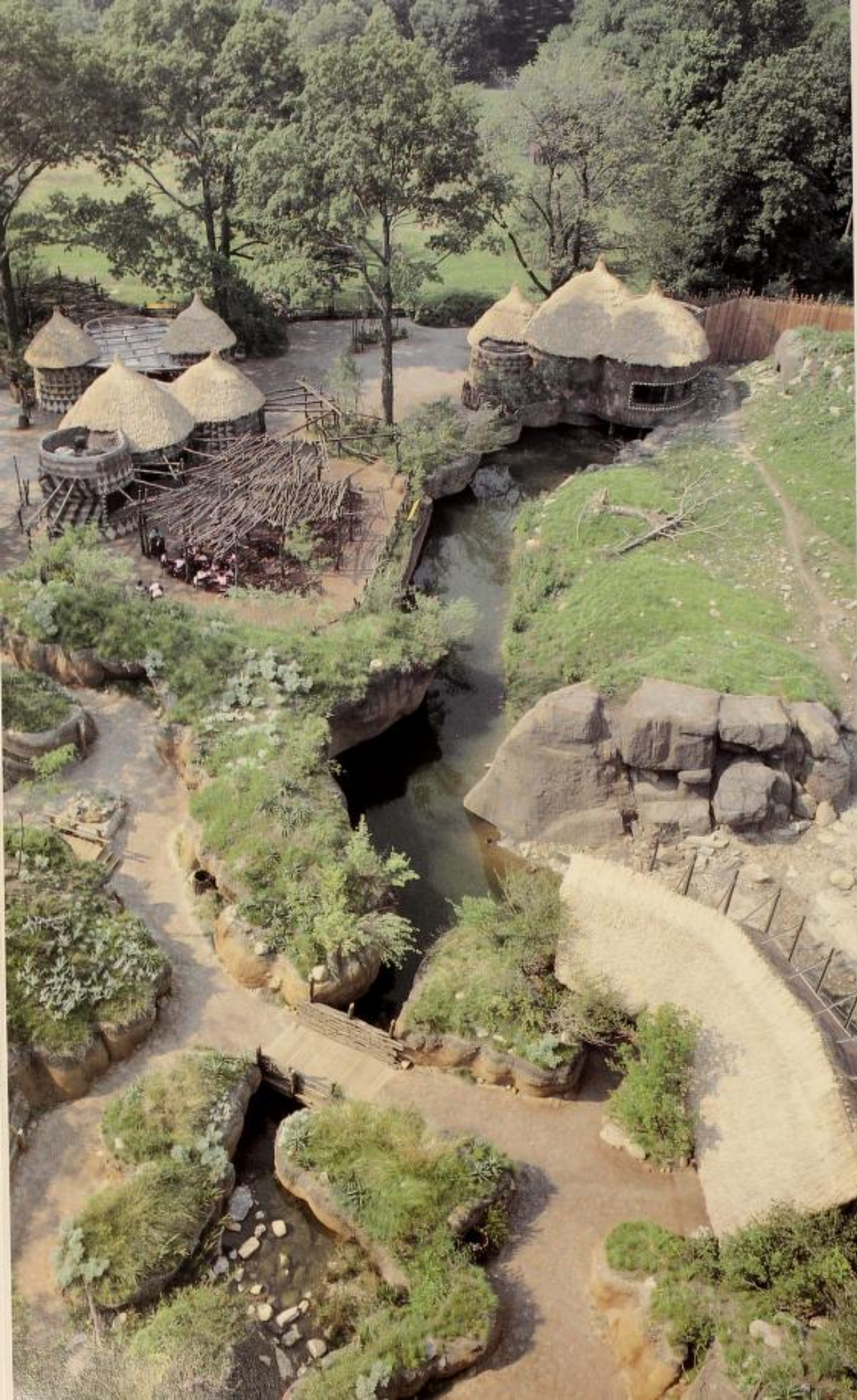


NEW YORK
ZOOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
ANNUAL REPORT 1989-1990



To Sustain
Biological Divers
To Teach Ecolog
To Inspire Care

Cover: Rapunzel,
the Sumatran
rhino.

Baboon Reserve
and African
Market at the
Bronx Zoo.

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Instability And Change

Stability is no more possible in a zoological society devoted to living creatures than is stasis in natural ecosystems; there is little "balance of nature" in nature. Eras of equilibrium are rare, periods of change pervasive—and response is essential. The response of a public not-for-profit institution to change is judged by its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission, the relevance of that mission, and especially by the quality of its initiatives. Inevitably, it is also measured by every applicable adjective almost anyone can think of—including "good" and "bad"—and even by that battered descriptive, "progress."

New initiatives are a telling way of gauging the progress—of calibrating achievement. The Zoological Society's past year has been extraordinarily telling, overseas and at home. Here is an NYZS sampler:

Overseas: A foundation was laid for the creation of the largest natural preserve on Earth—the Chang Tang on the Tibetan Plateau; Middle Cay, a critically positioned island in Glover's Reef off Belize, was acquired to help protect the finest example of a coral reef in the western hemisphere; the birth of Fundacion Patagonia Natural, a wholly new and already effective local wildlife conservation organization, was midwived in Patagonia; WCI scientists took the lead in a series of fact-finding studies and an education campaign that finally has braked the international elephant ivory trade; the Guam rail, extinct in nature, was reintroduced from zoo stocks to an island in the Pacific; Venezuela's important Caripe oilbird sanctuary was enlarged as a result of WCI research and promotion; a wholly new concept in global conservation action was introduced with the creation of an International Field Veterinarian post, and by the immediately productive actions of its first incumbent. These are a few of the year's efforts to save biological diversity.

At home: Fresh standards of interpretive animal exhibition were set with the innovative new Baboon Reserve and African Market at the Bronx Zoo; ground was broken for the vast Sea Cliffs complex for marine mammals and penguins; and work began on the City's Prospect Park Zoo, redesigned and ultimately to be

run by the Society. Nutrition research threw light on the needs of rhinos, frugivorous birds, penguins, and hoatzins; genetics research produced fascinating analyses of Sika deer subspecies and the relationship between gharials and false gharials; an ambitious program of biotelemetry research was planned; and animal identification techniques leapt forward through the use of transponders. Curatorial ingenuity and hard work led to the first successful exhibition of leaf-eating hoatzins; to the first captive propagation of giant endangered freshwater turtles known as batagurs; and to the acquisition of a Sumatran hairy rhinoceros as part of a collaborative effort with the Indonesian government and three other American zoos to save this rare creature, believed to number less than 900 in nature. The Society's breeding programs produced nearly 2,000 offspring during the year, including four baby gorillas!

And, on January 1, 1990, the Society's magazine, *Animal Kingdom*, appeared as a totally redesigned publication called, and devoted to, *Wildlife Conservation*.

Institutional Ecology And Caring For Wildlife

A widespread educational failure is evident in the still common public belief that a vast untamed wilderness exists somewhere "out there," that there are places where wild animals can get along just fine if only human beings will leave them alone. In a time of the fastest and greatest extinction of species since the Cretaceous, this idea of distant wilderness is reminiscent of the Flat Earth Society's concept of the solar system, and it is sad. The expectation that fragmentary human leavings of nature will prosper under a policy of benevolent neglect is simply uninformed.

Here in the U.S., for example, Everglades National Park was dedicated in 1947 primarily because of the year-round presence of "the most glorious assemblage of wading birds on the North American continent." Since then, the number of waders has declined nearly 90 percent! Figures for African preserves are comparable, for Asian ones much worse. Active, hands-on restoration, and understanding care for nature must replace just plain dedicating it. In the next two