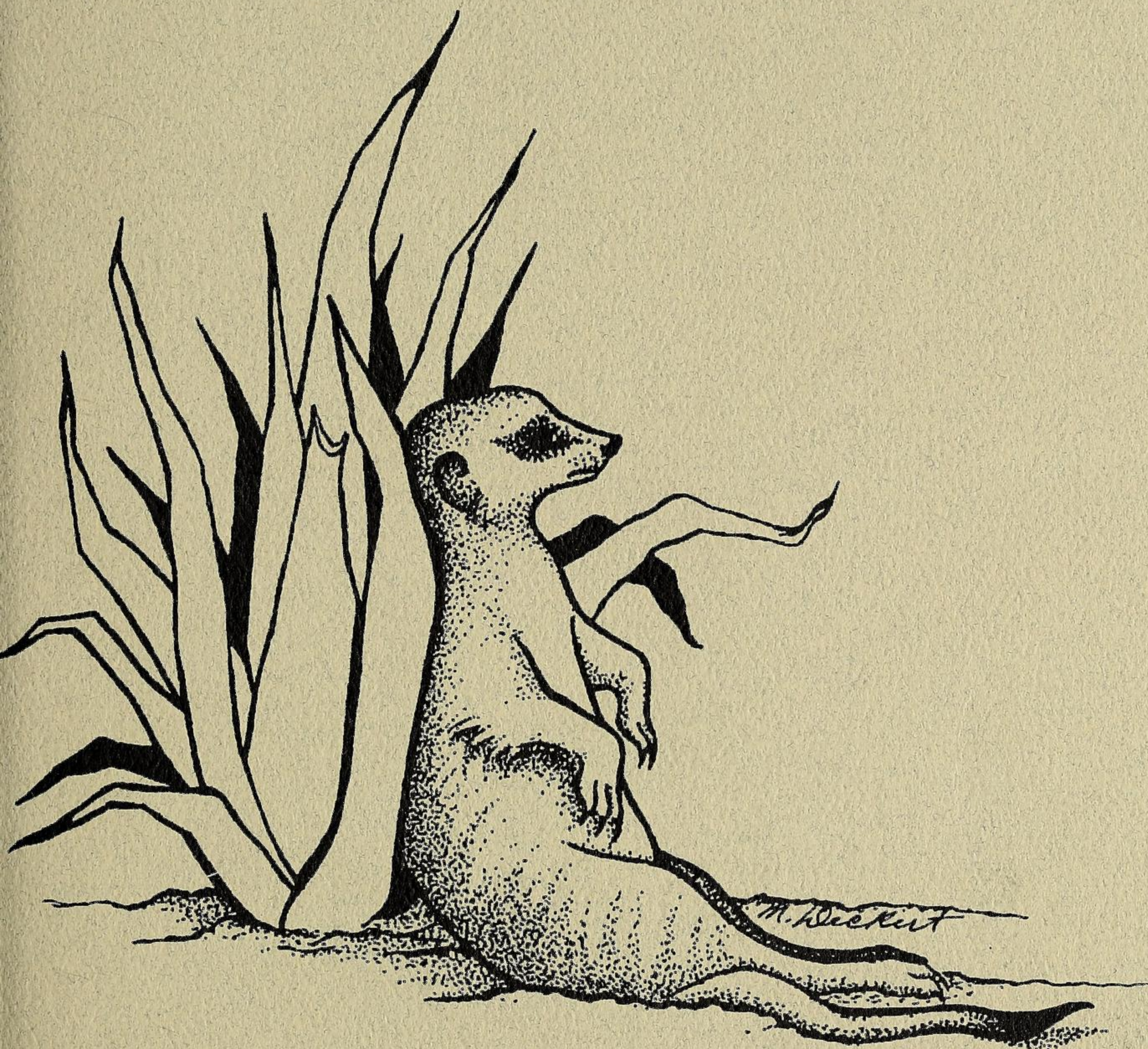


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ANIMAL KEEPERS' FORUM

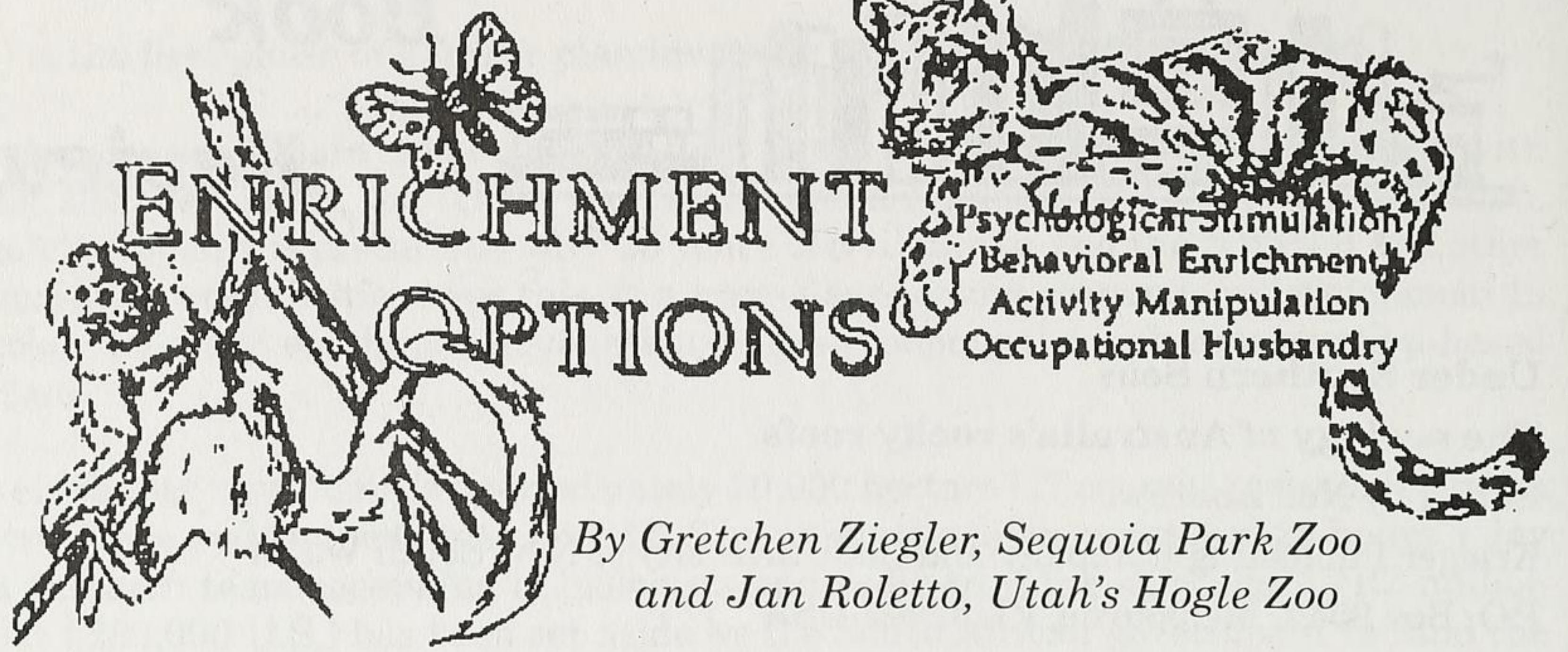


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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| About the Cover/Information for Contributors..... | 414 |
| Scoops & Scutlebutt..... | 415 |
| Letter to the Editor..... | 416 - 417 |
| From the President..... | 417 |
| AAZk Announces New Members..... | 418 |
| Coming Events..... | 419 |
| 2000 AAZK and AKF Awards..... | 420 - 421 |
| AAZK Book Sale..... | 422 |
| AAZK Workplace 2000 Survey Results..... | 424 - 428 |
| Chapter News Notes..... | 428 |
| ABC's Column: Guinea Baboon..... | 429 - 431 |
| Using Operant Conditioning to Weigh 1.1 Southern White Rhino..... | 432 - 435 |
| Reactions Column: Impending Animal Birth..... | 436 - 437 |
| Career Resources: Zoo Keeping/Working with Animals..... | 438 - 440 |
| Websites to Check Out..... | 440 |
| Handraising and Re-introduction of Common Marmosets: | |
| A Layman's Experience..... | 441 - 446 |
| Mexico Moves to Protect Monarchs..... | 446 |
| Legislative Update..... | 447 - 450 |
| Book Review (<i>Under Southern Seas:</i> | |
| <i>the ecology of Australia's rocky reefs</i>)..... | 451 |
| Enrichment Options (Scavenging Vultures)..... | 452 - 453 |
| Opportunity Knocks..... | 454 - 456 |





ENRICHMENT OPTIONS

Psychological Stimulation
Behavioral Enrichment
Activity Manipulation
Occupational Husbandry

*By Gretchen Ziegler, Sequoia Park Zoo
and Jan Roletto, Utah's Hogle Zoo*

Scavenging Vultures

The Milwaukee County Zoo in Milwaukee, WI has a unique approach to displaying natural feeding of vultures. A suggestion was made to use a large skeleton in the outdoor African Savanna yard as a feeding platform for vultures. The mixed species yard includes Impala, Thomson's gazelle, African ground hornbill, Helmeted guinea fowl, European white stork, African spur-thighed tortoise, Ruppell's griffon vulture, Cinereous vulture, and Lappet-faced vulture.



Vultures feeding in the outdoor African Savanna exhibit at the Milwaukee County Zoo. (Photo by Cindi Spanholz)

In 1983, a Southern white rhinoceros died at the zoo. The carcass was sent to the Milwaukee Public Museum. In 1999, the museum deaccessioned the skeleton and offered it back to the zoo. By placing the skeleton in the African Savanna yard, it serves as an educational tool to inform the public of the rapidly decreasing rate of the rhino population and as an enrichment device for the animals in the yard. At feeding time, dead rats and oxtails are thrown in or around the rhino skeleton. The vultures flock to the skeleton and fight for the food, even though there is plenty to go around. Some spread their wings and chase after ones trying to steal their food, while others patiently wait their turn. I saw one cautiously approach another vulture that was gnawing on an oxtail and every now and then would take a bite. If the first vulture didn't protest, the two ate off the same bone.

Even after the food had been out for awhile, the vultures continued to investigate the skeleton and peck at the rhino's bones. In fact, they were still eating their meal longer than an hour after they had been fed. In addition to the feedings, the vultures disarticulate the skeleton and carry the bones around the yard. Although some bones of the skeleton need to be repositioned occasionally, it is a small price to pay to enrich the life of an animal. The vultures are fed a diet similar to what they might find in the wild and are fed in a naturalistic environment, which elicits their natural behaviors.

---Cindi Sponholz, *Enrichment Intern*
Milwaukee County Zoo, Milwaukee, WI

(Ideas appearing in this column have not necessarily been tested by the editors for safety considerations. Always think ahead and use good judgement when trying new ideas. You are invited to submit materials for the Enrichment Options Column. This might include recipes, toys, puzzle feeders, olfactory enrichment ideas, etc. Drawings and photos of enrichment are encouraged. Send to: AKF/Enrichment, 3601 SW 29th St., Suite 133, Topeka, KS 66614-2054. Eds.)

West African Colubus Declared Extinct

In what biologists see as "just the beginning" of a "growing stream of extinctions of West African primates and other wildlife," the N.Y. Times has reported that experts have declared Miss Waldron's red colobus monkey extinct. Inciting the usual suspects, logging, road building, and the bush-meat trade, scientists warned that "unless more rigorous protection is applied immediately" the red colobus will be just "the first obvious manifestation of an extinction spasm." Last seen in the 1970s, an exhaustive seven-year search of remaining forest fragments where the monkey once lived turned up only a "deserted cathedral" littered with "snares and shotgun shells." According to Peter Grubb of the Natural History Museum in London, "with better management of game preserves in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, the monkey could probably have been saved."

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