

Memphis Zoo Staff Pleased with Bonding at Primate Canyon

by Tiffany Langston, Memphis Zoo

Memphis Zoo staff are very excited about the newly formed family group of gorillas now occupying the Primate Canyon exhibit. The culmination of a two and half year journey, this endangered foursome consists of gorillas acquired from three different zoos.

"We are truly excited about this introduction," said Sandi Shoemaker, Primate Keeper. "The female gorillas have really bonded, and the dynamic continues to be much better than we could've expected." As part of a recommendation from the American Zoo Association's (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), the staff's ongoing goal for these animals has been to build a cohesive family group. Before coming to the Memphis Zoo, "Mwelu," the silverback male, spent most of his life with another male or as a solitary animal. As a result, he was not well-socialized and had not been around females.

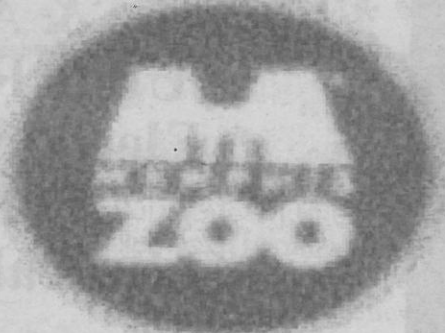
"Penny" and her daughter, "Kebara," were brought to the zoo in May 2008 to teach Mwelu how to interact with female gorillas. While Mwelu and Kebara bonded, Mwelu attacked Penny early in their introductions, leading zoo staff to determine that an additional female gorilla was needed for success. The gorilla SSP agreed. When Kwizera arrived at the Memphis Zoo on a breeding loan from the Buffalo Zoo earlier this year, the animal care staff introduced her to the other two females and gave them plenty of time to bond.

"Before we introduced Kwizera to Mwelu, we gave her several months of bonding time with Penny and Kebara," said Shoemaker. "We hoped that the three females, given time together, would build a tight bond, and Penny and Kebara would protect Kwizera if Mwelu responded aggressively towards her once they were introduced." Although Mwelu made aggressive motions towards Kwizera, the two other females chased him off and protected their new "sister." Zoo staff are elated with the outcome. "The females really seem to be defending her," Shoemaker said. "With time, Mwelu will learn to accept her as they spend more time together on exhibit, and we look forward to what's in store for this group." "We're honored to play a role in the survival of this species," said Matt Thompson, Curator of Mammals. "Hopefully, the gorillas can help our community gain an understanding and appreciation for these and other endangered or threatened species."



TETON TREK

Meet the King of Rock and Roar



Humorous Takes

contributed by Evelyn

* Palm Sunday: It was Palm Sunday, and, because of a sore throat, five-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. The boy asked what they were for. "People held them over Jesus' head as He walked by," replied his father. "Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed, "The one Sunday I don't go He shows up!"

* Children's sermon: One Easter

an egg. He pointed at the egg and asked the children, "What's in here?" "I know!" exclaimed one young boy. "Pantyhose!"

* Support a Family: The prospective father-in-law asked, "Young man, can you support a family?" The surprised groom-to-be answered, "Well, no. I was just planning to support your daughter. The rest of you will have to fend for yourselves."

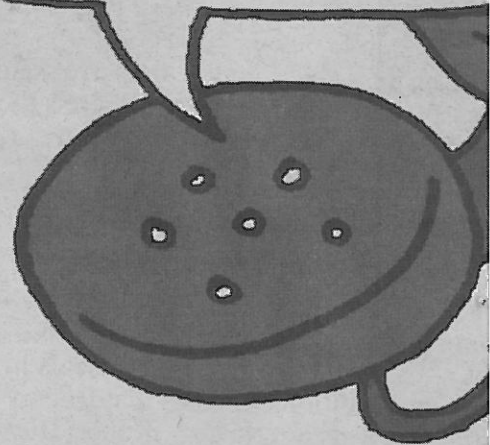
* First Time Ushers: A little boy in church for the first time watched as the ushers passed around the offer

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Saturday, October 30, 2009