

ZOO

Spring 2008

D U B L I N



Matters



Inside see first picture of our elephant calf & enter our great competition to give him a name.

Dear member

At 05:27am on the morning of February 17, 2008, Yasmin, our 17 year old Asian elephant, gave birth to a male calf. Surrounded by the other elephants - Bernardine, Anak and little Asha - the birth was completely natural. The, as yet unnamed, calf surprised us all by the speed with which he started walking and exploring his surroundings.

Later that week, the entire herd was allowed outside into their spacious habitat to be introduced to Ireland's media, who had turned up in great numbers. The event was reported widely in the newspapers, on radio and on television.

Weather permitting the elephants will now be out every day and even during inclement weather, visitors can observe them through the windows of their elephant house.

Don't wait too long to visit as elephants grow very fast!

Leo Oosterweghel

Leo Oosterweghel
Director



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Dublin Zoo Opening Times

March - September	Mon to Sat:	9.30am - 18.00pm
	Sun:	10.30am - 18.00pm

African Plains closing time - Mon to Sun: 17.30 Last admission one hour before closing.

Front cover photo: Matt the lion at Dublin Zoo by Neil McShane
Graphic Design: Independent Design Ltd. www.independentdesign.ie

ZOO NOTICES

www.dublinozoo.ie now online

We are delighted to report that our new website www.dublinozoo.ie is now online. Check it out for all the latest from your zoo as well as information about our animals, opening times, prices and lots more. Also enter our great competition to win a VIP visit to Dublin Zoo. All you have to do is send us a name for our new-born elephant calf - see the new website for more details.



The Chinese Ambassador Liu Biwei meets red panda keeper Joe Byrne during his New Year visit.

Ambassador celebrates Chinese New Year in Dublin Zoo

Dublin Zoo welcomed Chinese Ambassador, Liu Biwei, who visited in February as part of the Chinese New Year Celebrations. The Ambassador was greeted by members of staff and Zoo Keepers, who hosted a tour of the Zoo. One of the highlights of the tour was a visit to the striking Red Pandas, which originate from China. The Ambassador also visited other Asian species including Dublin Zoo's much loved elephants, where he was particularly impressed with the Kaziranga Forest Trail.

Amphibian campaign

While this may be the year of the rat in the Chinese calendar, zoos from around the world shall be highlighting the "Year of the Frog" as part of the global campaign to save amphibians from extinction. The fact that a whole group of animals such as amphibians may become extinct may seem extreme but unfortunately it is a possibility. In recent years we have already lost over 120 species of amphibians.

The "Year of the Frog Campaign" will be launched in Dublin Zoo during the Native Species Weekend on the 19th - 20th April. Dublin Zoo has pledged to donate €10,000 to the campaign and we also plan to raise additional money. EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) shall be coordinating activities for European zoos. Together European zoos hope to raise over €750,000.



Dublin Zoo hits new record with over 900,000 visitors in 2007! Dublin Zoo is celebrating record visitor numbers in 2007 - The busiest year in its history

A Tale of Two Pregnancies

Dublin Zoo has recently celebrated the news that elephant Yasmin gave birth to a healthy male calf. We are now waiting excitedly for another high profile birth, Rhino Ashanti's calf is due in the summer. Monitoring both pregnancies has been challenging for keepers who endeavoured to keep any intrusion to a minimum. Here we discover how they cleverly managed to gain important information about the mothers and their prospective offspring - without them knowing anything about it at all!!

KISS OF LIFE

Animals in Dublin Zoo get Kissing Bug treatment

Dublin Zoo is pioneering the use of 'Living Needles' a major new technique in which a blood-sucking insect is used to test the health and well-being of its animals.

The American Kissing Bugs or Triatomid Bugs' voracious appetite offers keepers and vets a stress free means of gaining samples of blood without the use of needles and syringes.

The insects are introduced to the skin of the animal where they spend up to half an hour gorging on its blood. This is in turn extracted from the bug using a fine syringe so the blood can be tested in the lab. The method is painless to the animal and also leaves the insect unharmed.

The team in Dublin are being taught how to use the technique by Andre Stadler the curator of Wuppertal Zoo in Germany where the idea was first conceived. Keepers were able to use the technique with excellent results on Yasmin the Asian elephant who gave birth to her second calf in February.

It is difficult to take blood from an elephant using a needle, particularly in the latter stages of gestation. Her keepers didn't want her getting upset or stressed, yet it was imperative that they monitor her hormone levels regularly as a sudden drop in progesterone is a strong indication of the onset of labour.



During a short trip to Dublin, Andre Stadler said: "In Germany, we use the bugs to test many species where blood sample collection is often not possible without anaesthesia. However, we have never used them to test hormone levels in a pregnant elephant before and we have been watching Dublin's efforts with excitement and great interest."

Because the blood is collected without stress to the animals it provides a sample of excellent quality, free of contaminating stress hormone. The Zoo therefore intends to use the method on many species throughout the collection including giraffe, zebra, rhino and tapir.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD!

Dublin Zoo introduces a sparkling new method to monitor the rhinos

Dublin Zoo's plans to breed from two of its female white rhinos took a festive turn around Christmas to make it possible to tell the difference between their droppings.

In order to keep a check on the hormone levels of Ashanti and Zanta the faeces were being collected twice weekly and sent to the lab for hormone testing. However, because the young females are kept together it was impossible to tell their droppings apart.

That was until somebody had a sparkling idea.

The Zoo Keepers' novel technique involved adding different coloured glitter, namely silver and blue, to the rhinos' feed. The colourful result is an effective identification method to test with certainty the hormone levels of the rhinos.

Keepers at Dublin Zoo are delighted with the results and indications are that Ashanti may be pregnant.

Zoo Vet, John Bainbridge who closely monitored the project said: "This is a nice simple, harmless way of getting the results we need. When the faeces samples are collected with the different colour glitter, it's clear which sample belongs to Ashanti and which sample belongs to Zanta. The glitter is a safe, non toxic method of testing the hormone levels in the Rhinos'."

Helen Clarke, Team leader on Dublin Zoo's African Plains said: "In order to gain good information on the hormone levels we needed to take samples each week over a three month period. We were struggling until we had this idea and are so pleased that it seems to be working. It's an ideal way of getting good samples without separating the rhinos or worse still - following them round all day with a shovel!"

