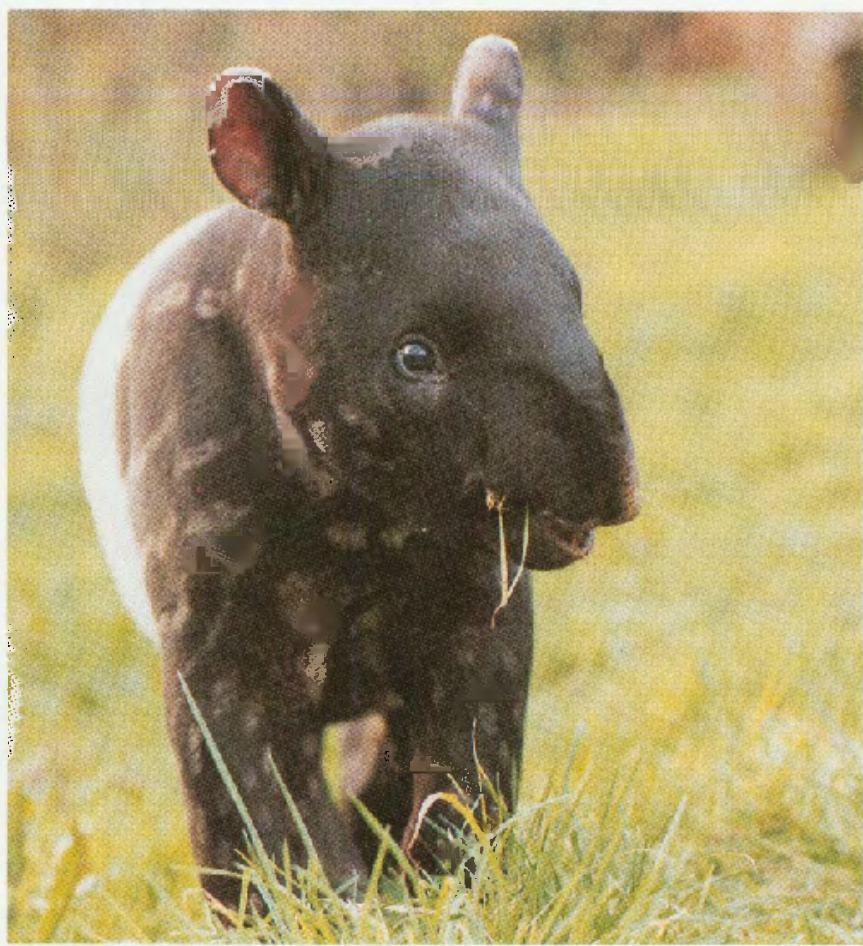


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Help Newsletter No 11



*Friends of Howletts
and
Port Lympne*

PORT LYMPNE HOOFSTOCK SECTION

by Jimmy Shave and Gordon Scott



Our Malayan tapirs, numbering 1.2, were wintered in the spare loose-box in the Sumatran rhino house in the woods. In July a pair were transported back to their original complex in the orchard by the mansion; these quarters had been completely refurbished during their winter absence. On the morning of 1st August, on checking our youngest female, Madina, we discovered to our delight a healthy female baby, newly born in the grass

paddock. She has been named Lidana, and is the first Malayan tapir born at Howletts and Port Lympne.

Another tapir birth during the last 12 months was that of the Brazilian female born in October 1988. She has now been sold to Suffolk Wildlife Park, together with a young male from Howletts. Octavia, her mother, sadly died in May of this year. All our

Brazilian tapirs now spend the winter in the old sable paddock shed, and are moved to various grass paddocks for the summer months.

Torgamba and Meranti have spent the entire summer, nights included, out in their paddock, the reason being that in March Meranti was thought to have had her first 'season'. Although no actual mating was observed, Torgamba showed immense interest in her. Urine samples are being collected from Meranti whenever possible, to determine her oestrous cycle. Although this task does at times prove difficult, we are generally successful.

The water buffalo herd, after returning from their winter quarters at Chilham, have spent most of the exceptionally hot summer lying in their wallows, which have fortunately been created by the natural streams flowing into their grazing area. Due to the extreme heat, the coats of the herd have taken on a ginger tinge. We have had five births since our last report, of which 2.2 have been sold.

In May two new Przewalski stallions, Rochus and his four year old son Miro, arrived from Nuremberg Zoo, West Germany. Miro was taken to the new holding pen recently constructed at Chilham, and Rochus was moved in with the 12 fillies at Combe Farm, with the intention of adding new blood to our herd. Rochus was seen mating on several occasions, but unfortunately died on 3rd August as a result of becoming 'bogged down' in a pond; his place has been taken by his son Miro.

Over the past months, in order to relieve pressure on the paddocks from the increasingly large herds at both zoos, it has become necessary to move some

more animals onto Combe Farm land: these include sambar males, hog deer, now totalling 15, and axis deer, whose numbers have increased to 28. The shed and paddock that used to accommodate Torgamba have become vacant, and this area is being used for 3.1 young European bison from Howletts.

On the black rhino front we now have a group of 4.4. Since last year's newsletter Mama Kidogo has arrived from the Zoological Society of London, to reunite with Bwana M'Kubua, another animal in his late twenties. They were both wild-caught in Kenya in the 1960s and arrived together in this country, where they have produced several calves. Because of space and incompatibility problems in recent times, we were asked to accept them into our herd. Bwana has mated with all four cows, and we are expecting both Naivasha and Rukwa to give birth any day now. They should be followed next year by Mama Kidogo and possibly Arusha, though at only six years old she is on the young side to conceive. Baringo, now 21 and the father of four calves, has apparently lost interest in breeding. His 11 year old son Basha has been ineffectual, and we are planning to move him elsewhere to meet other cows and be away from his father's presence, which may be inhibiting his breeding efforts.

Notable hoofstock births include three American bison, four barasingha, numerous axis deer, 3.2 Cape buffalo and 4.2 Przewalski horses. But we finish this article on a rather sad note, with the death of Ulan, the oldest and most magnificent of our Przewalski stallions; he sired countless foals and was considered a shining example of a herd stallion. He will be sadly missed by us all.

GARDEN REPORT

by Trevor King

I am pleased to say that we have fully recovered from the Great Storm — only to find that we are now suffering from a drought. Perhaps not knowing what is around the corner is what makes gardening so interesting. Just when you think you are winning, nature throws another problem at you and says 'Get out of that one if you can'. On a more serious note, most of the shrubs and herbaceous plants at Port Lympne and Howletts have put on a lot of growth and filled out quite nicely. Most of the trees we planted last winter to replace storm damage have survived despite the drought. New heating pipes have

been put in the old greenhouse at Port Lympne to replace the old cast piping, which will make it more efficient. The heating system at Howletts is also to be updated before the winter. The Garden Shop at Port Lympne is doing well, with a larger selection of plants, shrubs and garden sundries on sale. A new polyhouse is to be put up at Port Lympne to accommodate the increased number of plants produced there. We will resume planting of trees and shrubs at both zoo parks this autumn, together with plenty of bulbs to give more spring cover, especially in the Woodland Walk at Howletts.