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THE INVESTIGATOR

SUMMER 2010 // St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park Membership Newsletter



Fruitopia

By Gen Anderson
 Photo by Richard Petty

Feeding Time!

Steph Krueger • Senior Bird & Mammal Keeper

For Bird and Mammal keepers, a large part of each day involves making meals and feeding over 100 animals in our department. Besides taking most of the morning to prepare the meals that will be given to the animals that afternoon and the following morning, the composition of each meal (we call them diets) has to be carefully formulated to meet the dietary requirements of each animal, and that's a lot of work! A proper diet, for a bird or a mammal, must mimic what that animal would eat in the wild. To figure out what our animals would eat, we have to turn to the scientists who study them in their natural setting. These researchers spend months, or even years, watching animals forage to see what they eat. Sometimes observing isn't enough and an animals' poop has to be analyzed to get a closer look at what types of fruits, plants, and animals they're study subjects may be eating. This information is passed on to zoos and food manufacturers, who work together to replicate these diets. While some food items are easy to come

by, like fruits and vegetables, some others are harder to replicate. For example, many of our small monkey residents actually chew on plants in the wild to suck out the sap. Our zoo meets this dietary requirement by making a special monkey gel. This gel looks a lot like jell-o and is cut into small cubes for our animals to eat. Similarly, some of our birds, especially the parrots and many of the hornbill species, also eat plants and grains hard to obtain, so special food pellets are made to help fill in this dietary gap. Besides fruits and veggies, we also have to meet special protein requirements, and a lot of the time, this means feeding out animal protein. Animal protein comes in many forms, from the bugs we feed our small primates, to the large rats, ground meat, and bones we feed to our carnivorous birds like the vultures and storks. Overall, just like any meal you would make for yourself, it's important to eat a well balanced meal that includes all the important nutrients and vitamins to keep you healthy and strong!



From the Director

John Brueggen • Director



On March 3, Gen Anderson and I sat before the *Association of Zoos and Aquarium's (AZA) accreditation committee. We were introduced to all 15 members of the committee and then asked two simple questions about our operation. We were then asked to adjourn to the "post hearing room" to await their decision on our accreditation.

I'm happy to say that we passed with flying colors. They rushed in to congratulate us while enthusiastically praising our zoo and repeatedly shaking our hands and patting us on our backs. Out of all the zoos currently up for re-accreditation during the committee's two day session, they stated "if only every zoo was going to be this easy!" and "it was a simple decision, your report was virtually immaculate" and "compared to the other zoos, yours is at the top of the scale!" This is not the work of any one individual, but a testament to the devoted staff we have in all areas of our park. Many thanks to our staff and all of you that support our zoo every year.

We couldn't have done it without you!



*AZA is what separates us from other animal exhibits and roadside attractions. Across the United States there are only about 210 accredited zoos. The AZA stamp of approval is your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellence in conservation, education, science, recreation, and animal care.



THE INVESTIGATOR

VOLUME 2 • NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2010

ZOO HOURS & RATES

Open 365 days a year!

9AM - 5PM

Extended hours from Memorial Day to Labor Day - Open till 6PM

HOW TO REACH US

General Information
904/824-3337

Membership	ext. 10
Gift Shop	ext. 14
Education	ext. 29
Group Sales & Rentals	ext. 10
Rookery Updates	ext. 23
Reptile Department	ext. 15
Bird & Mammal Department	ext. 16

ZOO MEMBERS

General Public

- Adults \$21.95
- Children \$10.95 (ages 3-11)
- Children age 2 & under are admitted free
- Discounts available for locals, military, AAA, seniors and groups

Zoo Members • FREE Admission

CONTRIBUTORS

Editor & Curator of Education	Katie Girvin
Director	John Brueggen
Keeper II - Reptile	Jen Walkowich
Education Specialist	Debi Ricks
Senior Keeper - Bird & Mammal	Steph Krueger
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MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain the highest standards of zoological professionalism as it promotes wildlife conservation and education. Furthermore, the Alligator Farm is committed to promoting the appreciation of all animal and plant life, but specifically the living species of crocodilians and other animals in its collection.



What's New At the Z



LIZZZ-ARDS

Both the Komodo Dragon and the Crocodile Monitors can now be seen in their outdoor exhibits in front of the Komodo Dragon building. They were moved inside during the cold winter months but since the weather has improved they can bask in the sun once more. Komodo Dragons are the largest lizards on the planet weighing up to 200 pounds and measuring more than 10 feet long. Crocodile Monitors may not have the heft of the Komodo Dragon but have the honor of being the worlds longest lizards reaching lengths of 12 to 14 feet.



IT'S EASY BEING GREEN.

The St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park has a long history of commitment to conservation of crocodilians and their habitats.

We believe we need to be a leader in conservation both in situ, where our animals can be found in the wild, and ex situ, right here in our own facility. As such, we are striving to make our zoo more environmentally friendly by adopting "greener" practices. With the addition of our new "Go Green" logo, you can find out what practices we are using and how they help to better the planet!



THE LEGEND OF SUTA

Suta comes to us from the island of Timor in Indonesia where he was hand carved from a single Asian mahogany tree. The artist who made Suta was most likely inspired by the world's largest species of crocodilian, the Saltwater Crocodile, which can be found in Indonesia. Suta likes to spend his days on his platform where he has a good view all the Alligator Farm visitors. He loves attention and enjoys listening to people admire his impressive jaws. It is rumored that saying "selamat pagi" (good morning in Indonesian) to Suta pleases the crocodile and brings good luck.



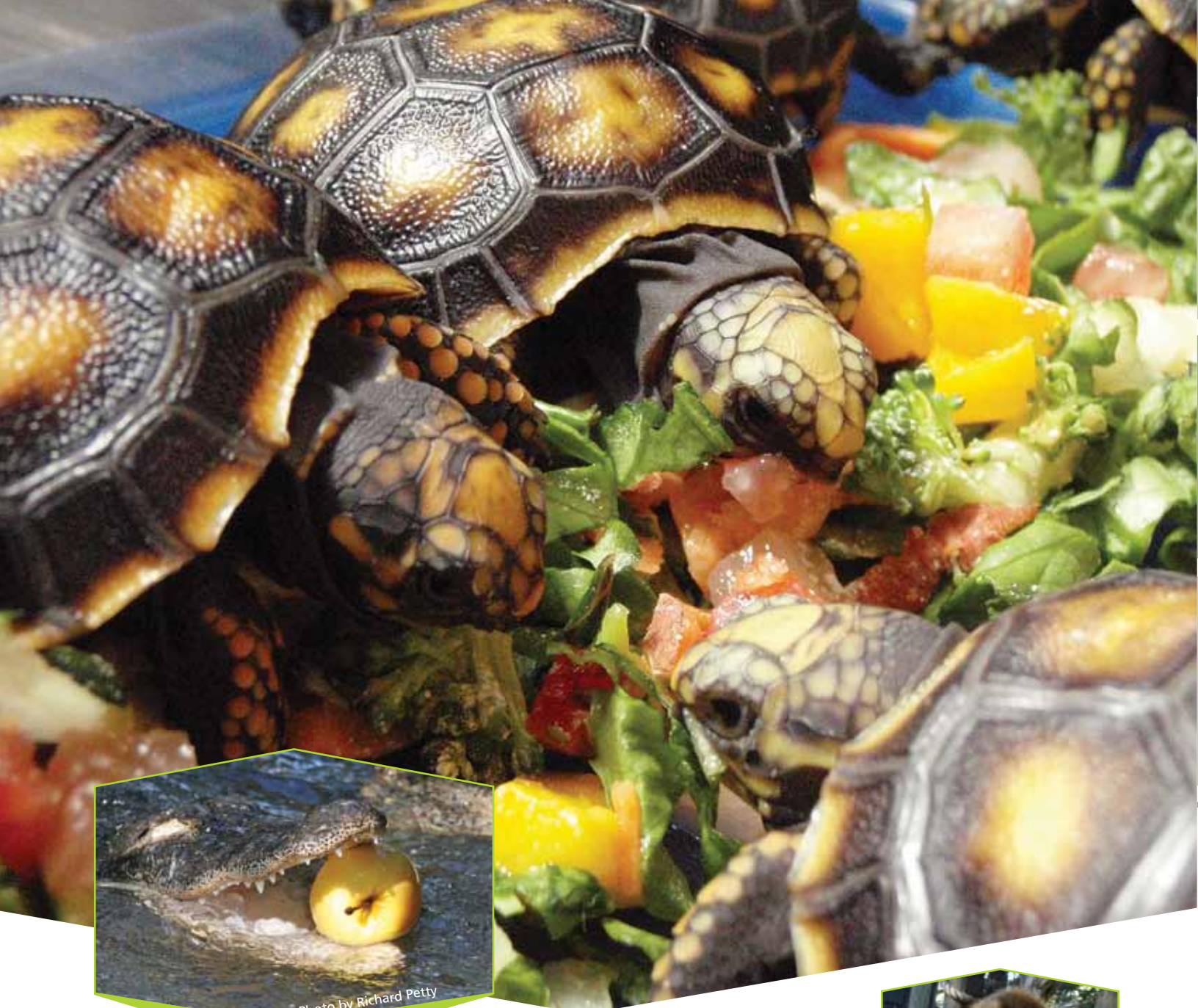


Photo by Richard Petty



Fruitopia

Gen Anderson • Bird & Mammal Curator

Two years ago, the Bird and Mammal department staff planted a variety of fruit trees throughout the zoo. The trees are intended to generate a fresh source of organic fruit for the animals to supplement the produce deliveries received twice weekly.

As the trees mature, the increased fruit supply will hopefully ease the Alligator Farm's grocery bills! There are many benefits to growing our own fruit trees organically: the fruit has a higher nutritional value; it ensures the lack of sprays, waxes, and chemicals; they produce high-quality fruit for pennies; they attract pollinators; and they are good overall for the environment.

Plum, peach, fig, pear, and pomegranate trees were planted

in two locations behind-the-scenes. Zoo guests can admire papaya and loquat trees while walking through Land of Crocodiles, various citrus by the Conservation Center, and figs and loquats in the cassowary's yard. The keepers also harvest wild mulberries, grapes, and bananas for the animals from around the entire zoo property.

Even though the fruit trees were planted primarily for the zoo's birds and mammals, they aren't the only animals to benefit. The tortoises greatly appreciate ripened bunches of harvested bananas, while the alligators chomp down on apples and citrus. So, the next time you visit the zoo, please take an additional moment and see what's fruiting!

With warmer weather, comes more excitement from the alligators!

By Jen Walkowich • Reptile Keeper II

Spring starts the breeding season for many animals, so you should see a lot of activity from the alligators and crocodiles as the males show off how big and handsome they are to the females or protect their territory from other males. Being very social animals, on any given day and at any given moment, you could hear bellowing, growling, and hissing, as well as seeing the water dance on their backs during the bellowing, head slapping on the water, and gentle displays of courtship. So we've included a list of behaviors you're likely to see when you come for a visit. *TIP: Best time is in the morning to see some of these behaviors.*

Good luck!



Geysering

Photo by Bruce Schwedick
Taken at Florida Cypress Gardens.

Bellows & Roars
The bellows and roars start off as sub-audible vibrations from the abdomen, and then pass over the vocal cords. If the alligator is in shallow water, the water will dance off the back. Once one alligator starts, usually many others will follow.



Posturing



Nesting

Bubbling
Courting alligators may go under the other alligator's head and release a series of air bubbles for an effect similar to head rubbing.

Head Rubbing
Gentle rubbing of the head of one alligator to another during mating. The scales on the head are extra sensitive.



Bellows & Roars

Snout Lifting
Females will raise the tip of their snout toward the males to show they are ready to mate.

Head or Jaw Slapping
Slapping the head against the surface of the water for visual and acoustic communication, or rapid clapping of the jaws.

Geyser
Nostrils are held just below the surface of the water and then forcibly exhale air to give off this visual and acoustic communications.



Coral reefs are found in warm, shallow ocean waters around the world. They are made up of the hard skeletons of tiny animals called coral polyps. Coral reefs are home to a wide variety of marine animals, including many species of fish and invertebrates.

Can you find the names of some of the Alligator Farm's coral reef creatures hidden below?
Words can appear vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

N H S I F N W O L C A L U C R E P K B J
Z I H W X S K Y Q W B R O H M N W C P F
B J H C D C S A G S R T W H I O F N H I
P R V C D X R B E O B L Z J N M L Z S J
S A L A R O C N O T T U B N E E R G I I
I J W O T U S T D L B W L Y M N P X F D
H B K E N Y A N T R E E C O R A L Q N A
T V I N X F V E D B N L N Z Q E L Y W M
R U K P M I R H S D E D N A B L A R O S
U W A V S Q A I W D A G D R M C G R L E
M G T V J T N W R M E R L T X A Z T C L
P Z S W K L Y R S C X N M Q M T L J O F
E Y B R Z Q N E M Q Z K I X W N R W S I
T G X T G M L K V T J M J P C E Y N S S
C W L Q Y F Z C W N X T Q G S T Z T A H
O V J N I K P R Y R L K V P B G M V C R

Blue Leg Hermit Crab

Green Button Coral

Long-Spined Sea Urchin

Picasso Clownfish

Coral Banded Shrimp

Kenyan Tree Coral

Long Tentacle Anemone

Serpent Sea Star

Fiji Damsel fish

Lemon Damsel fish

Percula Clownfish

Trumpet Coral

CALLING ALL BUDDING ARTISTS!

Send us a 8.5 X 11 drawing of your favorite part of the Alligator Farm and you could see it in the next issue of the Investigator.

Send artwork to:
St. Augustine Alligator Farm
Attn: Education
999 Anastasia Blvd.
St. Augustine FL 32080

**ZOO CAMP REGISTRATION IS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE!
VISIT WWW.ALLIGATORFARM.COM TO REGISTER YOUR CHILD TODAY.**



Clare Cassidy • Age 5



Chiara Brambilla • Age 6



Connery Cassidy • Age 7



Russell Pardue • Age 6

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WILD
over our exciting
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All camps include zoo tours, hands-on animal presentations, keeper talks, shows, crafts, games, themed activities and FUN, FUN, FUN! Summer Camp is open for students entering 1st through 6th grade. Morning sessions include a camp t-shirt and afternoon camps include camp visor.



**REGISTER
ONLINE TODAY!
at www.alligatorfarm.com**

THINGS WITH WINGS Come explore the lives of some winged wonders including birds, bats, and bugs. Together we will learn what makes their lives so exciting!

ZOO MYTH BUSTERS Discover the fact: or fiction about animal myths. Campers will work together to declare each animal myth confirmed or BUSTED. One fact campers will have an incredible time!

ZOORASSIC PARK Explore a world of living fossils! We will have a wild week encountering animal ancestors and modern dinosaurs. Come uncover the past right here in the present.

YOUR FLORIDA BACKYARD Our own backyard is full of fabulous and interesting wildlife! From alligators and snakes to owls and manatees, campers will investigate the animals that live right under our noses!

HOME SWEET HABITAT Could a polar bear live in the desert? Could a pig live in a tree? Come learn about the diverse habitats found around the globe and what animals can be found there.

CAMP SENSE-SATIONAL Ever wonder how animals see in the dark, hear underwater, and feel without fingers? In this camp we will see how animals make "sense" of the world around them.

WILD IMPRESSIONS From cave drawings in Africa to the art of the Old West, artists have found animals to be one of their favorite subjects. Campers will let the zoo animals be their inspiration for their very own master pieces!

ANIMALS HAVE CLASS Investigate the diverse world of the Animal Kingdom. Examine the differences between the five classes of vertebrates and how they fit into their ecosystems.

**UP COMING
ED•ZOO•CATION**

MAY

Parents Night Out May 7

JUNE

Parents Night Out June 4
• Things with Wings June 21-25
• Zoo Myth Busters June 21-25
• Home Sweet Habitat June 28 - July 2
• Camp Sense-sational June 28 - July 2

JULY

• Zoorassic Park July 5-9
• Your Florida Backyard July 5-9
• Wild Impressions July 12-16
• Animals Have Class July 12-16
• Zoo Myth Busters July 19-23
• Things with Wings July 19-23
• Camp Sense-sational July 26-30
• Home Sweet Habitat July 26-30

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Meet Maria Lowe! Maria enjoys the pleasure of having the coolest office location on property; her office is in the tower that can be seen at the main entrance. Maria returned to the Alligator Farm in January after a year away. While she was away, Maria spent her time in Kuwait with

her husband working at the military bases there. Maria hopes that she will get a week with her husband in April when he will be home training to only then return to the Middle East. Maria has three grown children, one girl and two boys, and is hoping to get a dog in the near future. Maria's favorite part of the zoo is hearing the alligators bellowing and watching peoples reactions that have never seen the bellowing before.