

Editorial

by John Aspinall



1985-86 has been an interesting year for Howletts and Port Lympne. The main event has been the successful capture of 3.1 Sumatran rhino in the Torgamba forest and their installation in Port Lympne and Djakarta zoo (see page 20). The last bull to be caught, Napangga, is to be swapped with Julia at Malacca zoo. This will leave for the time being, 1.1 at Port Lympne, 1.1 at Djakarta, 1.2 at Malacca and 1.0 at Bangkok. Four more rhino are to be rescued from Torgamba and split between Djakarta and Port Lympne, so there is plenty more work to be done which will take at least one more year to complete.

A successful year with the gorilla colony has ended with the birth of 1.3, all of which have been mother-reared (see page 12). The expression 'mother-reared' should not obscure the important role of the father in the birth and raising of these remarkable apes. These recent additions bring the colony to 28 – 9.19. We can expect between three and five more births next year with any sort of luck.

One day we intend to put a whole family of 8 to 11 gorillas back in the wild or semi-wild state, provided the animals will have a chance of the enforcement of protection. At least one or two keepers will have to accompany the apes for a year or two on site to give the venture any hope

of success. We are about ten years away from being in a position to be able to afford the 'loss' of such a large group of pioneers.

Everyone here is excited by the breakthroughs made in the breeding of some quite difficult species this last year. Fishing cat, guereza, Javan langur and maned wolf have all been bred and raised successfully en famille during the last twelve months, by us for the first time.

We are also pleased to report that many of our colonies are now operating in multiple. Two litters from different breeding pairs, all mother-reared, for caracal, Siberian lynx, serval and desert cat. Some zoos are content to have one breeding pair of a species and then find great difficulty to keep things going when one of the pair dies from an accident or old age. Next year we hope to add hunting dog, bush dog, rusty-spotted cat, black-footed cat and marbled cat to the list of breeding successes.

I hate to end an editorial on an optimistic note as I know such a sentiment jars with the hopelessness most informed people feel at this time — the most terrible time in all evolution when so many of her creations are being swept away before the rising swell of human numbers. We do what we do with misgiving, acting more out of instinct than reason; the former being of course the better guide to wisdom.