

henry vilas

# ZOO news

friends  
of the  
ZOO

Vol. 3, 2011

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## director's den

### Hello Zoo Friends!

Our cold wet spring was quickly replaced by the hot & dry weather of summer. Many of you have asked about how the animals are weathering the heat. Our Zoo staff appreciates your concern, and we take special care to ensure animal health is not diminished by hot weather.

Exhibit temperatures are monitored and animal habitat environmental systems are checked continually. For example the bear dens are about 10-12 degrees cooler than outside temperatures and the bears are given 24 hour access to their cooler dens. They also enjoy treats like 'bear pops' (five gallons of frozen water), and fruits and vegetables. Primates, bears and other animals enjoy ice cubes flavored with a little bit of cherry juice. The Red Panda exhibit must be kept around 70 degrees, and even our tropical rain forest aviary must be cooled in very warm weather. Some animals, like our white rhinos George & Gracie, like to rest in the sun during the day even though their exhibit has many shaded areas. During the evening their barn ventilation is controlled by humidity and temperature sensors. Exhibit areas are shaded by both structures and living trees, giving animals a choice of sun or shade. Managing the potential effects of temperature extremes, both hot and cold, are an important part of animal care.

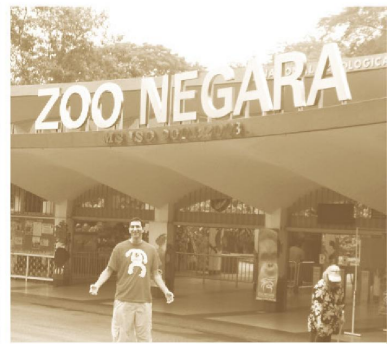
A very special thank you to Mounds Pet Food Warehouse for donating over \$6,000 worth of animal enrichment supplies and a \$20,000 cash donation to our animal welfare fund; we are grateful for such a terrific partnership.

Thanks for your wonderful support. Come visit your Zoo often.

Jim Hubing | Director, Henry Vilas Zoo



Sign up for our Henry Vilas Zoo E-News by visiting our website at [www.vilaszo.org](http://www.vilaszo.org)



## Ronda Schwetz: a mission to save orangutans

From July 8 to July 28, 2011, Henry Vilas Zoo Deputy Director, Ronda Schwetz, visited Malaysia. As the Field Advisor of the Orangutan Species Survival Plan Steering Committee, it is her mission to help improve the lives of wild and captive orangutans.

Schwetz lead a group of nine Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) professionals to Zoo Negara in Malaysia's vibrant capital city, Kuala Lumpur, and then to Sukau, a village in Sabah, Malaysia in the Lower Kinabatangan River region. For the first week of the trip, Schwetz taught vital orangutan education workshops to staff at Zoo Negara, working alongside them to demonstrate food enrichment, diet protocols, behavioral conditioning and general husbandry.

**"This program is now in its fourth year and I want people to know that this project directly helps animals in orangutan rehabilitation centers,"** wrote Schwetz in an email from Malaysia. "We were able to bring thousands of dollars worth of donated tools, medical supplies and equipment over these last four years. This year is our biggest yet."

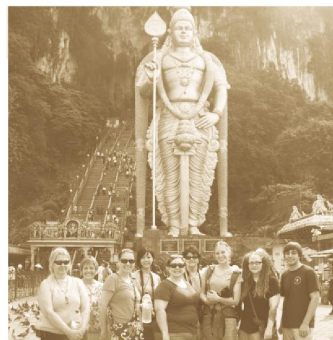
The Orangutan Species Survival Plan (SSP) team also taught Zoo Negara centers about zoonotic diseases, how to set up volunteer programs, and helped them reconstruct their animal enclosures to reflect the animals' natural habitat.

After completing these workshops at Zoo Negara, Schwetz headed to the beautiful Lower Kinabatangan to watch the wildlife, plant trees, visit a palm oil plantation and donate school supplies to the children of the parents working on the plantation.

**Next, Schwetz and a subset of the group headed to the only orangutan rehabilitation center in Sarawak and later to Semenggoh, where many orangutans have been successfully rehabilitated and released into the nearby Nature Reserve.** The SSP team donated two suitcases full of medical supplies to these sites, some of which cannot be obtained locally, to help save the lives of injured wildlife.

Schwetz, reflecting on her work with the Orangutan SSP, wrote to Henry Vilas Zoo: **"This is one of those times where your Henry Vilas Zoo is the industry leader in helping save an iconic species from extinction."**

Orangutans are quickly disappearing in the wild due to human activity and development. This endangered species is one of the most intelligent and sophisticated primates, but their populations are dwindling. They are being poached, their habitat is being destroyed by massive palm oil plantations and forestry, and they are sometimes the victims of human cruelty. **Orangutan rehabilitation centers and zoological institutions play a key role in saving this species from extinction, and it is our great privilege at Henry Vilas Zoo to support these vital global efforts.**



# diary of a trip to Malaysia

reflections by Deputy Director, Ronda Schwetz

## Making a Difference in Malaysia

As Deputy Director of Henry Vilas Zoo, I am constantly impressed with the commitment of those I meet to help make this world a better place. In my role as Field Advisor for the Orangutan Species Survival Plan, I was given an opportunity to witness the amazing effects of this commitment when I traveled to Malaysia with a group of nine zoo professionals. It is such an honor to be able to lead a group of dedicated people on an orangutan conservation trip that is designed to share expertise and give back.

*The most breath-taking moments of the trip were the boat rides when we saw families of the highly endangered local pygmy elephants.*

## Zoo Negara

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, our group, which included the SSP husbandry advisor, SSP studbook keeper, a veterinarian, orangutan keepers and a dedicated volunteer, traveled to Malaysia together. The combined efforts of Red Endangered Ape Conservation Trust (REACT) and Way Out Experiences (WOX) made this trip possible by helping facilitate our group's workshop at Zoo Negara, the National Zoo of Malaysia. Amazingly, we had over 100 attendees from every zoo in the country and from the Ministry for Forestry! Highlights from our five days with them include making a termite mound out of cement for the chimpanzees, the unveiling of Zoo Negara's Environmental Enrichment Center and the partnerships formed with Malaysian zoos and government.

## Palm Oil Plantations and Rehabilitation Centers

After spending time in Kuala Lumpur we flew to the country of Sabah to stay in Sukau, a village on the edge of the Lower Kinabatangan River. Driving from the airport past kilometer upon kilometer of palm oil plantations was truly striking, but the Malaysian government has set aside land around the river for wildlife. Some of the amazing animals you can see are hornbills, crocodiles, gibbons, leaf monkeys, macaques and, if you are very lucky, orangutans and pygmy elephants. Highlights from the six days we spent in this area include visiting a palm oil plantation that is trying to get certification from the

Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), eating meals at local villagers' homes, planting trees to repopulate the forest and visiting the school on the plantation. I especially cherish the memories of hearing the children from the palm oil plantation school sing songs to our group in both English and Malaysian. I am so happy to say through the generosity of our group we were able to donate school supplies, books, toys and t-shirts. Then we visited Sepilok, the oldest orangutan rehabilitation center in the world, and talked with the manager on building partnerships with American zoos and offered professional advice to improve the care and quality of life for their injured orangutans.

## Life-changing Memories

Next, we visited the Rainforest Discovery Center and spent time in the canopy of the rainforest at sunset listening and watching the wildlife. The most breath-taking moments of the trip were the boat rides when we saw families of the highly endangered local pygmy elephants. Sitting in a boat on the Kinabatangan River after a good rain and watching the family groups eating, dust bathing and calling to each other is an experience you can't quite explain.

## "Be the change you wish to see in the world"

The wonderful thing about working on orangutan conservation is that every time you go, there is something new you experience and learn. This year we had twice the amount of zoo professionals and donations than any other year, and we worked in Malaysia for the first time, setting up new partnerships that should last a lifetime. My experiences taught me that building relationships with people is what will make a difference in the long term. I sincerely hope that if you are inspired to help and make the world a better place that you find what it is you can do and go out and DO IT!

Trips like this one are made possible thanks to many generous donations. Research and education trips allow Henry Vilas Zoo to take a lead role in species stewardship around the globe and to provide continuing education for Zoo staff.

**You can help:** If you wish to make a donation or to sponsor a field research trip, please contact *Friends of the Zoo* Executive Director, Anna Reynolds at 608.258.9490.

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