

INTERNATIONAL ZOO NEWS

Monarto's director, Chris Hannocks, accompanied six euros (*Macropus robustus erubescens*) to Opel Zoo, Germany, in April 2001. This transfer formed part of the promotion to launch the new euro currency in Europe!

The Society continued to work with conservation programs for both exotic and native species. Among the highlights in conservation of native species for 2000/2001 were the following:

Hooded plovers (*Thinornis rubricollis*) are considered vulnerable in the wild due to predation by feral cats and the impact of tourism – often hatchlings leaving their beach nests are vulnerable to being run over by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Society bird staff collected five young 'on permit' from Kangaroo Island to help improve the genetic make-up of the existing captive population at Adelaide Zoo.

A wild population of one of Australia's most endangered birds, the black-eared miner (*Manorina melanotis*), was translocated from a site in South Australia to the Sunset National Park, Victoria. This

species has been part of a captive-breeding program at Adelaide for several years, with a total of seven chicks being hand-raised to fledging.

For the first time in more than 30 years the orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) was bred at Adelaide Zoo. This nationally endangered species, which breeds only on the western coast of Tasmania and winters in the south-east of mainland Australia, has been the subject of a recovery program for a number of years. The zoo was successful in breeding four birds.

The yellow-footed rock wallaby (*Petrogale xanthopus*) release program, approaching its fifth anniversary, continues to thrive, with second-generation offspring forthcoming. Monitoring continues twice a year. The future of the program will hopefully lead to the re-introduction of other species in Aroona Sanctuary. Discussions with the Department of Environment and Heritage are under way to assess the potential for release of other species including the greater bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*).

Symposium on Gibbon Diversity and Conservation

Whereas the research on, and conservation activities directed at, the great apes are supported by a strong lobby, gibbons tend to be overlooked whenever media, scientists, funding agencies and conservation agencies are referring to apes. As a first step to counteract this development, I am organising a symposium on 'Gibbon Diversity and Conservation', to be held at the 19th Congress of the International Primatological Society (Beijing, China, August 4–9, 2002).

A large number of presentations have already been proposed, with topics under the general headings of Systematics, Diversity in Behavior and Ecology, Status and *In Situ* Conservation, and *Ex Situ* Conservation. A preliminary program of the symposium has been published on my website (see below), and will be updated regularly.

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Amersfoort Zoo, The Netherlands

The 13th September 2001 is marked in the annals of Amersfoort Zoo as a very special day, for it was then that the Indian rhinoceroses Daan and Zimon arrived.

The zoo management had consulted with the EEP coordinator in Basel about keeping two male rhinoceroses together, namely Daan, born in July 2000 at Rotterdam Zoo, and Zimon, born in September 1998 at Planckendael Zoo, Belgium. They arrived in Amersfoort on the same day, accompanied by their regular keepers. In order to make them leave their transportation boxes more quickly, their new corrals were strewn

with their own excrement. The animals could see, hear and smell each other right from the start. Their first encounter was accompanied by much whistling and hissing, but without any sign of aggression.

On 14 September Zimon was given the opportunity to explore the small enclosure (40 m²). However, he only had eyes for Daan – licking and nuzzling, they stayed together. On the next couple of days their contact intensified. On 17 September 50 square metres were fenced off from the big corral to give Daan the opportunity to get used to the outside enclosure. This went according to plan, partly because the rhinos were already accustomed to the mini-train that drives



Young male Indian rhinos Daan and Zimon at Amersfoort Zoo.

around their enclosure. Right from the beginning the outside door had been left ajar to familiarise both animals with the sight and sound of the train, and after four days they did not take notice of it any more. On 20 September Zimon entered the outside enclosure for the first time. This enclosure is surrounded by rocks 1.25 metres high, with pebbles at their base. At a height of one metre an electric cattle fence is secured to the rocks. The terrain consists of a loampit with water (30 m²), a swimming pool with a depth of 2.25 m, many hillocks and heavy tree trunks (1.25 m in diameter), several green patches and trees. Watching them swim for the first time in their lives was exciting. They were a bit frightened at first because they could not feel any ground beneath their feet. However, it soon became clear that they had found a new hobby!

Because it was decided that both of them had to explore the entire outside enclosure separately, the rhinos were not yet let outside at the same time. This was only to be done when they were sufficiently relaxed in their new surroundings. On 6 October, Daan was let outside, and as soon as he was at ease, Zimon was let out as well. When Daan saw Zimon he froze and refused to move. After a couple of minutes Zimon was called inside again. On the 7th everything again happened according to the same scenario. Why? As long as they had no direct contact they were extremely affectionate to each other. Another try was decided upon, and on 9 October the corners of the outside enclosure were fenced off and the rhinos were let out together once more. They walked up to each other straight away, started to whistle and hiss, and licked each other's muzzle and ears.

From that moment onwards they have been close friends: they run together, swim together, take mud-baths together, wrestle together and eat on one square metre. In short, Daan and Zimon are inseparable.

Marjo Hoedemaker

Burgers' Zoo, Arnhem, The Netherlands

In autumn 2001, the zoo offered to temporarily set up the first European great hornbill 'dating centre' [see further above, p. 35]. An off-exhibit area primarily used for housing non-winter-hardy species was made available. Before being moved to the dating centre, all eight hornbills (housed as pairs) from four zoos (Amsterdam, Antwerp, Arnhem and Rotterdam) were given transponders and a pseudo-tuberculosis vaccine, were tested for parasites, and began an extra vitamin B treatment a week before transport. Once at the centre, the birds were housed separately in eight cages with visual and auditory contact. They were given a week to adjust before the partner choice trials began. One bird was released into a hallway adjoining all the cages for six hours in one day, and the interactions with the other birds recorded by video. There were three series of trials, i.e. each bird was placed in the hall three times throughout the experiment.

It was found that in the six weeks that the birds were at the zoo they did not change their dietary habits, i.e. they ate only the items familiar to them from the diet of their home zoo. Activity levels of all the birds were highest in the first and third trials; it is thought that activity was lower during the second trial because many of the birds were moulting at that time. Some birds were more active than others generally, and all the males showed particular interest in one female. The pair from Antwerp seemed clearly most suited to each other, based on the number of positive interactions seen, and they were sent back together. The results were more ambiguous with the remaining hornbills, and as all three pairs had been held together at their resident zoos for some time without much reproductive activity, the males were switched so that each of the other three females will be repaired with a new partner. While this experiment was relatively short (six

weeks in total) and undertaken during the non-breeding period, both of which factors may have influenced success, it was nevertheless considered a positive step in the right direction and a very valuable learning experience.

Wineke Schoo in *De Harpij* Vol. 20, No. 4 (2001)

Cango Wildlife Ranch, Oudtshoorn, South Africa

The staff of the ranch were devastated that seven of their hand-raised cheetahs were apparently deliberately poisoned on 11 November 2001 in what appears to have been a well-planned, malicious act. When the cheetahs started to show signs of being unwell, staff on duty called the owner of the ranch, Andrew Eriksen, the senior curator and the general manager to say that something was wrong. Then one animal after another began to collapse. The ranch's vet Dr Glenn Carlisle was immediately informed, and the animals were transferred to the surgery, where he and ranch staff struggled to save them.

'The effects of the poison were horrific,' says Eriksen. 'Three of our cheetahs died one after the other. Naf and Cuddlebum, two boisterous 18-month-olds, died first, followed by a nine-month-old female, Aurora. Three others, including Aurora's sister, continued to fight the effects of the poison, which included hemorrhaging in their lungs, long into the afternoon. The seventh cheetah, named Goggles, who it appeared had luckily ingested very little of the poison, reduced the staff to tears when she started to come round and, on seeing her handlers, started purring and licking them, displaying the incredible bond of trust that develops between these cats and those who care for them.'

All of the endangered animals at the ranch, including the cheetahs, are supported by the Cheetah Conservation Foundation, a non-profit organization. As there is a fear that this could happen again, the

Foundation feels it essential to provide security to their surviving cheetahs as well as the other big cats, which include the only white tigers in Africa. To this end it is appealing to corporations and members of the public who can help them with the donation of CCTV cameras and systems, fencing or money, as the estimated cost is approximately R100,000. Anyone who is able to assist in any way should contact Jenny Schmidt, Public Relations Officer, Cheetah Conservation Foundation (*Tel.*: ++ 021 852 6336) or Rob Hall, General Manager, Cango Wildlife Ranch (+ + 044 272 5593).

Chester Zoo, U.K.

Experience and research have taught us that more than anything else, zoo visitors appreciate the opportunity to be close to, or even in beside, the animals. While this is rarely possible for reasons of health, safety and welfare, we decided to be innovative with our bat exhibit, the 'Twilight Zone'. Until 1997, the zoo's two bat species, Seba's short-tailed and Rodrigues fruit bats, had been housed in a rather dated facility that gave them little opportunity for sustained flight and offered limited viewing to visitors. Plans for the new exhibit were developed to provide as much space as possible for the animals in a dramatic walk-through environment where the visitors would be totally immersed in a tropical experience.

From the outside the building doesn't look particularly inspiring: it is basically a large agricultural shed. But inside, a sophisticated, computer-controlled environment is landscaped to mimic a rocky valley covered with lush vegetation. Supporting species in the exhibit include a variety of large catfish in the central lake, Mexican blind cave fish, imperial scorpions and giant hissing cockroaches. (The latter two are likely to be replaced with some kind of small nocturnal lemur in the future.) Forty-two Rodrigues and approximately 200 Seba's bats fly around in semi-darkness while visitors walk