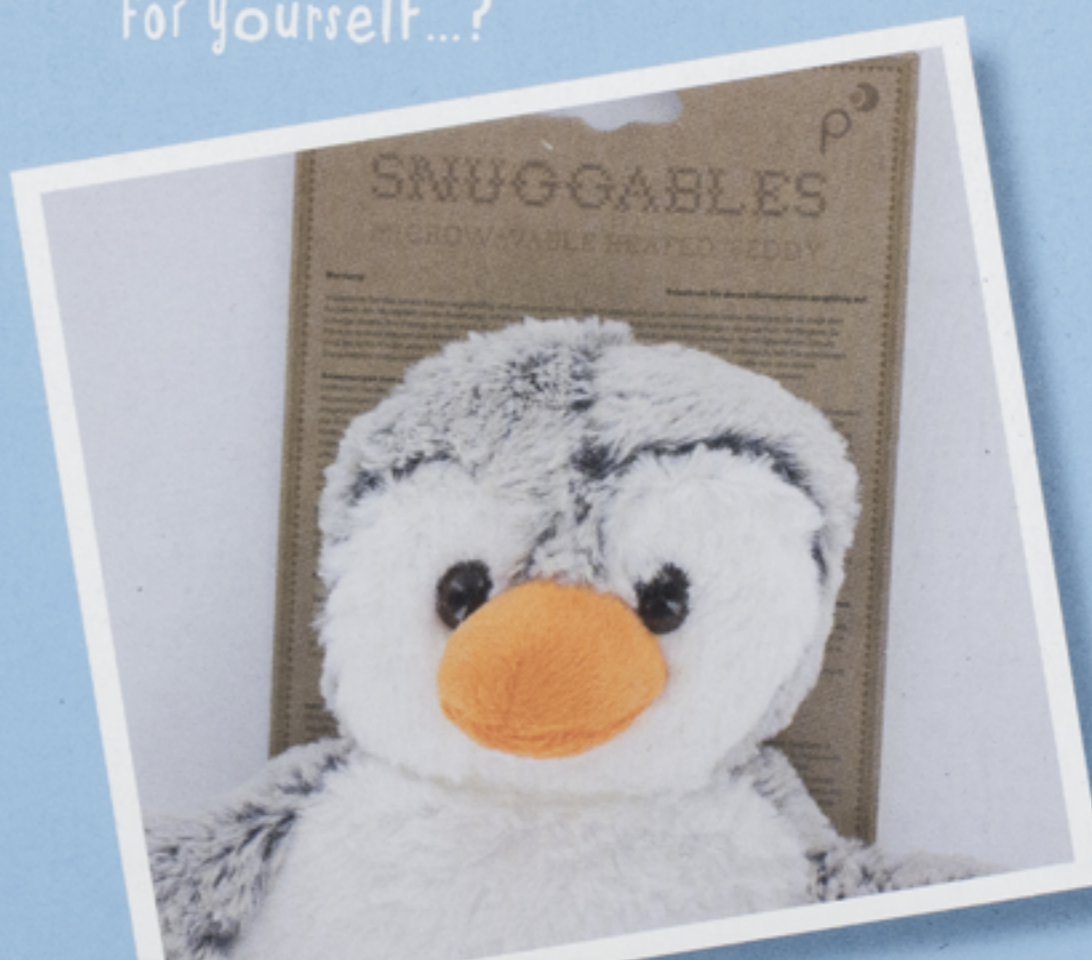
Kenyan Christmas tree decorations

These beautiful beaded decorations are individually handmade by ladies in Northern Kenya. They're translating their traditional skills into much needed income, without relying on environmentally-damaging activities. This in turn protects fragile grasslands, home to endangered animal species including Grevy's zebra and black rhino. Each decoration is individually labelled with who made it and where she lives.

Stocking fillers

No Christmas is complete without snuggly gifts to keep you toasty all winter. We have bear paw slippers, kids' and adults' pyjamas, giant slippers, winter hats, scarves and microwaveable plush animals too. Our popular 'Guess Who' game is also back by popular demand!

And for those of you who are already organised then maybe a little treat for yourself...?



Talking Conservation...

**WINTER
PROGRAMME
2017**

If you would like to find out more about the work your membership supports both here and out in the field, then why not come to one of our membership talks. You can find out more about our conservation project in Nepal, get the opportunity to meet our aquarium team and learn about the changing landscape of the zoo!



Tuesday 9 January

ASSESSING THE PRACTICAL INTERVENTIONS OF REDUCING HUMAN-TIGER CONFLICT IN NEPAL

Our Living with Tigers project aims to reduce human-tiger conflict. We are implementing community interventions, such as poverty reduction activities, predator proof pens, bio-gas stoves and a social marketing campaign. Join Amy Fitzmaurice, a Chester Zoo funded researcher from the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at the University of Oxford as she discusses the project and how she's assessing how effective these interventions are at reducing conflict, through ecological and social research.

Wednesday 7 February

AN EVENING WITH OUR AQUARIUM TEAM

Find out what goes on behind the scenes in our aquarium. The team will tell you about the diverse range of species we care for, how we breed them, the systems behind the scenes at Islands and give you a conservation overview.



Interested in attending?

Please call Kate in education on **01244 389831** or email k.brankin@chesterzoo.org. Booking essential.

AMAZING ADOPTERS & MARVELLOUS MEMBERS' PRIZE DRAW!

To say **THANK YOU** for your valued support during 2017 all current members and adopters will automatically be entered into a quarterly prize draw to win an adoption! Our two previous winners are **Caroline Roberts (member)** **Paul Gibbons (adopter)**



Thursday 8 March

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF CHESTER ZOO, WITH THE BOTANICS TEAM

Delve deeper into the stories behind our acclaimed gardens and amazing plant collection as we find out more about the development of the zoo over the years. Join with Phil Esseen, Curator of Botany and Horticulture, and the botanics team to discover how they have adapted to wider trends in the zoo world and look ahead to what the future might bring.

MEMBERS' TALKS

held in the Lecture Theatre (near the zoo's main entrance off the A41), start at 7:30pm and:

- booking is essential
- are free to members (please bring your membership card and welcome letter)
- we offer a special rate of £2 to adopters
- members of the public and guests are welcome (£3.50 for non-members)
- post-talk refreshments give you the opportunity to have an informal chat with speakers, zoo staff and fellow members

NEW ARRIVALS

This chunky little capybara pup is the latest to be born at the zoo! The playful youngster, who has not yet been sexed, arrived to parents Lily and Jeff on 7 November.

Capybaras are the world's largest species of rodent and are sometimes labelled giant guinea pigs. They are found in South America where they live in small herds, spending much of their time in water.

Currently not listed as an endangered species, the capybara is threatened by habitat degradation and illegal poaching for its meat and skin. Keepers hope Lily's newest arrival will help to highlight a species which is often overlooked.

Capybara fact file

The capybara is the largest of the world's rodent species

Their eyes and nostrils are on the tops of their heads so they can stay submerged with very little of their body showing - helping them to avoid detection by predators such as jaguars, anacondas and caiman

Like rabbits, they eat their own dung to extract maximum nutrition from their food

The scientific name for the capybara means 'water hog'





IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

As a charity, volunteers provide vital support to the life of the zoo. Our award-winning volunteers complement the work of our paid staff and contribute to our success by supporting the zoo's education, scientific and conservation mission.

Our volunteers provide thousands of hours between them to support our work. We have over 200 volunteers who support us and play a crucial role in providing an all-round excellent visitor experience. They're passionate people, dedicated to engaging you, our visitors in amazing educational experiences and helping us raise funds for our vital conservation work.

We recently published a report which highlights the impact of volunteering in UK zoos. Whilst zoological collections recognise the benefits of volunteering in terms of adding operational capacity and enhanced opportunities for conservation education and visitor experience, it's believed that this is the first time a significant study has been carried out to understand the broader benefits of volunteering on the individuals who participate in zoos.

The analysis revealed significant positive self-reported impacts on the individuals.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Volunteers reported significant increases in their perceived fitness levels, confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

A significant number of volunteers reported a sense that their communication skills, team working skills, work place and vocational skills had been improved.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers reported significant positive impacts on their mental health, willingness to try new things and suggested that

volunteering had given them 'things to look forward to in life'. This was a particularly rewarding outcome for those volunteers who reported overcoming specific mental health problems and bereavement.

CONNECTION WITH PEOPLE

82% of people suggested that their range of friendships had increased since volunteering and a sense of belonging was evident.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

More than 85% of volunteers felt valued by the zoo that they had volunteered for and that they received the support that they needed.

The report highlights a number of suggestions related to best practice in terms of volunteer support and how zoos can make the most of the mutually beneficial opportunities for them and for their volunteers. Chester Zoo's Head of Discovery and Learning, and co-author of the report, Charlotte Smith explains:

"This project has been hugely rewarding to develop such a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of volunteering on the volunteers themselves and it has given us lots of confidence to grow and develop our own programme.

"The results clearly show how zoos can offer a range of social intellectual and cultural benefits to our local communities, in addition to delivering against our conservation and education aims."

The report will be used to inform future developments of zoo volunteer programmes. To find out more about our volunteering programme at the zoo and what they get up to, here:

www.chesterzoo.org/volunteers



Special Christmas
Sorting Office

THE LANTERNS

AT CHESTER ZOO

It was a cold festive night at Chester Zoo.
With presents piled high, we still had work to do.
We thought long and hard, and wrote the animals a letter
What could Christmas bring to make their lives better?

All the gibbons wanted was a place up high,
Somewhere safe to swing, with their family nearby.
The flamingos wanted warmth and space to roam.
Water clean and shallow to safely call home.

The insects just wanted to continue their song,
Buzzing and humming all day and night long.
Bold, bright and beautiful, macaws aren't a pet
They love to crack a nut, safe from human threat.

But with all this thinking, we'd forgotten the time!
We all started to panic, as we heard a clock chime.
The postman had been, we'd missed our chance.
There would be no Christmas for the animals or plants.

At the Christmas Sorting Office, our letters needed to be
An enchanting place, with a sparkly Christmas tree.
We'd never make it, we're far too slow
But our amazing animals could give it a go!

We sent off the letter and pointed the way
Quick as the wind, the antelope galloped away.
Up in the trees, the gibbon swung from each limb
And down in the water, the flamingo followed him.

And there it was! Glowing bright in the night
Surrounded by animals, a truly magical sight.
With the letter delivered, we all joined together,
Thinking of our zoo and how it makes life better.

24 November
to 30 December

BOOK NOW

so you don't miss out!

chesterzoo.org/lanterns

Brought to you by Wild Rumpus

Special Christmas
Sorting Office