Flying Squad lands a new home in Sumatra

The Tesso Nilo Flying Squad (with one on the way, as one of the elephants named Lisa is pregnant) and eight brave riders who are dispatched to villages to ward off crop-raiding wild elephants, has moved into a new camp. The camp is situated in the acacia-belt buffer zone of the Tesso Nilo National Park on land donated by Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP). The squad is seen pictured on our new Elephants Helping Elephants poster (Pachyderm Press, November, 2006).

The compound includes an office building with secure storage for equipment and radio communications as well as sleeping quarters for flying squad staff. Fresh water is supplied from a well and electricity is provided by generators.

The elephants of the flying squad are kept nearby and allowed to graze on natural vegetation and bathe frequently in the clean waters of a nearby river.

Proceeds from the Zoo’s cell phone recycling program help the World Wildlife Fund support the program which in 2006 was having great success. 300 copies of the Elephants Helping Elephants poster printed in Indonesian have been sent to Sumatra to help support the program in nearby schools and villages.

Volunteer Coordinator:
Fun Bunch Corner
by Annie Langenfeld (Next to Santa’s chair)

When you receive this the Holiday Lights Zoo event will be going. We need each of you to donate at least one night, and more if possible. This is an ever growing event and certainly one of the prettiest we have on the grounds. On the email and mailed notice of the dates for Holiday Lights I made a boo-boo, The dates for the second weekend should be December 8 and 9th.

November 14 was a red letter day for all of us. The City Council voted to accept the construction contracts and go ahead with the African addition to the zoo. Plan on attending the ground breaking ceremonies at 10:00am on December 7th.

November 14 also saw all of us gather together to wish Nancy Pixley a “happy retirement”. The zoo won’t be the same without her and her bright, smiling face but she has earned a well deserved new adventure. Good luck, Nancy, from all the volunteers and the Education Staff and Anne. And thanks, Dee, for putting on such a great spread of yummy food.

November 13 was also a happy day as Helen Stark (our snow bird) and Derrill Rothermich returned to us. They both were put to work IMMEDIATELY. Sal Quintanilla visited a foreign place, the hospital, for about a week and is still getting back to “normal” at home. He hopes to be back with us after Thanksgiving.. The schools hope so also. Jeanette Surface picked up a bug somewhere and hopes she has not shared it with others.

Rick has a big, happy grin on his face now that Rose Janice and Elizabeth Corbin have joined the Education Department. They are welcome additions so please take the time to come in and meet them. Elizabeth joined us at the October Volunteer meeting, as did John Kiseda and

More Tesso Nilo News on Page 2
Roland Brown. They are certainly invited to attend all our meetings, as it gives us a chance to get better acquainted and to catch up on “zoo” news.

PUT THIS NUMBER IN YOUR BILLFOLD OR PURSE: It is the cell phone for the security guards in case you need to get on the zoo grounds before 8am or after 4pm and there are no guards around. 790-3936.

The next volunteer meeting is December 11 at 3:30pm in the Paraje.

I wish all of you a most joyful holiday season, good health for the coming new year and many hours added to your volunteer time.

Elephants released in Tesso Nilo National Park

Contact the Zoo’s Education Curator at 521-1881 for more information on how you can help the elephants of Sumatra

The endangered Sumatran elephant, the smallest of the Asian elephants, is facing serious pressures arising from illegal logging and associated habitat loss and fragmentation in Indonesia. Earlier this year eight Sumatran elephants were released into Indonesia’s Tesso Nilo forest, months after they were found chained to trees without food or water. The World Wildlife Fund, which provided daily care and medical treatment for the elephants after their discovery, worked with local government officials to ensure their safe release.

The elephant herd initially numbered ten when they were captured by Riau Forestry Officials after raiding crops in Balai Raja of northern Riau on the Indonesia island of Sumatra — one died of tetanus and one escaped.

Unsustainable logging throughout the province has eliminated much of the elephants’ original habitat and as a result have been moving into more populated areas in search of food.

“These elephants are the latest casualties in the escalating human-elephant conflict in central Sumatra, the direct result of uncontrolled destruction of their forest habitat,” said Nazir Foead, Head of WWF Indonesia’s Species Programme. “These elephants need room to live, which means ending problematic pulp and oil palm development.”

WWF has pushed for the protection of Tesso Nilo Forest as a national park since 2004 so that Riau’s elephants would have a safe haven. But the park is still being illegally cleared for commercial activity and may be at its carrying capacity for elephants. The current 38,000ha park is too small to provide sufficient habitat for any additional elephants. The park was originally proposed to be 100,000ha.

“We are calling on the government to immediately declare the full proposed Tesso Nilo National Park and to stop all forest conversion, illegal logging and encroachment,” said Nurchalis Fadhli, WWF’s coordinator for human-elephant conflict mitigation.

In 2004, non-governmental organizations, including WWF, and the Indonesia Ministry of Forestry developed a human-elephant conflict mitigation protocol for Riau that would avoid the kinds of cases that have occurred with this elephant herd.

“Capture of wild elephants has to remain the very last tool when mitigating conflict,” added Fadhli. “If the protocol had been in place, it would have taught communities how to mitigate human-elephant conflict without suffering losses and without the need to capture elephants.”

END NOTES: Some of the highlights of the elephant herd’s capture and recovery:

Female #2: This teenage elephant appears to be pregnant. Although she suffers from an abscess on her stomach and wounds on her legs from being kept in chains that were too tight, she appears to be healthy. Despite her young age, it’s clear she’s had a history of violent encounters with people – the tip of her trunk is nearly cut off, possibly from a previous capture, and she has old scars on her legs. After her wounds healed, this elephant broke free of her chains and was last seen running toward the nearby forest. She has not been found.

Continued on page 4
Female #4: Three weeks after being found, this 6-year-old adolescent began to show signs of tetanus. Despite treatment with anti-tetanus serum, she developed lockjaw and was unable to eat. Vets force-fed a mixture of fruit juice and baby food for days. She was healthy when released.

Male #2: This 8-year-old appeared to be healthy when found, but was stressed and aggressive. A week later, abscesses on his rear right leg appeared, apparently from darts used during its capture. His condition turned critical and, despite surgery on the abscesses, his condition worsened. After two weeks of treatment, he developed tetanus and eventually died, three weeks after being discovered chained up.

If you missed Scott Pelley’s report on CBS 60 Minutes on November 19 you should be able to watch a streaming video of the program on the CBS news website. If you do not have high speed Internet at home try your local library or use one of our computers in the Paraje. When you go to the website search for “Shooting Tigers” in Search Videos box if you can’t find the clip.

Main story (Transcript)

60 minutes video
http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/60minutes/main3415.shtml

Jingle Bells and a Hearty Ho-Ho-Ho to our December Birthday Volunteers

Stephanie Millett  December 8
Gilberto Monarez  December 14
Mauri Miyamoto  December 30

Education Trailer Wish List
Call 351-5350 or write langenfeldar@elpasotexas.gov for more information
♦ Newspapers, without all the colored ad inserts
♦ Pesticide free closed pinecones (birds love to pull them open for the seeds)
♦ Towels, hand towels, wash cloths, sheets, pillow cases
♦ Vegetable dyed wooden toys for the birds, also old phone books
♦ Animal carrying cages

Attention Zoo Employees & Volunteers: Christmas Sale

On December 13th come visit the Elephants Trunk Giftshop and save an extra 10% off your normal discount (including an extra 10% off of clearance items). The store will open early just for staff at 9am.
Amur leopard Update

We now have three Amur leopards, an adult male and his two three year old daughters who born at the Zoo on December 9, 2003. Our older adult female, and the mother of the cubs, was sent to the Hogle Zoo in Utah in November.

In the remote forests of southeastern Russia, scientists have captured what's believed to be the rarest big cat on Earth: a Far Eastern (Amur) leopard.

The animal is so scarce that only 30 are thought to survive in the wild.

The team, led by biologists from the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society, caught the 100-pound (45-kilogram) male in a snare last week while studying Siberian tigers in the Russian Far East, 20 miles (32 kilometers) from the Chinese border (See Russia map).

The chance capture gave biologists a priceless opportunity to study the elusive feline, and Melody Roelke (below), a specialist in big-cat genetics with the U.S. National Institutes of Health, wasn't shy about getting a closer look.

She and other team members conducted a thorough series of tests on the leopard, from studying its teeth to collecting sperm samples, before releasing the animal back into the wild.

Among the scientists' main concerns is whether Far Eastern leopards, also known as Amur leopards, can continue to sustain their tiny, isolated population, or whether disease and inbreeding may eventually wipe out the cats.

"This capture represents a milestone in our cooperative efforts to save the Far Eastern leopard and Siberian tiger from extinction," said Dale Miquelle, director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Russia Program, in a statement.

"With the information gained from these animals, and others to come, we will be in a much better position to determine appropriate conservation actions."

Zoo Volunteer Phone Directory
(915) Area Code

Official Zoo website plus past issues of this newsletter: www.elpasozoo.org/edu
New El Paso Zoological Society website: www.elpasozoosociety.org

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(The main number will be your best bet if you can not reach staff at other numbers.)

Mail Bag

Every week we our volunteer program receives nice compliments from the teachers we meet on Traveling Safari programs.

From Lee Elementary School:

"Mr. Derrill Rothermich was an excellent presenter. He was very patient and spoke slowly for our 4 and 5 year olds to understand him. The best part of the presentation was when our students got to feel the short-tail opossum."