

SPRING 2014

Z MAGAZINE

CHESTER ZOO

The official magazine for Chester Zoo MEMBERS and ADOPTERS

IN YOUR Z...

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DON'T MISS!

Adopter Days
Saturday March 8
Sunday, October 5

Members' Days
Saturday March 29
Friday, June 27



DEWA ROMAN EXPERIENCE - 2 for 1 on Admission

Chester Zoo Members can experience the sights, sounds and smells of Roman Britain. Visit the dark hold of a Roman galley and see the reconstructed granary, barracks, bath-house, taverna and market stalls that would have formed part of the fortress that was once home to the 5000 strong "brave and victorious" Twentieth Legion.

You can also view the genuine Roman, Saxon and Medieval remains buried beneath Chester and try on Roman armour, fire a catapult or create a mosaic. www.dewaromanexperience.co.uk

Offer details: Chester Zoo Members can have 2 for 1 on admission (membership card must be shown and one discount applies per card). Offer ends June 30, 2014.



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ARE YOU A FRIEND OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

As part of our commitment to the environment, we're giving you the chance to receive **Z** electronically.

Swapping over is easy.

Simply contact the membership office on **01244 650 208** or email membership@chesterzoo.org with an email address you would like us to send the link to – but don't forget to include your membership number or postcode so we can find you on our system. You'll still receive **Z** by post should you not wish to receive it electronically.

NEWS FROM THE ZOO

with Dr. Mark Pilgrim director general



Please can you update us with news from the zoo?

It seems amazing that we are in February already, yet this is probably the first chance I have had to officially wish you all a happy and successful 2014.

It has been an extremely busy start to the year for us all here at the zoo, with work continuing apace on our exciting Islands project, the launch this month of our Bloom campaign – highlighting the incredible diversity of gardens, birds and wildlife native to the UK – and some ground-breaking work on conservation.

I myself have just returned from an expedition with a team of 10 colleagues to Ecuador where we were researching the Ecuador Amazon parrot, which has been a part of my life for the best part of 20 years. Around the same time our colleague Gerardo Garcia, curator of lower vertebrates and invertebrates, was doing pioneering work in Madagascar, which could ultimately prove a lifesaver for the golden mantella frog, one of the world's smallest, most spectacular amphibian species.

I will get onto both of these projects a little later, but first I must take a moment to hark back to the close of 2013 and our magnificent Lantern Magic festival. I am deeply proud of the entire team which has enabled our zoo to put on such an enchanting event at what is a very special time in everyone's calendar. In December last year I stepped out of my director general's shoes for a short while to join the crowds as a zoo visitor myself, bringing my own children along to this event. Both they and I were completely entranced by the festive atmosphere. I am delighted our zoo has created such an interactive family-friendly format for our annual wintertime celebrations. It was an unforgettable experience for all who attend. I hope you and yours all enjoyed Lantern Magic as much as my own family.

How has the zoo coped with recent bad weather?

Following a relatively mild winter, the new year has brought some catastrophic weather to many parts of the UK. My heart goes out to all families whose homes have been devastated, businesses and livelihoods setback by years as a result of the unprecedented floods. We especially sympathise with those zoos in other regions of the country which have had to cope under such difficult and emotionally trying circumstances.

We have been lucky that, to date, the vagaries of the weather here in Chester have been relatively calm in comparison. But even so we can never afford to be complacent and I would like to thank the maintenance and clean up teams who keep our zoo infrastructure in such tip top condition in sun, rain, wind, snow and hail.

Please can you update us on Islands?

While the north west has escaped the worst of the weather, construction work on our Islands project has inevitably, on occasions, been affected by the heavy rains and winds which have battered Britain. Increased mud and wet winter days can disrupt timetables.

But the level of expertise of our Islands team is such that we have built in a certain amount of flexibility which has enabled us to keep on top of this exciting project and we are still right on schedule. Turn to pages 12 and 13 to find out more about how work is progressing, plus the exciting news that The Wolfson Foundation has pledged to fund the building of a schoolhouse within the Islands exhibit. We thank them for their generosity in supporting a venture which will do so much to further educate people about diverse island ecosystems and the need to conserve animals and their habitats around the world.

What is happening in conservation?

Even during these early stages of its development there has been keen interest in Islands and the fantastic opportunity it offers us to deliver some key conservation messages.

Conservation is of course at the heart of our work here at the zoo and we have seen an exceptional start to 2014 in this regard. Turn to pages 8 and 9 to read how experimental silicone tags developed here in Chester offer a glimmer of hope for the rare golden mantella frog in Madagascar.

Some of you may have seen television interviews with Gerardo explaining how tagging rare frogs with the silicone can help the monitoring process. Gerardo has this month been out to Madagascar helping train local conservationists how to tag frogs in the wild.

International acclaim has also been achieved for Chester Zoo as a result of our Ecuador expedition with a group of dedicated colleagues. Turn to pages 18-21 to discover more about our trip researching the Ecuador Amazon parrot.

We gained important new data about this bird, now recognised as a full species in its own right as a result of work I undertook for a thesis. Our trip attracted the attention of BBC news websites and, importantly, the press in Ecuador itself, where raising awareness about the Ecuador Amazon parrot and local conservation issues generally is of the utmost importance.

And finally...

The Ecuador Amazon parrot resides in the dry forests of Western Ecuador, a region typically warm, humid and dry. Despite this we were greeted by torrential rains during the first few days of our trip in January. They were not the easiest of conditions to work in but the team remained professional, enthusiastic and dedicated throughout. There was not one moan or groan as we worked often from 6am till 9pm watching the birds, charting their nesting habits and following them from forests to mangroves. There were some fun moments and some heart-stopping moments as we caught our first close up views of these amazing birds and Ecuador's other wildlife species. I'd like to thank the entire team for the work they did which will hopefully be of great value in helping the long-term future of this species.

Busy start to 2014 for Capybara family...

LILY, gives birth to SECOND SET of TRIPLETS

For any new mum, one baby is a handful but our capybara, Lily, has just given birth to her second set of triplets. The start of 2014 has seen her busily looking after her new charges, now aged three months, with a little help from their dad Mordon.

It's no mean task for Lily, as capybaras are the world's largest rodents. They can grow up to 1.5m in length and weigh up to 60kg. But as she has had triplets once before, Lily knows what to expect from the chunky trio.

Curator of mammals, Tim Rowlands, said:

"Triplets are a handful for any mum but Lily knows what she's doing. To us at first glance the babies look very similar but their mum knows exactly which is which and what mischief they're up to!"

During a health check undertaken by zoo vets the youngsters - male Zayn, and females Lochley and Mollari - were weighed, microchipped, and found to be doing very well.

Capybaras are native to South America where they live in small herds in wetlands. Their bodies are specially adapted for swimming. They have webbed feet, and their eyes, ears and nostrils are located on top of their heads. They can stay submerged in water for about five minutes. As a result their scientific name means 'water pig'.

In the wild they are naturally preyed upon by jaguars, anacondas and caiman. But humans also hunt them for their meat and skin, which can be turned into leather.



Left: One of the young trio is given a first health check.

Right: The new triplets learn the ropes from the older capybaras.





This fabulous little lady is another new, photogenic arrival.

Philippine spotted deers are native to the rainforests of the Visayan islands where they are endangered due, in no small part, to deforestation and hunting.

This is mum's first fawn but keepers say she's doing a great job for a new parent and our youngster is thriving.

Beautiful
new arrival



Shy saki monkey
peeks out
at the world

Curious to see what's going on in the big wild world is this baby white-faced saki monkey which you can just see poking its head out from mum, Tibiti's, fur. This striking photograph was taken shortly after it was born.

BRIGHT IDEA

could prove a

LIFESAVER for FROGS

How experimental silicone tags offer glimmer of hope for Madagascar's threatened species

Amphibian experts say silicone implants could play a part in saving one of the smallest, most spectacular frogs in the world.

Conservationists are trialling a technique to tag a population of 80 of the zoo's golden mantella frogs by placing a tiny amount of fluorescent silicone gel under the skin on their legs.

They hope the implants will ultimately enable them to identify and track the progress of wild populations in their native Madagascar – a move which could help to protect the species.

Dr Gerardo Garcia, our curator of lower vertebrates and invertebrates said:

"The technique of injecting a small coloured implant under the skin has never been attempted on these tiny golden mantella frogs before. However, if it works successfully here, we'll be replicating this in the wild in Madagascar.

"In the short-term we hope these tags will allow us to identify each of the groups of frogs we have at the zoo – something that's currently very difficult given that they are all about the size of a thumb nail and all look the same. We need to be able to do this so we can easily tell them apart for our own conservation-breeding purposes.

"Once we've assessed how effective the tagging method is on the zoo's ambassador group and if it proves to be the success that we think that it will be, we'll deploy this method in Madagascar with wild populations.

"We've already collaborated with organisations in Madagascar to help to set-up captive-breeding centres there, which are now successfully breeding the species. If we can tag groups of frogs in this way before we release them, then we'll be able to track where they go, how long they live and what their survival rate is.

"These frogs are highly threatened in their homeland and this process could play a very important part in their long-term survival."

The 20mm-long frogs are classed as critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, meaning they face an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

A programme devised to protect golden mantellas and all other amphibians in Madagascar was set up in 2006. The strategy aims to equip local conservationists with the skills needed to establish safety-net populations of amphibians in captivity, out of the reach of a killer fungus that has devastated amphibian populations worldwide.

Madagascar is one of the only places in the world where the deadly chytrid fungus – a disease which thickens the frogs' skin and prevents the movement of fluids, causing a chance of heart failure – does not currently exist.

However experts believe it is only a matter of time before the fungus arrives there.

Dr Garcia added:

"Amphibians already face lots of threats, most notably from the destruction of their habitat, and the chytrid fungus could be the last nail in the coffin. It threatens most of the wild amphibian species around the globe with extinction and it's probably the first time ever that a disease has threatened to wipe out an entire class of animals.

"There's a very real chance of a new epidemic here and that's why it's vitally important that careful, professional programmes are in place to buy us more time and give the species a lifeline until the threat of chytrid can be resolved."

If the tags are a success Dr Garcia will help train conservationists in Madagascar how to inject them.



Curator of lower vertebrates and invertebrates, Dr Gerardo Garcia, prepares to inject a frog with a thin strip of silicone gel. The implants will enable keepers to easily identify individuals in their group of 80 frogs.



The frog is placed on a glass screen and the implant viewed from underneath. Amphibian experts at the zoo will monitor the effectiveness of the tags and, if deemed a success, the method will be used to track the progress of the critically endangered species in the wild in their native Madagascar.



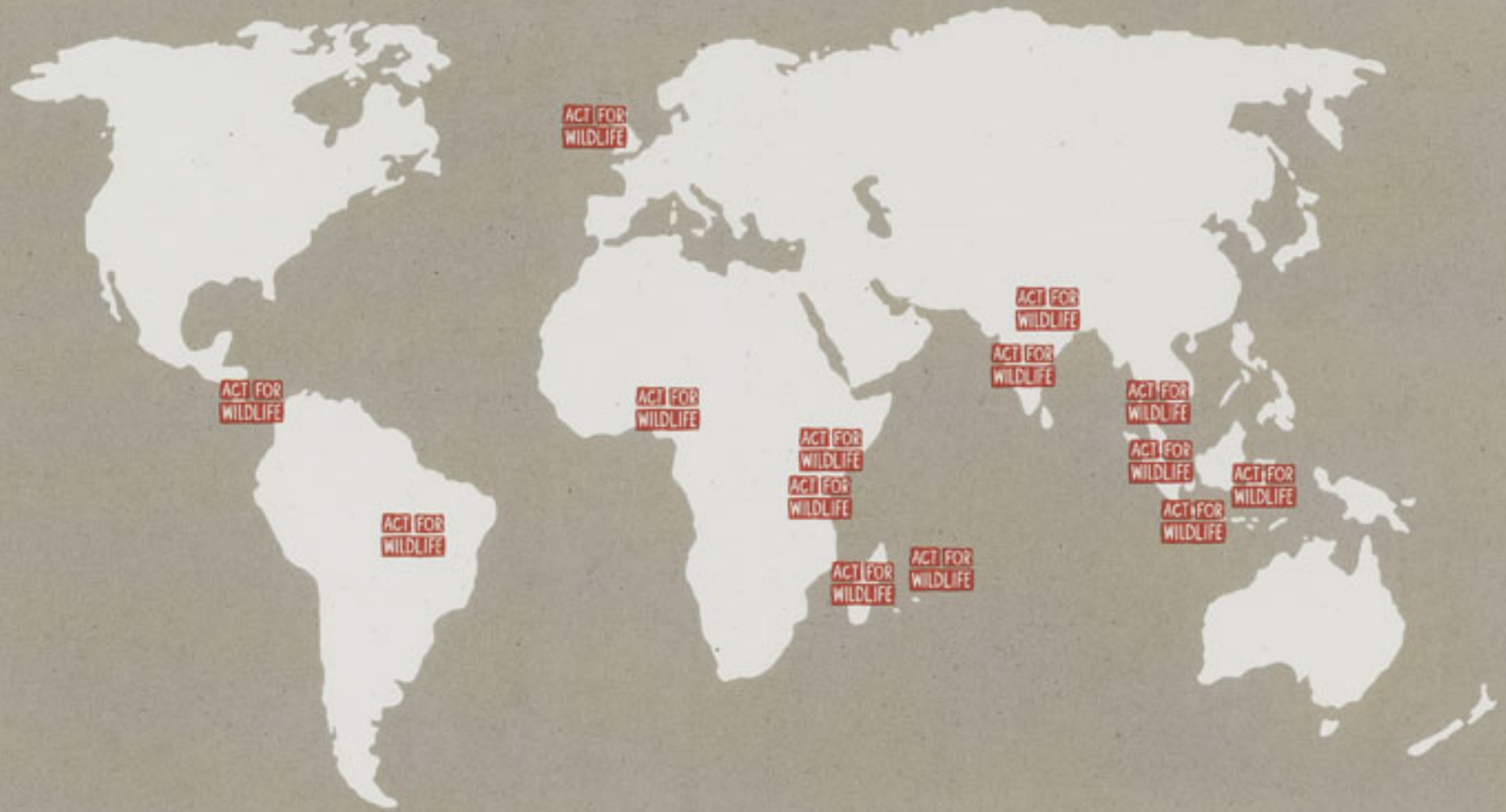
Keepers ensure the gel, which is mixed with a hardening agent so that it quickly sets, has been correctly implanted by checking it glows ultra violet using a special torch.

CHYTRID FUNGUS. *the grim facts:*

- The chytrid disease is caused by the fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*
- Chytrid causes changes in the frogs' skin and because skin is such a vital organ for amphibians, it ultimately results in death
- At the moment there is no effective method to treat frogs in the wild
- Chytrid fungus has yet to be discovered in Madagascar, and many studies are being conducted to monitor the health of wild frog populations. Because Madagascar's frogs have been isolated from infections such as chytridiomycosis, it is unlikely that they would have developed any form of resistance to the fungus. If there is no resistance then the accidental introduction of chytrid to Madagascar would have a devastating effect on such an important and unique group of animals

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AROUND THE WORLD

All the places we have ACTED FOR WILDLIFE in the last three months



A focus on... UK WILDLIFE



BARBERRY CARPET MOTH PROJECT

A team from our horticulture and botany department has been helping efforts to reintroduce the barberry carpet moth into areas of England by increasing the number of plants in the wild that they use as a food source.

The first phase involved growing 600 *berberis vulgaris* plants here at Chester Zoo. In June, the team planted 250 of these plants along the Shropshire Union Canal. Then, in November and January, they extended this planting further along the canal. The project aims to create a triangle of host plants connecting Chester Zoo, Dudley Zoo and Twycross Zoo. These will create corridors of the larval food plants for the moths which will later be reintroduced to sites throughout the midlands.

PROTECTING BADGERS

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis*. It has re-emerged as a major threat to the British cattle industry, with the distribution and incidence of cases increasing significantly over recent decades. This spread has been attributed to badgers which can carry the disease. In other parts of the country, badger culls have been trialled to try to control the spread of the disease.

Here at Chester Zoo, however, we are encouraging disease-control techniques that protect badgers. In November we provided funding to Wirral and Cheshire badger group (WCBG) to support a badger vaccination programme within Cheshire. Badger vaccination has proven to reduce the severity and progression of bTB, as well as reducing transmission. Our support will help pay for WCBG members to train as vaccinators. The group will then be able to offer an alternative to badger culling, which will not only protect badgers but will help reduce localised spread of bovine tuberculosis.

BREEDING BIRDS OF NORTH WALES

In 2011, we provided funding towards the production of a north Wales breeding bird atlas, managed by volunteers doing field work over four breeding seasons from 2008-2011. The atlas, published last year, documents the distribution of breeding bird species in north Wales and can be compared to the last national breeding bird

atlas which took place between 1988-1991. The atlas helps identify declining populations which, in turn, helps us determine conservation priorities.



MEET ERIC

Eric Fletcher is manager of RECORD, the local environmental record centre for Cheshire, based at Chester Zoo.

RECORD gathers information on wildlife sightings from Cheshire, Halton, Wirral and Warrington. It is used to help manage local areas, encourage other species into an area, or for planning purposes. We work with RECORD on a number of schemes. They manage data from our black poplar and hazel dormouse projects and work with us on our Heritage Lottery-funded Skills for the Future programme. This provides training placements for people pursuing careers in the UK wildlife sector.



CAUGHT ON CAMERA

This image taken by an unmanned camera trap is the first ever record of a giant panda in Laojunshan Reserve, Sichuan. It represents a range extension for the iconic species and a fantastic testament to conservation work in this reserve, funded and supported by Chester Zoo as part of our China conservation programme.



© Bolivian Amphibian Initiative

Amphibian Programme *UPDATE*

The Bolivian Amphibian Initiative aims to conserve endemic amphibian species within Bolivia. We help fund research into the critically endangered Lake Titicaca frog. Found only in Lake Titicaca, it is under threat from habitat destruction, pollution and invasive species. A mating pair was recently recorded within one of the monitored populations.

The initiative has also located eggs in the lake and found important evidence that the species provides parental care to its offspring. Discovering data like this furthers our understanding of the biology and reproduction of the species; information which can be used to help implement the best possible conservation practices.

Through the initiative young biologists and students have also received training in conservation methods, both with captive frogs and those in the wild.

Some of the most recent work undertaken has found significantly high levels of parasites in the species, opening up a new line of research.

News from *ASSAM*

Many rural communities in Assam, India, are heavily dependent on firewood for cooking and lighting. Often this wood is taken from local forests. To protect these forests and the wildlife, which live in them, including Asian elephants, the Assam Haathi Project has been helping to install fuel efficient stoves in villages. The use of stoves decreases wood consumption and has significant health benefits by removing smoke from kitchens.

Project staff member, Lakhi Kumar, has also been carrying out training, and installation demonstrations at Nath in Udalguri district, a new project site. By providing training, villagers can then go on to install more of these stoves throughout their communities.



GRANT SUPPORT

We've supported a vast array of new projects in the last quarter, helping to conserve species all around the world. These include:

AFRICA

Recent support includes a study into the ecology and demography of African wild dogs in Mozambique, and in Kenya the construction of bridges to reduce road traffic accidents involving black and white colobus monkeys.

We also funded a project to identify the hornbill species most vulnerable to the loss of tree cavities in Kenya. This involves testing the use of artificial nest boxes and individually marking and monitoring populations.

SOUTH AMERICA

Human-wildlife conflict is an issue which many of our conservation programmes focus on. In Brazil a new project we're supporting will determine areas where human settlements overlap with jaguar and puma territories. It aims to improve people's tolerance for these species and better understand issues facing the big cats.

We've also renewed our support for a project investigating the ecology and conservation of spider monkeys in Costa Rica and Mexico.

ASIA

New projects include an assessment of the viability of komodo dragons on Flores, Indonesia, and the development of sustainable fishing practices to conserve threatened marine species in India.

We've also continued our support for the Budo hornbill conservation and education centre, in Thailand, which aims to increase public awareness and participation in hornbill conservation.

NEWS ON CONSERVATION

FROM AROUND BRITAIN

GOOD The short-haired bumblebee disappeared from our shores in the 1980s and a mission to reintroduce the species has been launched by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. After two releases of queen bees, experts have now recorded offspring worker bees for the first time. This is the first time this species has nested in the last 25 years!

BAD Some of our most recognisable garden birds are in decline. The once common starling has experienced population declines of almost 80 per cent since 1979, with about 40 million starlings lost from the EU since 1980. That means 150 lost every hour since the eighties.

Rhino Programme *UPDATE*

In November, we received fantastic news from our project partners in Chyulu Hills that rhino calf footprints had been found within the national park. This was really exciting and a positive end to 2013 after a worrying series of poaching incidents in the region.

Over the last two months we've funded a number of projects within the rhino programme. We've supported an emergency fund for black rhinos in Laikipia district, Kenya, to help ensure translocation, veterinary and other essential equipment is available to deal with any emergency involving black rhinos. We've also continued our support for Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, providing money to help improve the sanctuary's infrastructure.

JOIN US TO ACT FOR WILDLIFE AND VISIT
www.actforwildlife.org.uk



ISLANDS at CHESTER ZOO

Progress continues as we get set to raise the roof on MONSOON FOREST

Progress continues on *Islands* with contractor Laing O'Rourke working across the site, from north to south, installing floor slabs and footings for the restaurant, stables and other buildings.

The boat channel is now visible and recent weeks have seen walls for the Monsoon Forest building erected in readiness for the installation of a transparent roof.

Meanwhile, activities involving local schools and further education organisations are being developed to offer students an insight into the construction process. Local community projects are also being explored.

Ahead of *Islands* opening, we have contracted works to improve traffic flow and orientation of vehicles as they approach and access the site. This includes new white lines and signage along the A41 and around the two roundabouts on the access road.

The full storyline for *Islands* has been developed and will ensure visitors feel like they are on an expedition to explore unique environments. With this in mind, work has started to acquire items that will set the scene for each different habitat. Artefacts and specially commissioned features will be complemented by unobtrusive technology that will create sounds and movement appropriate to each island. The overall experience will be supported by an app that offers extra information, plus a paper booklet for each explorer.



MAJOR FUNDER ON BOARD for ISLANDS EXPEDITION



Our exciting *Islands* project received a fantastic boost when The Wolfson Foundation pledged a grant to fund the building of a schoolhouse within the new zoo attraction.

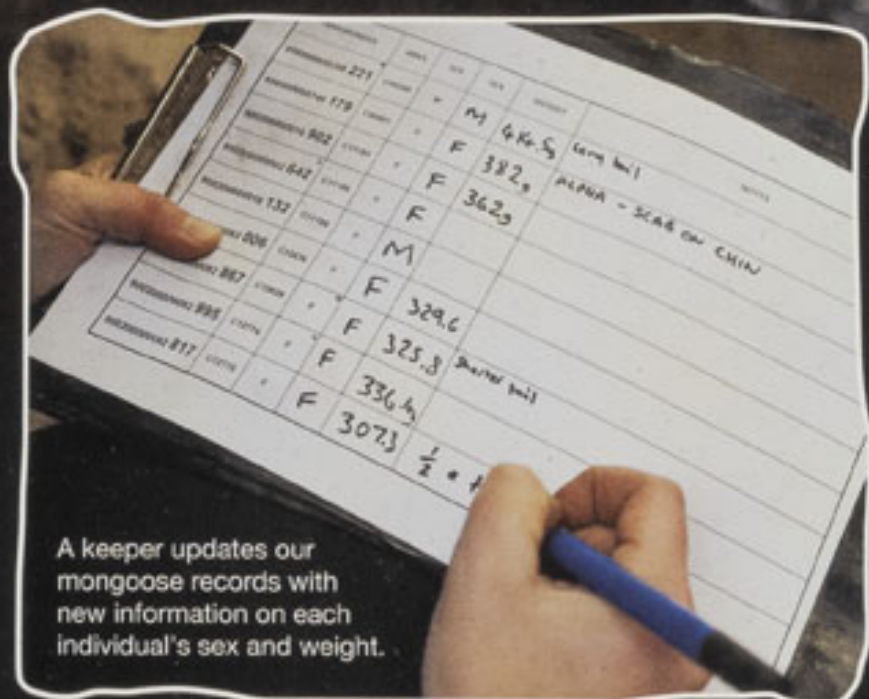
The foundation is a major grant-maker that supports and promotes excellence in the fields of science, medicine, health, education, the arts and humanities. We were delighted to accept the offer of funding for the schoolhouse which will provide a varied daily programme of activities and events. It will give visitors a real insight into our international field programmes and the science of conservation.

We want everyone to leave *Islands* feeling inspired to do their bit to protect the environment and this education facility will play a huge part in achieving that. Our sincere thanks go to The Wolfson Foundation for their support and we look forward to further developing this relationship as the construction of *Islands* forges ahead.

For more information on *Islands* see the dedicated webpages at www.chesterzoo.org/islands



CHECK UP REVEALS 'FEMALE' MONGOOSE *is in fact male!*



A keeper updates our mongoose records with new information on each individual's sex and weight.

A new year health check on our mongoose population has revealed there are two males in the group – not one as previously thought – and seven females.

One of the group was recorded as a female in past examinations, but the latest check-up found it is in fact a male, now aged three.

That means there are two healthy males. The other one is Mungo, our adult breeding male, now aged eight and a half, who weighed in at 414.5g and originally came to us from Marwell Zoo.

Our lead female is slightly smaller at 382g and was born at Edinburgh Zoo, before joining us here in Chester. She is now aged seven and a half.

The rest of our mongoose family are all younger. Three of them are about three years old and four others are around two years. The youngest – and smallest – female weighed 307.3g.



One of the mongoose family is prepared for a check up.

PRIZE
TO BE WON!

See our
QUIZ



Kidz zoo

Spring 2014



Inside...KIDS' PROGRAMME OF EVENTS



Junior Members' PROGRAMME of EVENTS 2014



TRACKS AND SIGNS

SATURDAY MARCH 22

This is probably one of our most popular events which entertains 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 11am, returning there for collection at 4pm. You will need a picnic lunch, and it is important that you wear clean, very old clothes and absolutely clean wellies please.

HOO FARM - TELFORD

SATURDAY APRIL 26

This will be a new trip for the junior members. We will visit the wide variety of animals at Hoo Farm near Telford where they have all the regular farm animals as well as a lot of exotic animals such as alpacas, bats, foxes, racoons, meerkats, snakes, frogs, lizards, parrots - in fact, all sorts! There will be a lot to do whatever the weather. It will be a lovely day out.

Eights and over are asked to join us, meeting at the staff entrance at 10am, and we will return there for 4.30pm. Bring a picnic with you.

ANGELSEY SEA ZOO AND PILI PALACE

SATURDAY MAY 17

This is always a very enjoyable day when we head over to the Anglesey Sea Zoo for the morning and then go on to the amazing Pili Palace to see their stunning butterflies and so much more before returning home. Helpful staff will offer us a guided tour and the opportunity to meet some of the animals that we can handle there. May is a wonderful time of year to blow off the cobwebs and head for Wales.

The bus will leave the staff entrance at 9.30am and return for 5pm. Over eights are invited to come along and you should bring a picnic.



GREENWOOD FOREST PARK - SNOWDONIA!

SATURDAY JUNE 21

Don't worry, we will not be traipsing the juniors up Mount Snowdon, but we will have this famous mountain in our sights at times when we are approaching this fascinating park, based on sustainable living and having fun without using up masses of natural resources. We will enjoy the wet toboggan ride, propel your own boats through the jungle stream, as well as den building and the big dipper ride - you will even get the chance to try archery. This event is definitely back by popular request.

We will leave the staff car park at 9.30am and return at 5.30pm. Bring a picnic lunch. All eights and over are invited to come along for a lovely day out.

HOW TO BE A GOOD ZOO KEEPER!

WEDNESDAY JULY 23

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 years old or over**. We try to match juniors to their favourite section, but places are limited so this cannot be guaranteed. Please arrive prepared to work hard, with clean wellies and an additional completely clean set of clothes to work in.

Owing to the zoo's biosecurity measures, it is important that the clothes you wear to work on the sections have not been in contact with any farm animals, or even your pets at home, since they were last washed.

We will meet outside the Oakfield at 10.30am, and the day will finish for juniors at 4pm. Please bring a packed lunch. **Also please note** that bookings for this event **will not** be taken before 9am on Wednesday July 9, 2014, (01244 650215) and will be strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.

JUNIORS' SUMMER BARBECUE!

THURSDAY JULY 31

Our summer barbecue has become a regular feature for the juniors' diary as it has proved immensely popular. Perhaps this is 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 or zoo tours during the evening, but you can be sure to find it relaxing.

We invite eights and over to join us for a 7pm start, when you should arrive at the main entrance. Parents are asked to collect juniors from the main entrance at 9.45pm please.

THE JUNIOR MEMBERS' SUMMER SCHOOL

FROM AUGUST 4 - 8 INCLUSIVE

Please note that the two week booking rule does NOT apply to this event and EARLY BOOKING IS ADVISED (anytime from December 2013 onwards).

The summer school is open to juniors aged 12 and above (although preference will be given to those aged 13 and above). Participants must be able to attend all five (full) days and the cost will be £185 for the week.

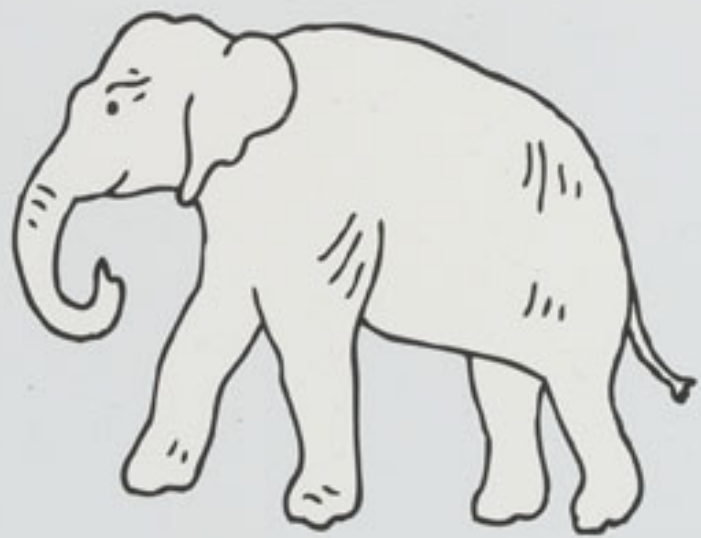
A full programme of events for this action-packed, but informal week, will be issued in the March edition of this magazine, but essentially the summer school will encompass a wide variety of theoretical and practical training including a mid-week field trip, live mammal trapping, tours of the zoo, and talks from a variety of zoo staff about all aspects of the zoo's work. It is ideally suited to those hoping to follow a career in zoos, conservation or veterinary science but is also a lot of fun for those just interested in finding out more about how our wonderful zoo works.

HILBRE ISLAND

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 20

Back to the seaside for September. We will be walking over to Hilbre Island in the Dee Estuary to see the seabirds and seals and to investigate the rockpools on our way. You will love this visit which offers the chance to walk across the sand as the tide goes out, climb on the Little Eye and Middle Eye islands on our way over to Hilbre itself, where we will spend the day watching the wildlife and visiting the lighthouse. Don't worry, we will leave in good time to be back to the coach before the tide comes in!

The bus departure time will depend on the tide times for the day and so keep an eye on the magazine to check when we will be leaving nearer the date. Eights and over are invited to join us for a relaxing day. Bring a picnic.



Please Note:

Bookings must be made for all events. Please ring Penny Rudd on 01244 650 215, 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 Kidz Zoo 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.

TATTON PARK, HOME FARM AND DEER RUT

SATURDAY OCTOBER 18

It is a few years since the juniors last visited Tatton Park, home to big herds of fallow deer and red deer. October is the time of the rut for the red deer and we will be able to watch the big males competing to attract the females. This is usually a fantastic autumn visit and we will visit the Home farm at Tatton in the morning before heading across the main parkland to watch the deer. Wrap up warmly and come along!

Over eights are invited to join us, and we will leave the staff car park at 10am and return there for 4.30pm. You will need a picnic lunch.

MARTIN MERE, THE WILDFOWL AND WETLANDS TRUST

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 22

Martin Mere is the place around here to see the vast flocks of pink-footed geese that stop here on the autumn migration. There will also be hundreds of swans and many other wild waterfowl species to see at this stunning reserve near Ormskirk, Lancashire, where there are many hides spread around the area from which you can get really superb views of the birds without disturbing them.

This is a very easy going day and we will start by visiting Martin mere's exotic species collection before heading out to the wetlands to look at the wild birds.

The bus will leave the staff car park at 10.30am and return for 4pm. You will need to dress warmly and bring a picnic lunch. If you have binoculars bring them along, but we will have some you can borrow too. Juniors of eight and over are more than welcome to join us.

THE JUNIORS' CHRISTMAS PARTY!

FRIDAY DECEMBER 5

Our annual bash welcomes juniors of eight and over to 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 Café Bembe. Access can be gained through the main entrance. You should arrive 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.

COMPETITION PAGE

PRIZE WORDSEARCH

The household garden acts as it's own

where all the different species rely on each other. The most

important invertebrate in a garden is the

, which digests waste material and produces soil.

Several creatures eat these animals, including

the which leaves mounds of earth behind, and also the

, which has reduced in numbers and is the gardener's friend,

also eating the .

Bees and butterflies, such as the

.

collect nectar and transfer pollen to pollinate flowers and other plants.

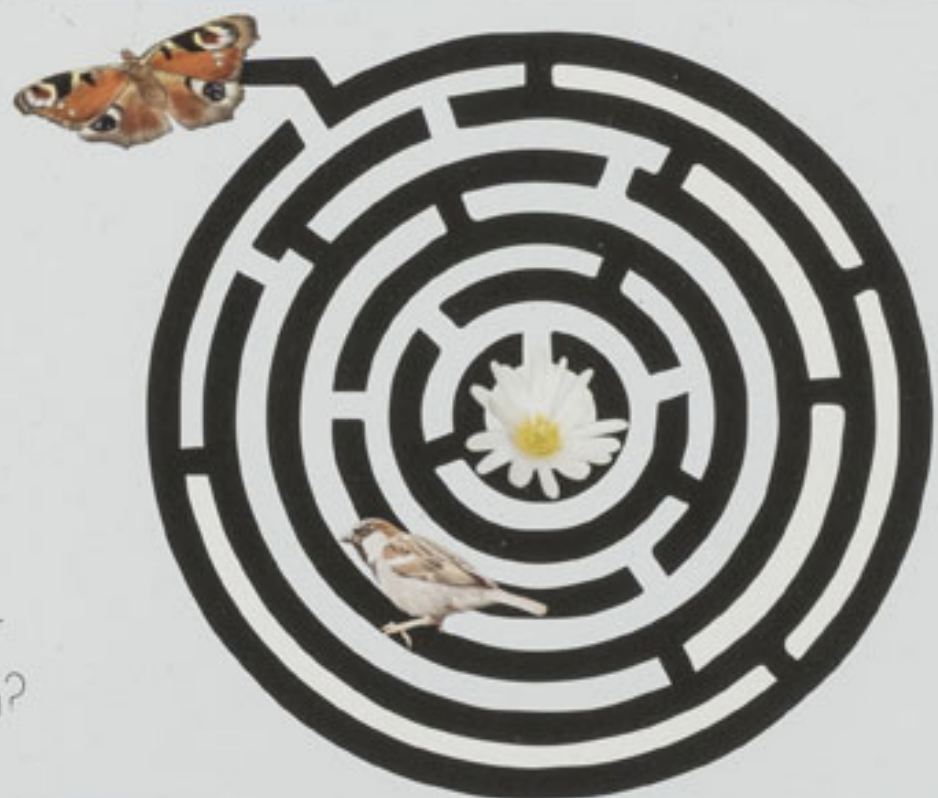
Read the paragraph left about gardens and then try to fill in the gaps with the correct words which you can find in our wordsearch grid. Be careful, though, as there are some extra wild life names hidden in the grid, so make sure you pick the right ones.

H	G	K	S	o	I	G	D	I
E	A	R	T	H	W	O	R	M
D	E	B	A	H	I	E	E	E
G	I	o	G	u	L	I	D	T
E	D	h	B	B	L	G	A	S
H	G	u	E	K	O	E	D	Y
O	E	R	E	I	W	u	M	S
G	G	B	T	s	E	h	I	O
I	M	O	L	E	p	E	R	C
E	D	o	E	H	B	D	A	E
G	I	E	K	I	G	U	L	S

PRIZE MAZE

Butterflies collect sweet nectar from flowers using a long tongue called a proboscis, and the butterfly, along with other insects, picks up pollen and transfers it to the next flower.

Can you help this butterfly find it's way to the flower without meeting anything that would have it for lunch?



To be in with a chance to win a £10 voucher to spend in the zoo shops, send your entries for one or both competitions, together with your name, address and phone number by **Monday March 31** to: **Z Magazine, Marketing Department, Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Chester CH2 1LH**. Congratulations to our previous winner **Keira Cheers of Blacon**.

Among the more unusual creatures we currently have off show here at the zoo are tentacled snakes (*Erpeton tentaculatus*), so named because of the two feelers on their snouts, which allow them to sense the vibrations of fish which swim by.

They feed wholly on fish and the toxicity of their venom is specifically lethal to the types of fish they feed on. In the wild they can be found in Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, where they live virtually their whole lives underwater in lakes, slow moving streams, rice paddies and sometimes muddy pools of sea water.

They can stay underwater for 30 minutes without coming up for air and their young are born live underwater.

In dry seasons they will burrow themselves in riverbed silt and mud until the rains return.

Researchers have been fascinated by the unusual hunting methods of tentacled snakes as they use their tails to anchor themselves in the water. They wait for fish to swim by, then use their body to make a disturbance in the water, tricking the fish into swimming in the opposite direction from the disturbed water, but that leads them directly back into the grip of the snake's fangs. It is one of the few animals we know of which uses this ambush method of catching its prey.

Feeling their way to a feast...

Snakes have an unusual way to catch supper





HOW TO CATCH A DRAGON

Herpetology keeper Matt Cook tells of his fieldwork monitoring Komodo dragons in Indonesia.

Last October I travelled to Indonesia to work with the Komodo Survival Programme in its study of wild Komodo dragons. The roles of this non-profit organisation include monitoring dragon populations, collecting data to improve our knowledge and educating local communities. The conservation of these giant reptiles and their habitat is, of course, at the heart of the project.

Chester Zoo and other EAZA institutes support the funding of the Komodo Survival Programme through the European Endangered Species Programme. Without such support this conservation project would not be able to function.

The Komodo dragon is unique among reptiles. Juveniles greatly resemble their closest living relatives in the *Varanus* genus, but the sheer mass and remarkable feeding ecology of the adults sets them apart from all other monitor lizards.

The Komodo is the largest lizard in the world with a deadly bite which enhances its global reputation.

There is much of conservation significance with this species, currently listed as vulnerable by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Its survival is threatened by habitat loss, poaching of its prey-food sources and conflict with humans.

My trip took me to a very remote location to observe and assist in catching Komodo dragons, found on a small group of islands in Indonesia. The programme was situated in Riung, Flores, where the dragons have been poorly studied and the population is not well known at all.

The method used to initiate the population survey, once suitable habitat had been determined, was to set up camera traps. These devices, strapped to trees, are supported in their chances of catching dragons on film by meat baited nearby to

lure the keen-scented dragons towards the vicinity of the cameras.

The second stage was to set up live traps to catch the dragons. The dragon trap is a metal crate structure, three metres long and weighing 30kg. The trap splits into three parts for transportation purposes. Each segment is fitted with a harness. The team and I would carry the crates in the same manner as if carrying a rucksack. This was the most physically demanding aspect of the field work. The traps were not particularly light and were quite bulky.

Komodo dragon habitat consists of savannah and forest. The forest presents the problem of snagging and tripping in the dense foliage. The hilly savannah is fully exposed to the hot sun. The traps were assembled in shaded forest and baited with meat. They were then checked twice a day for curious dragons.

Successful traps captured a Komodo dragon ready for data collection to support research of the species. The data includes measurements, weight and blood sample collection for genetics. Each dragon was also micro chipped to be catalogued for population study.

The dragons of Riung were discovered to be much smaller than the ones living on Komodo island. The completed prey population survey suggested no large food items such as deer or buffalo at all. The actual prey is not fully known but smaller dragons meant smaller prey. This unstudied dwarf population awaits much more research and ecological study in the near future.

During our trip to Riung we caught 11 different dragons, plus re-captures, in a week. This suggested a good population. However, this land currently has no legal protection so the Komodo Survival Program, supported by Chester Zoo, is currently working towards securing land protection whilst also supporting the local communities.



Matt carries one of the crates, using the same technique as if he were carrying a huge and heavy rucksack!



Checking over one of the captured Komodo dragons.



A dragon approaches one of the crates used to temporarily capture the animals so measurements can be taken and further information obtained to add to the Komodo database.

STAFF GO WILD SPECIAL: MAURITIUS

Mauritius is included in the Madagascar and Indian Ocean biodiversity hotspot region due to the high number of plants and animals found only on this island. However, many of these are under threat of extinction.

Only about two per cent of the original native forest on the island remains intact and over half of these areas are privately owned. One of the most important areas of privately owned land for native wildlife is the Ferney Valley, approximately 600 hectares, in the island's south-east Bambous Mountains. In 2004 the area was under considerable threat as there were plans to build a new highway directly through the forest. Thanks to a campaign to stop the development, with our partners the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF) being a key player, the proposal was scrapped and a reserve of 175 hectares was set aside to be managed as a conservation reserve.



Our photos show Mark, Paul and the team undertaking horticulture skills.



The valley was opened to the public in 2006 and visitors can now enjoy walks through the forest to see native wildlife, led by knowledgeable guides. On a recent trip Mark Sparrow and Paul Shippides, of the horticulture and botany department, were fortunate to see Mauritian kestrels circling over their heads. These critically endangered birds were released in the valley in 1987 at a time when it was feared they would become extinct. From an original four remaining birds there are

now believed to be more than 400 on the island. They also saw a number of critically endangered plant species which are found no-where else on the island. These are being propagated and grown in nurseries so they can be planted back in the reserve.

Conservation projects have achieved significant progress in halting and slowing biodiversity loss on Mauritius. Chester Zoo has been involved with these projects for many years now and the recent visit by Mark and Paul was the latest effort to help conserve the rare plant species of the island. Their mission was to deliver the Certificate in Practical Horticulture to seven staff, from three organisations; four from Ferney Valley, two from MWF and one from the Ebony Forest Project, another privately owned area of native forest. The course, which was devised and is administered by the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE) and endorsed by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), was held at Ferney Valley.

It has been designed to give students a solid grounding in horticultural techniques which they can put into practice in the growing of plants. Each of the three organisations has their own plant nurseries where they are growing plants for re-introduction into the conservation reserves. The training programme is divided into eight units and each unit is delivered in one teaching day. This is typically arranged into theory sessions taught in the classroom followed by lots of practical training, giving the students plenty of chances to get their hands dirty. The eight units cover the fundamentals of growing plants successfully: understanding and naming plants; soil care; feeding and watering; seed propagation; vegetative propagation; growing media and potting; planting; pruning and training. There is a full day practical exam at the end of the course which covers elements of all eight units studied. It also includes a plant identification test.

The trip enabled Mark and Paul to work closely with the staff from the three organisations and to develop an understanding of the challenges they face in growing and re-establishing rare plants in the wild. They were able to adapt techniques used in the UK so they were relevant to their situation. The students were all very enthusiastic; their desire to learn and commitment to saving native wildlife was obvious. While there are still dedicated people like this in Mauritius there is a chance to save what is left. We are extremely pleased to say that they all passed the exam, three with distinction, three with merit, one with a pass.



Fouka, the olive white-eye

Call of the CUCKOO

Towards the end of 2013, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation also hosted two of our bird keepers, Steve Williams and Victoria Kaldis, who each spent eight weeks in Mauritius assisting with the annual monitoring of endemic passerines.



Paradise flycatcher

Both Victoria and Steve were involved with monitoring the Mauritian cuckoo-shrike.

Steve spent the majority of his time in Mauritius searching for and monitoring nests in 11 territories. Through careful monitoring, he determined the incubation period of the species is 16-17 days, not 24 as had previously been thought.

Victoria flew out to Mauritius as Steve was leaving to carry on the successful nest searching. Her work with the cuckoo-shrikes also included habitat surveys to determine the suitability of the habitat for future translocations of flycatchers and cuckoo-shrikes. This involved making equipment which could be used to determine the presence of any predator species in the area as well as availability of invertebrates as a food source.

Another focal species was the olive white-eye, a critically endangered endemic bird. Both Victoria and Steve were involved with monitoring nest territories. Victoria returned to Isle Aux Aigrettes, an island she hadn't visited since 2009, where she came across an old friend, an olive white-eye named Fouka who she helped hand-rear during her previous trip.



Mauritian cuckoo-shrike

Skill exchange with our conservation partners is a key element to many of our conservation programmes and our work will continue in the future to support the conservation of Mauritius's wildlife through projects essential to their long term survival.

Our director general, Dr Mark Pilgrim, on the lookout for Ecuador Amazon parrots in the Cerro Blanco forest, Ecuador.



EXPEDITION ECUADOR

THE PARROT SPOTTERS!

The zoo recently sent an expedition to South West Ecuador in a bid to discover more about a rare species of parrot. A team of 10 were tasked with collecting vital data on the Ecuador Amazon parrot – a bird that has been newly recognised as a species in its own right following a 15-year-long study by the zoo's director general, Dr Mark Pilgrim. First though, they had to find them. Assistant Media Manager *Will Condliffe* went parrot spotting...

It's our fifth day deep inside the Cerro Blanco forest and the first morning that we'd unzipped our tents and not been greeted by the unwelcome pouring of torrential rain. Damp, muddied boots tapped out (with tarantulas regularly seen around camp this was a ritual born out of paranoia) and laced up, we headed into the forest well before breakfast.

Paul, our accompanying ranger, cut a trail through the misty trees and vines with the machete he had taken great care to sharpen following the previous night's hike. We followed on in silence while the forest, as always, screamed with cicadas.

Less than a kilometre after leaving camp, we couldn't believe our luck. The early morning mist had lifted from the pocket of forest we found ourselves in and, all of a sudden, our binoculars were raised in unison. Ahead in the distance, we were treated to a fantastic view of parrots coming in to land on a giant ceiba tree.



FACT FILE

- Ecuador Amazon parrots need two types of habitat – mangroves and dry forest – in order to survive
- The conservation status of the Ecuador amazon parrot (*Amazona autumnalis lilacina*) is currently being re-assessed and the work the expedition carried out will help to inform this status and direct a future conservation action plan
- Chester Zoo currently has 12 Ecuador Amazon parrots, housed in its rare parrot breeding centre
- 80 Ecuador Amazon parrots are housed in the endangered species breeding programme in zoos around Europe

ECOLOGÍA

ESABÍAS QUE...? Una paca tipo toconazo en una selva del Ecuador...
EXPEDICIÓN DEL ZOOLOGICO DE CHESTER ESTUDIA A LA AMAZONA LILACINA

Frentirrojo atrae a británicos

Científicos sugieren mantener árboles grandes, como el piño, para conservar la especie en riesgo.



Universidad Laica VICENTE ROCAFUERTE
de Guayaquil

Curator of birds, Andrew Owen, reads a report on the expedition in the Ecuadorian national press.

Excitement was evident even in Mark's whispers:
"We've caught glimpses of parrots flying high over us but to see them sat perched, relaxed and preening is just tremendous. It's really exciting to be able to see them properly and - for the first time on this trip - get a good look at the colours on their faces."

Little is known about the Ecuador Amazon parrot in the wild and that was precisely why we were stood here, shirts already drenched in sweat due to the oppressive humidity, in the first place. This was a fact finding mission and in this spot, we were finding facts aplenty.

"They're giving off an unusual call which we've not heard before," murmured Andrew Owen, curator of birds. "It seems like a contact call between a pair."

He took out his recording device.
"I'll listen to that later - it could be useful bit of data, or at the very least, a ringtone to ensure I can never not locate my mobile phone! The sounds are truly unique."

Previously, the Ecuador Amazon parrot was considered to be one of four subspecies, which has an estimated population of about five million birds. As a result of the size of the population, it did not rank among conservationists priorities. However with full species status now awarded - it has taken on a whole new level of importance.

Mark, with binoculars still pointed at the parrots, added:
"The main thing about all of this - my research, the reclassification and the expedition - is that this species can now get some protection. And it's vital that that happens now as we fear there could be as few as just 600 left."

"Ultimately the work and research the team is doing is essential for the survival of this species in the wild and, potentially, it could help save these parrots from becoming extinct."

For more news as the collected data is compiled and analysed, keep an eye on www.actforwildlife.org.uk and www.facebook.com/actforwildlife

CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Spotted paca (*Cuniculus paca*):
A large rodent with dots and stripes, short ears and barely visible tails.

They were formerly grouped with agoutis but were given full family status because they differ in the number of toes, coat patterning and skull shape.



Collared peccary (*Pecari tajacu*):
A mammal confusingly often referred to as a pig but not classified in the pig family.



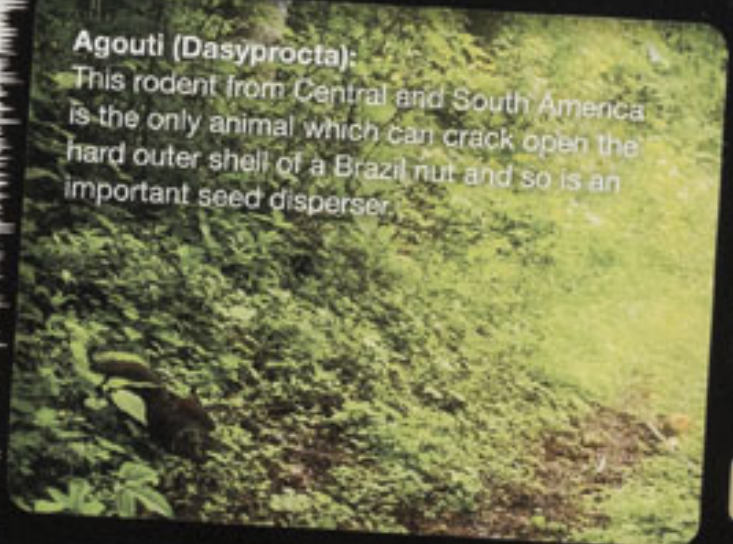
Red Brocket (*Mazama americana*):
A South American deer species. Only the male has antlers



White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*): A medium sized deer native to USA, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America.



Agouti (*Dasyprocta*):
This rodent from Central and South America is the only animal which can crack open the hard outer shell of a Brazil nut and so is an important seed disperser.



FOREST LIFE THROUGH A LENS

EXPEDITION
ECUADOR

Our expedition team completed a survey of one of the few remaining areas of tropical dry forest in the world. Here are just some of the many weird and wonderful species they discovered...



Red-marked parakeet Endemic to the area and one of a number of threatened parrot species that the Cerro Blanco dry forest supports.



Manfled howler monkey One of the largest Central and South American monkeys, the howler eats large quantities of leaves.



Iguana Green iguanas use 'head bobs' in a variety of ways in social interactions, such as greeting another iguana or to court a possible mate.



Guayaquil squirrel A relatively heavily built tree squirrel which is endemic to Ecuador and Peru. Their colour is highly variable.



Long-fouged bat Feeds on nectar and has the fastest metabolism ever recorded in a mammal, similar to those of hummingbirds.



Swimming crab Characterized by the flattening of their fifth pair of legs, creating broad paddles, which are used for swimming.



Giant mesquite bug The males of these large leaf-footed bugs have extra-large hind legs featuring bumps and spines.



White-fronted capuchin monkey This monkey boasts a complex vocal repertoire and is one of the few primates known to utilize tools in the wild.



Purplebloom/pinkbloom tarantula Juveniles have orange and black markings, becoming purple and pink as an adult male or brown if female.



Gustaria superba Commonly known as heaven lotus, its leaves are a favourite food of iguanas and it's believed that Amazon parrots eat their seeds.



Frog from the Leptodactylidae family Ecuador has the third-greatest diversity of amphibians in the world.



Juvenile barred forest falcon One of many raptors that live in the Cerro Blanco forest. They often hunt prey with a brief, flying pursuit.



Rowan

Flavest creamy white



Humblebee



Hubbells
shades of blue



Blue Crowned
Laughing Thrush

BLOOM

A celebration of gardens, birds and UK wildlife

Nature comes alive in spring, when the zoo can be a relaxing, inspiring place and this year we are giving you the opportunity to get closer to nature than ever.

Watch the fluttering of butterflies, listen to the song of our exotic birds in our awe-inspiring free flight aviaries and notice buds emerging in our award winning gardens.

We'll take you behind the scenes, introduce you to experts who create our unique and beautiful landscapes and you'll have a chance to become a UK wildlife conservationist too by joining in our Wildlife Watch projects.

We've got a season of special events and activities for you to enjoy. Simply go to our website or call the membership team to find out more and book for your favourite event.

SPRING LECTURES

Experts share their knowledge on a range of topics about UK and exotic wildlife. Learn about the science behind nature and conservation.

INSPIRED BY NATURE

Throughout history artists have been inspired by the world around them. From performance to poetry, music and crafts this series of courses and events will inspire the artist in you.

MEET THE EXPERTS

A series of events that will let you get closer to some of the lesser known plant and animal species that can be easily overlooked during a visit to the zoo. Our experts will help you spot some of these fascinating species and tell you more about them. Visitors can glean even more expert information at our free Ask the Gardener series, which offers a chance for you to get specialist advice from our horticulture team on a range of topics.

BRILLIANT BIRDS AND GLORIOUS GARDENS TRAIL

In addition to the events programmed as part of our Bloom festival we've put together trails to help you see some of the highlights from our bird and plant collections. Simply ask for a trail at the guest services pavillion or you can download your electronic trail from www.chesterzoo.org/bloom



Blue Morpho
Cephalotes blue
morpho



chiff chaff
yellow faced
bump headed



Poppy
translucent petals
range of red.



Big tree
in forest



Domestic
mouse



MEET THE GARDENER TALKS:

(These talks are free but places are limited so booking in advance is advised).

- Keeping ornamental grasses happy, March 12, 2-3pm
- Explore the Nepenthes Collection, March 26, 11am-12noon
- The Foothills of the Himalaya, April 9, 2-3pm
- Native Plants at Chester Zoo, April 23, 11am-12noon
- Tropical Plants at Chester Zoo, May 7, 11am-12noon
- The Sunken Garden, May 21, 2-3pm
- Give us your Support, June 4, 2-3pm
- Gardening for Wildlife, June 18, 2-3pm

Other events for spring include workshops in origami, willow sculpture, guided garden tours, a gardener's question time evening, bat walk, plant a poppy day, waterbus safari, poetry workshops, a chance to join our bird teams listening to the dawn chorus, and a bee and honey themed weekend. For more information, details of dates and times for these and other events visit our website www.chesterzoo.org

WILDLIFE WATCH *Sign up today!*

We are offering you the opportunity to participate in our conservation work and to protect and encourage wildlife around you.

Our Wildlife Watch is part of a wider campaign to celebrate the gardens, birds and UK wildlife at Chester Zoo.

Recording when and where we see wildlife is one of the main priorities for conservationists all over the world and all of us can do our bit to contribute. Without this data scientists don't have enough information to know which species are thriving and which are in trouble and need our help.

You can record wildlife you see anywhere in the UK – in your garden, at work, at school or on a day out and we've made it easy for you to get involved:

STEP 1

Register your e-mail address at www.chesterzoo.org/blp0m, or call the membership team.

STEP 2

We'll send you a weekly e-mail with a link to our UK wildlife database so you can record what you've seen. Don't worry if you can't do it every week, as often as you can is great.

STEP 3

The data you supply will be sent to the national conservation database to inform scientists working across the UK. We'll try to give you regular updates about what has been discovered as part of Wildlife Watch.

Tips for wildlife watching

1. Make your garden more wildlife friendly. You can encourage more wildlife in to your garden by creating places to hide and providing food that birds, mammals and insects like. In our weekly e-mails we'll be giving you lots of tips to get the very best results.
2. Take your time; the ideal way to wildlife watch is by spending as much time as you can in a particular location and looking as carefully as you can for plants and animals. This way you'll notice more about species around you. You can choose when and how long you record for but always make a note of where and when you saw each species as it will help when you come to record your findings on our database.
3. The more often you watch wildlife the better as this gives us really reliable information about the movements of wildlife in your area.

Species you are likely to see

Mammals:hedgehog, fox, badger

Birds:robin, blackbird, wren

Invertebrates: 7-spot ladybird, peacock butterfly, snail

Amphibians and reptiles: toad, frog, slow-worm

For schools

We've got a range of classroom and in-zoo sessions for school groups giving young people the opportunity to learn real conservation skills (KS2: How Science Works), to understand evolution, to explore our new nature reserve or simply take the opportunity to ask our experts questions about the natural world. For more information go to www.chesterzoo.org/education

BIG GARDEN BIRD WATCH

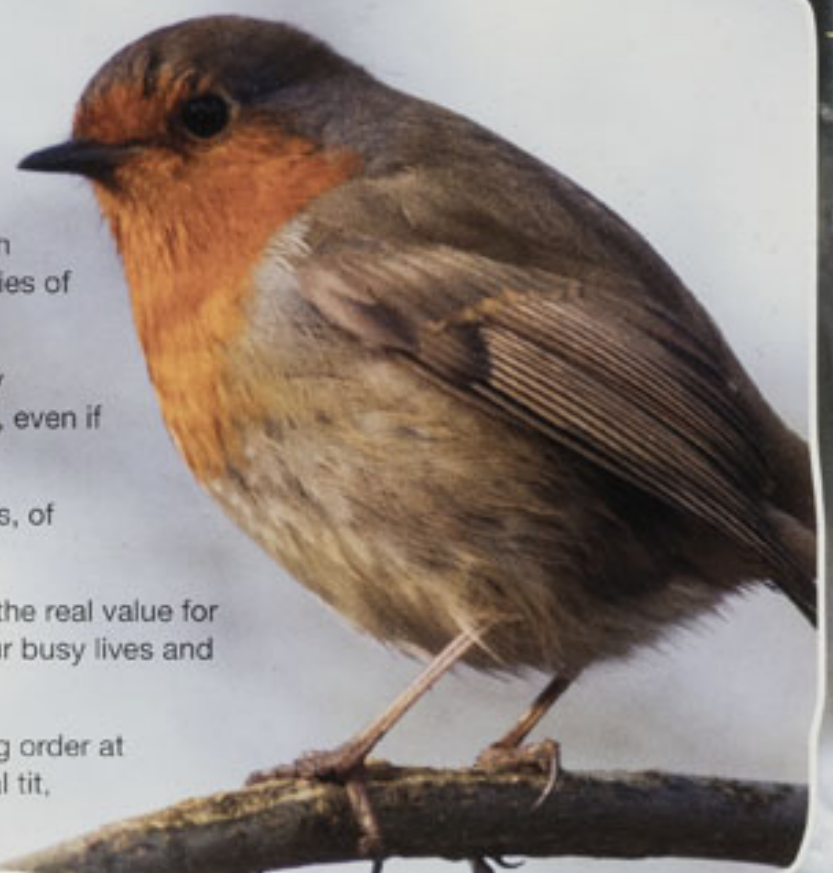
During the recent RSPB's Big Garden Bird Watch, some of our own zoo staff set aside an hour of their time to monitor how many wild birds they could spot in our gardens. With the help of a few passing families and helpful bird experts they spotted 22 different species of bird visiting our wildlife garden.

Zoo presenter, Sean Dick, said: "It was simple to set up and with the help of a few handy identification sheets we were soon spotting some hungry birds. Great fun was had by all, even if it was a little chilly.

"We even had an appearance from a lovely pair of bank voles, lacking wings and feathers, of course, but they were a very welcome addition to the wildlife garden.

"Lots of British birds are in decline, and we need to monitor our native bird species, but the real value for me and many of the visitors who came to help, was the chance to take an hour out of our busy lives and hectic schedules to see our wonderful British wildlife doing its thing".

The team could see the ebb and flow of different feeding flocks, and observe the pecking order at feeding stations. Even the humble green finch is a real monster if you're the size of a coal tit, weighing in at just nine grams!



Fundraising NEWS



LOVE A CHALLENGE 2014

Are your new year's resolutions to get fit a distant memory? Do you need a goal and something to aim for? Then join team Act for Wildlife and help conservation at the same time.

We're looking for people who can run, swim or cycle for Act for Wildlife and raise sponsorship to fund our conservation projects all around the world.

This year we're looking to get teams together to take part in the following events:

- Chester Half Marathon – May 18
- Greater Manchester Cycle (various distances to suit all levels of fitness) – June 29
- We Love Manchester 10k run – July 13
- Great Manchester Swim (1mile open water) – July 19
- Salford Triathlon (1mile swim/40k bike/10k run) – August 17

If you'd like to get involved, or just want to find out more check out the pages on the website www.actforwildlife.org.uk/get-involved/love-a-challenge

Get in touch with the development team on 01244 650229 or email development@chesterzoo.org.

LET'S TALK BUSINESS!

This year we're looking for more local businesses to sign up and become a corporate adopter. Just like the individual adoptions, your support will help towards looking after your species of choice. You'll receive a lovely ready-to-frame certificate, your company name listed on the adopters board, a digital subscription to Z Magazine and four complimentary tickets to visit the zoo. Plus, you'll also receive invitations to our new exclusive business events.

Whether it's the company mascot, the animal you most align your brand to or even the CEO's favourite – there's an animal species just waiting to be adopted by you.

A big welcome to our latest corporate adopters:

- **Waters Corporation**, who are adopting the Livingstone's fruit bats
- **Investec Wealth & Investment**, adopters of the Grevy's zebra.

If you'd like to become a corporate adopter contact us on 01244 650265 or email development@chesterzoo.org for more information.



PRUDENTIAL RIDELONDON-SURREY 100

If cycling is your thing and you fancy the challenge of a lifetime we've got just two places in the **Prudential Ride London – Surrey 100** in August up for grabs. Already extremely popular, this new event is only in its second year and places are in huge demand. The Prudential RideLondon is the largest mass-participation cycling festival in the UK, with about 65,000 cyclists, including some of the world's top professionals, taking part across four events.

Last year's Act for Wildlife supporters were Chester Zoo member Steve Counce and workmate Rob Sidwell, who between them raised more than £2,000 for conservation.

So if you're looking for a challenge, give us a ring on 01244 650229 for further details or register your interest on www.actforwildlife.org.uk/get-involved/ridelondon



A donation that *GROWS!*

We often get enquiries asking about how supporters can get their names acknowledged within the zoo's beautiful grounds and our **Giving Tree** is one way this can be done (of course an animal adoption is another great way to do this).

The Giving Tree is a fitting way to make a special donation to mark an occasion such as a birth or a marriage or to remember a loved one. We work hard to save wildlife here in the UK and across the world and with your help we can do even more. For more details see www.chesterzoo.org/givingtree or contact the development team on 01244 650292.

CHESTER ZOO 100 CLUB

The winners of the prize draws, held recently, were:

October 2013

£100..... Mrs Maureen Allsopp, Neston
 £100..... Mr Jason Chandler, Ruthin
 £100..... Mrs Kim Metcalf, Chester
 £50 Mrs Vanessa Hewitt, Frodsham
 £50 Mr Darren Keay, Chester
 £50 Ms Linda Joy Ash, Rhuddlan

November 2013

£100..... Mr Gerard Milan, Rhyl
 £100..... Mrs Anne Rowlands, Mold
 £50 Mr K Hodgkiss, Crewe
 £50 Mr S Hamlett, Heswall
 £50 Mrs Catherine Piercy, Chester
 £50 Mrs Christine Amy Hope, Wirral

December 2013

£100 Mrs Lilian Abrathat, St Helens
 £1000 Mr Alan Matear, Workington
 £50 Mr Paul Dod, Chester
 £50 Mrs Patricia Cade, Ellesmere Port
 £50 Mr Colin Abrathat, St Helens

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 650 229.

TALKING CONSERVATION 2014 Programme

ZOO TALK

Welcome to the spring 2014 members' talks, beginning with an evening with our rhinos team. Ensure you book your place for this one; it's looking like a sell-out. In April, you'll have the chance to meet our chatty green team, then in May we'll be welcoming to the stage our intrepid explorers, freshly returned from an expedition to Ecuador in search of the Amazon Parrot.

Keep checking our website www.chesterzoo.org/support-us/membership/members-talks for news of this year's gold medal winner's talk, and dates of autumn talks to be published in the next edition of Z.

Our talks bring you up to date with the work your membership supports so we hope you can join us. Take a look at the programme below and if you're interested, just give Kate a ring to book your place.

Wednesday March 12

An evening with our rhinos team

Enjoy an evening of behind the scenes chat as our keepers tell you all about the species on their section. Hear about their working day and the latest news on our rhinos, tapirs capybara and deer.

Thursday April 10

Sustainability and climate change talk by Chester Zoo's green team

We'll be explaining why sustainability is a part of the mission of zoos and how energy consumption and waste impacts on biodiversity. Our green team is passionate about sustainable travel, water, energy, green buildings and reducing waste. They'll tell you what the zoo is doing to help change behaviours and what we can all do to look after the environment and those who live in it.

Wednesday May 14

Expedition Ecuador!

Dr Mark Pilgrim and the Ecuador explorers

In January 10 staff from across the zoo went to Ecuador's Cerro Blanco protected forest, which is home to the endangered Ecuador Amazon parrot, a species found only in four locations down the West coast of Ecuador. The expedition team will talk about their intensive two week field trip during the parrot's breeding season.

June (date to be confirmed)*

Gold medal recipient

Each year the zoo awards a gold medal to someone who has had a huge impact in the fields of zoology, conservation and the natural world. This year we will be making our award in June and we hope our prominent recipient will be giving the members' talk in June.

September (date to be confirmed)*

Butterflies

Heather Prince

Our Butterfly Journey opened in 2009 and this will be the first talk by our butterfly team. Find out all about their husbandry and Heather will update you on our large heath butterfly project. She is hoping they will pupate and emerge successfully so she can report good news.

Wednesday October 15

Act For wildlife and field conservation

An evening to bring you the latest news on our vital work with communities and endangered species worldwide.

November (date to be confirmed)*

Moving animals!

Join Penny Rudd and Liz Ball for an evening of tales and anecdotes and find out more about the interesting and complicated world of moving animals.

December (date to be confirmed)*

Islands!

Simon Mann

Ahead of the opening of our major new exhibit in 2015, Simon, the zoo's development director, will update you on the progress of Islands, the trials and tribulations, the excitement and buzz.

*We'll announce these dates at upcoming evenings, on our website and in future editions of Z or call Kate (see below).

Members' talks are held in the Geraldine Russell-Allen Lecture Hall (near the zoo's Diamond Jubilee Quarter, off the A41).

- They are FREE to members (please bring your membership card and welcome letter)
- We offer a special rate of £2 to animal adopters
- The public and guests are welcome (£3.50 for non-members)
- Our lecture hall seats up to 170.
- Post-talk refreshments give you the opportunity to have an informal chat with speakers, staff and fellow members
- **Booking essential**
- All talks start at 7.30pm

Interested in attending? Please call **Kate Brankin** in education on **01244 389 444** or email k.brankin@chesterzoo.org to book.

Your Membership in 2014

As a member the role you play in supporting the zoo is invaluable. By making regular visits you give us opportunities to share our many stories, developments and our passion for conservation and education. Of course we also want to ensure you have a great time, every time you visit, so we really do appreciate any feedback you give us, whether in person whilst you're at the zoo, via email, phone or letter, or via our social media channels.

With the feedback we receive we regularly review our prices and benefits of membership. Here are the benefits of membership* in 2014:

- Unlimited entry to Chester Zoo (excludes separate ticketed events)

- Fast track entry
- 10% discount in shops and cafes
- One free visit to eight other zoos (Bristol, Colchester, Edinburgh, Marwell, New Quay, Paignton, Living Coasts & Twycross)
- Quarterly Z Magazine – direct to your inbox or door
- Programme of members' talks
- Car sticker and stickers for juniors
- Entry for 12 guests at half price on members' days (two a year)
- Access to junior member events and days out (age restrictions and additional charges apply)
- £5 discount (per adult household) on renewal for annual in advance direct debit payment

We'd like to extend our thanks to all those members who recently assisted in our research

project. The research was to help us to understand which benefits are really important to you, and how you spend your time here at our zoo. We learnt that you really love to pop in when the mood takes you – sometimes just for a coffee, or to meet friends, or see a new arrival. Other times you plan a full day, and love to come with picnics and pals. Some of you would also like to hear more about our conservation projects and help with our fundraising. So this year we'll be looking at how we can make your membership matter to you even more.

Thank you for all your support. We'll see you soon!

*Any changes to membership benefits are made to ensure we keep in-line with HMRC's Gift Aid regulations.



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Founded in 1934, the North of England Zoological Society is a registered charity. 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.