



WILD TALK 2019

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A year with Belle!



Baby Belle

Hayley Mullaney, Assistant Curator, describes the ups and downs of being a 'Human Rhino Mummy'.

Tinkerbelle, or Belle as I like to call her, was born on 2nd October 2017 at around 8am. We noticed straight away that Belle was having an issue with her walking, but we hoped that by the following morning it would have resolved itself. The next morning her foot position was worse and we had to get the vets in to take a look.

In order for her leg to be examined we had to anaesthetise her to do x-rays. Luckily the issue was not as bad as it could have been. The vets were hopeful that a leg cast would help resolve Belle's foot position and give the leg time to strengthen. This meant removing her from mum Nancy to give her the care and treatment required. This is when the stress, tiredness and amazing bond began.

Hand-rearing a Rhino was never something I dreamt I would do. It was a team effort as she needed 24/7 care initially, on top of fulfilling our normal

daily duties. I spent a huge amount of time with Belle taking on the role as her human mummy, as she needed a lot of care, attention and love.

We also had to overcome a lot of small medical issues. D-day came when her cast was removed. [PAGE 2](#) ►



Belle with keeper Hayley



Photo: Harriet Bycroft

Belle out for a walk

It had successfully strengthened the leg muscles and tendons, and she started walking normally. Belle was then moved up to our Rhino House, with her own stall built in our keeper service area, so she could smell the rest of the herd and we could begin the socialising process.

given access. We would do laps of the paddock running and playing. I would encourage mud bathing by rubbing mud onto her.

Soon she began to get too big and boisterous for us to be out with her, so we began integrating her with her mum, Nancy. I have to say that

Belle continued to be fed by us and will do so until she is about 18 months old, but her feeding times have gradually been reduced from 12 feeds a day and now to once a day.

This past year with Belle has been the most rewarding time of my career to date. She is a huge part of

“We bought Belle a large outdoor beanbag as a companion to snuggle up to, which replicated lying next to her mother. This meant we could leave her overnight and just pop in for her feeds.”

We bought Belle a large outdoor beanbag as a companion to snuggle up to, which replicated lying next to her mother. This meant we could leave her overnight and just pop in for her feeds. At birth Belle weighed 67.5kg, but soon she began to grow. She was weighed daily at her 8am feed to make sure her food intake was correct. After 2 weeks the socialisation process began and we started to introduce Belle to her family through gates and fences, and started taking her out for walks around the Rhino paddock. This was my favourite part of the day, as I would take her out for about an hour before the herd were

this terrified me initially as she was still small and we knew it would not take much for her to be crushed or injured if Nancy took a dislike to her. I had to take a step back and watch from our CCTV cameras, as Belle was very attached to me and my presence tended to disrupt her behaviour and we wanted her focus to be on Nancy. Luckily it all went well, and over the following weeks they spent longer and longer together until we could leave them all of the time. We also then started mixing her with the rest of the herd, which I feared, but again the group took to her and she started to become part of the herd.

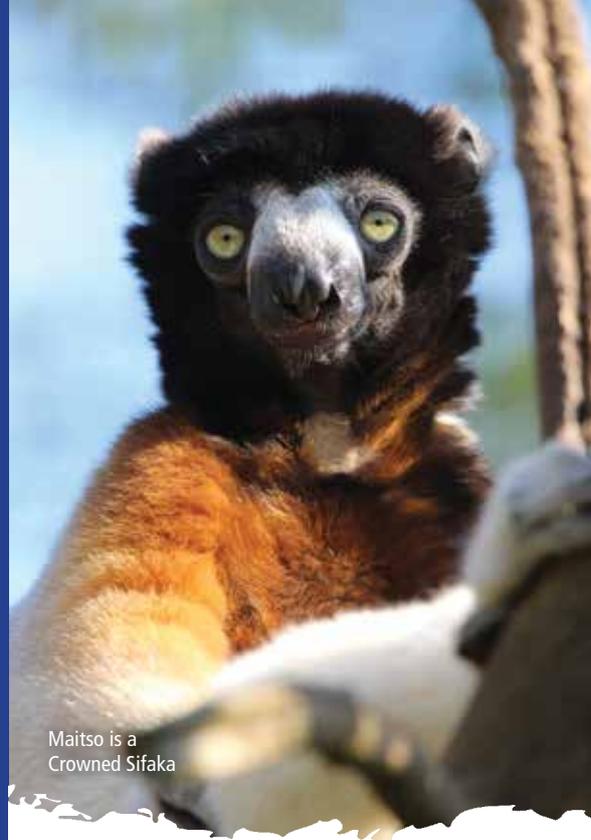
my life and my heart now. A lot of people expect me to be sad about us losing her from the Park, but I am excited, as I know the work we have all done has been for the greater good of the European Breeding Programme. We know that she can go on and contribute to this by becoming a breeding female in a new herd helping to keep the species alive, as the plight of their wild counterparts is a real issue due to poaching. As zoo keepers we care for and love our animals and hope that we can breed them and sustain a captive population to help prevent future extinctions.

No two days are the same

Roxanne Newton explains what her job as a Cover Keeper entails.

Last year saw the arrival of six new Keepers at the Park, including myself. Each Keeper will remain on one of the four sections at the Park (Birds, Large Mammals, Primates and Small Mammals and Reptiles). However, I work a unique role here at the Park. I am a Cover Keeper, meaning I get to work on all four sections. While every Keeper will insist that no two days are the same as a Keeper, I really do mean it when I say it. On the Monday I could be working with the Zebra and by Thursday I am working with the Crocodile Monitor.

Being the Park's Cover Keeper is the best job. I have the opportunity to work with everything here, including animals that I never imagined I would take care of, like Giraffe. We should never have favourites when it comes to the animals, but there are definitely a few animals I really enjoy working with on each section. On the Primate section, the new Crowned Sifaka in Madagascar, 'Maitso', and his other Lemur companions always keep me busy. The Cassowary and Whistling Ducks have so far been my favourite birds. Large Mammals is a fantastic opportunity to work with the rhinos, including 'Belle', and our pair of Giant Anteaters. On the Reptile department I get to work with an array of amphibians, invertebrates and our breeding group of Crocodile Lizards. I also get to work with every other Keeper here at the Park and with our mix of passions and interests it makes the next day a bit different from the last.



Maitso is a Crowned Sifaka

Meeting Maitso

Nat Horner, our Deputy Head of the Primates Section describes one of our newest arrivals.

We received a special delivery on 14th August 2018 in the form of a 5 year old male Crowned Sifaka named Maitso. He came to us from Apenheul Zoo in Holland and can be seen within our Lemur walkthrough 'Madagascar'. He shares his new home with a family of Collared Lemurs and a troop of Ring-tailed Lemurs.

Maitso came to us from Apenheul Zoo in Holland

After a brief time of getting used to the enclosure on his own he was quickly introduced to his new room-mates. There was a lot of interest from all sides with lots of vocalising and scent marking going on, all very positive interactions. Maitso has now made himself thoroughly at home, with his favourite spots being high in the trees or on top of the Lemur house. These all happen to be the areas that get the best amount of sunshine.



Belle being bottle fed by Roxy

Wild Wetlands

Head Gardener Tim Miles, with our Tree Consultant Tom Dunlop and Plantsman Roy Cheek, are undertaking a major landscape project in time for the Park's 50th anniversary.

After passing through the entrance gate, visitors can see a large paddock occupied by our Ostriches. This area has been divided diagonally by a new fence which allows these splendid birds to be viewed more easily. Beyond this new fence much of the ground is poorly drained so in the autumn of 2018, we scraped out an area at the lowest point allowing this to become a wetland which will be planted to encourage native wildlife.



Ostrich

Beyond this new wetland were the remains of an old arboretum planted in Victorian times, whose specimen trees such as Cork Oak had virtually all disappeared. Colonies of self-sown sycamore and ash had become dominant so we clear-felled the whole area in 2018, leaving just the best mature oaks, beech and lime trees.

In time for the Park's 50th anniversary in 2020, this area will be replanted as a new arboretum with a range of native and exotic species to add to the Park's already extensive tree collection. The soil ranges from damp to well-drained and it has a sunny sheltered aspect, allowing us to accommodate a diversity of varieties. We are particularly keen to include trees which colour well in the autumn.

The whole area in time will evolve into a haven for wildlife, as well as providing a stunning backdrop to the car park and Ostrich paddock.

James Alexander Sinclair

Tulip Fever!

Christine Beausire (left) and Mandy Palmer (centre) of our Gardens Team tell the story behind the spring-time display on the south terrace of the Manor House.

One of the highlights of a late spring-time visit to the Park is the incredible impact of our tulips. Borders and planters in the Walled Garden, around the Manor House and throughout the Park are illuminated by over one hundred varieties of all different shapes and colour. We hope one of the most striking will be a display of bright pink tulips in the borders in front of the Manor House.

On a bright November day in 2018, garden designer and TV presenter James Alexander Sinclair helped us plant 1,000 pink Tulip "Caresse" bulbs, in aid of the charity UCARE, for which he is their Ambassador.

UCARE is an Oxford based charity dedicated to urology cancer research and education. The pink tulip is the emblem of the charity and by buying and planting these

bulbs the Park is helping to support and raise awareness of UCARE's work.

TV presenter James Alexander Sinclair helped us plant 1,000 pink tulip bulbs

Also helping to plant the tulip bulbs were the Founder of the charity, Professor David Cranston, Keith and Betty Jamieson (Keith was a patient and is now a supporter of the charity) and Valerie Berry, UCARE's Chief Executive. We look forward to welcoming them back here to see their handiwork in full bloom.

For more information about this wonderful charity, please visit www.ucareoxford.org.uk

Zoo Explorer Day

Education Assistant Bethan Williams reports on our first ever day for Uniformed Groups.

On a glorious sunny day in June 2018, we held our first ever Zoo Explorer Day. Together with the second "Uniform day" in October, over 500 Beavers, Rainbows, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides visited the Park. Throughout the day the groups got to take part in lots of special activities including games, crafts and even a private talk from one of our Keepers including preserved Rhino pool! They also got a trail to complete whilst exploring the Park and, to top it all off, received a special woven badge at the end of their day.

"I've brought my children here for years. It is a great way to introduce them to wildlife."

Bear Grylls, Chief Scout and TV presenter

The day was great fun (although very hard work!) and feedback from the events was overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to all the groups that came for being such great participants.



1st Tackley Scout Group

In 2019 there will be two more exclusive dates. We have already been in touch with the groups who missed out the first time. We welcome uniformed groups throughout the year. There is plenty to see, do and discover at the Park with feeding talks, a unique trail booklet and a woven badge especially designed for uniformed groups. The trail booklet encourages children to discover new animals, learn new and interesting facts and have a great time at the Park.

As a result of our new Zoo Explorer Days and trails, 2018 saw nearly five times as many uniform groups visiting us compared to 2017. We look forward to welcoming many more to the Park in future fun filled days of discovery!

Marvellous Marley

Bird Keeper Helen Lawless talks about a surprise hand-rearing of one of our Humboldt Penguin chicks.

Here at the Park our colony of 24 Humboldt Penguins start breeding in early March until late June.

Adult Humboldts start to fatten themselves up for their annual moult at the end of July. This is where they exchange their old feathers by growing a brand-new set. Marley hatched so late in the year that her parents unfortunately started to neglect her by not feeding her on a regular basis, so Keepers made the decision to pull Marley from the nest and hand-rear her.

When Marley arrived in our hand-rearing unit, she weighed 370g and was covered in a soft downy fluff. We fed her on a diet of small whole sprats which she took to like a duck

to water. Marley gained weight rapidly. Soon her downy fluff was replaced by juvenile feathers and she was finally big enough to join the rest of the group. We placed a red and green tag on her left wing for identification. In September she went out with the group and remained with them. A week later, Keepers

were happy to record that she had increased her weight to 4.2kg.

Visitors can see Marley spending time with the other birds in the group on the beach or doing her other favourite activity: swimming!

Marley loves swimming

Marley hatched so late in the year that her parents unfortunately started to neglect her

Ugly duckling

Keeper Calum O'Flaherty describes how the bird department stepped in to save a Scarlet Ibis chick.

This year the bird team have had a busy time incubating and raising numerous chicks from Currasows to White Spotted Laughing Thrushes. Each chick provides a new but welcome challenge to take on.

We had another successful year with our flock of Scarlet Ibis parent-rearing several chicks! However, on the morning of 14th August, one of the bird team was greeted by the characteristic noisy sounds of a hungry ibis chick. Unfortunately, L.J. (as he has subsequently been named)

Unfortunately L.J. had fallen out of his nest during the night

had fallen out of his nest during the night. He miraculously survived the fall but we were unable to determine which nest he had come from, so the decision was taken to hand-rear him. He was grey, no bigger than the palm of your hand and was estimated to be only four days old. Scarlet Ibis chicks are born with grey feathers and slowly turn pink to red as they get older.

Due to comprehensive notes kept on previous experiences of hand rearing this species, raising L.J. was a relatively easy task with everything going to plan. He is quite a handful but he has become a firm favourite in the team.

L.J. is now fully integrated back in with the rest of the flock in the large aviary by the Meerkats. You might even see his first pink feather!



L.J. the Scarlet Ibis chick

Edible Garden

Deputy Head Gardener Jan Lambourn outlines the thinking behind our newest garden project.

A re-landscaping project that provides improved access to the Children's Farmyard has incorporated a new Edible Garden. The challenge was to grow exciting displays of produce with mid and late season interest, often with extended fruiting and the introduction of more unusual varieties. Judging by visitor comments the final result has been much enjoyed and has stimulated the curiosity of our younger visitors!

The style of planting is unlike a traditional allotment garden. The principles of 'agroforestry' have been adopted, where permanent trees are under-planted with annual fruit, vegetables and flowers in random groups. To add height, wigwams of Runner Beans, French Beans and Sweet Potatoes are integrated, with ornamental climbers that wind their way around hazel and metal supports. A back-drop of curved hazel hurdles has been used to train Grape Vines, Peach, Tomatoes, Kiwis, Goji berries, Gooseberries and Blackberries onto the structure.

Tomatoes, Aubergines, Peppers and Chillies all thrive in a sheltered position opposite the barn entrance, a site that benefits from the hottest part of the day. A hint of 'Cottage Garden' is suggested by Sweet Williams, alongside shorter sunflowers that provide a contemporary 'twist'. Bees and butterflies have enjoyed these nectar sources and ensured good fruit pollination. On a warm day, fragrant herbs such as basil, fennel, purple sage, lavender and lemon verbena have provided visitors with a sensory treat as they brush past them. The 'cucurbits' (cucumbers, courgettes, squashes and

melons) are also given free rein to scramble amongst other plants. For our autumn visitors, a variety of colourful pumpkins continued to grow.

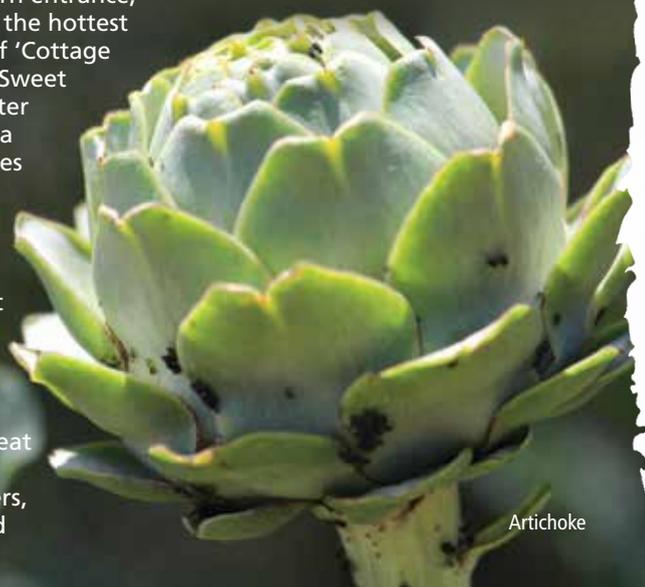
Crops are left displayed on the plants for as long as possible and then provided to the Farmyard kitchen for the animals. The Peacocks have taken to helping themselves to the chard and also developed a taste for the fresh basil leaves!



Tomatoes



Chard



Artichoke

A tiny hatchling

James Headleand, Deputy Head of Reptiles, is very proud of the breeding success of our Sailfin Chameleons.

All Chameleons are expert climbers, having specialist hands to cling onto and climb in the bushes they call home. Chameleons are best known for their extraordinarily long tongue, which in some species can be twice the length of its body. In human terms, that would be about 10 to 12 feet! In addition to all these adaptations, the eyes move independently which help the Chameleon aim and fire its long tongue at food.

We have two species of Chameleon at the Park, the Panther Chameleon which originates from Madagascar and the Sailfin Chameleon which is found in the mountains of Cameroon, Africa. The Sailfin Chameleon prefer a cooler environment compared to the Panther Chameleon and some of our other reptiles in the reptile house and both enjoy a very high humidity.

We are proud to be only the second UK collection to breed Sailfin Chameleons. There is not a lot of information about the husbandry or breeding of this species, but what we have found is that the females can lay clutches of up to 12 eggs and due to their native cool climate will take almost 6 months to incubate. When it was born it weighed a tiny 0.4g! The hatchling's diet includes fruit flies and hatchling crickets. Please note these Chameleons aren't on show.

Sailfin Chameleon hatchling



The wonderful world of invertebrates

James Headleand shares his passion for Invertebrates, otherwise known as bugs.

There are over 1.25 million species of invertebrates in the world, with the UK home to almost 40,000 species. What is an invertebrate? It is an animal that is lacking a backbone; some may cover themselves in hard armour such as beetles, and some may rely purely on muscle such as snails and slugs.

The Park was one of the first UK zoos to have a specific house dedicated to invertebrates, which was opened in 2012 by Bear Grylls. The house holds almost 30 different species from all over the world. These include our colony of 20,000+ leaf cutting ants which originate from South America; they require fresh leaves, fruits and flowers every day and have up to 30 different types of food. The only animal in the colony allowed to breed is the queen who creates all the ants within the colony, including the bulky soldier ants, and the foragers who do the hard work and locate, cut and bring back all food to the queen in her nest.

The tailless whip scorpions are an unusual species, originating from Tanzania, Africa

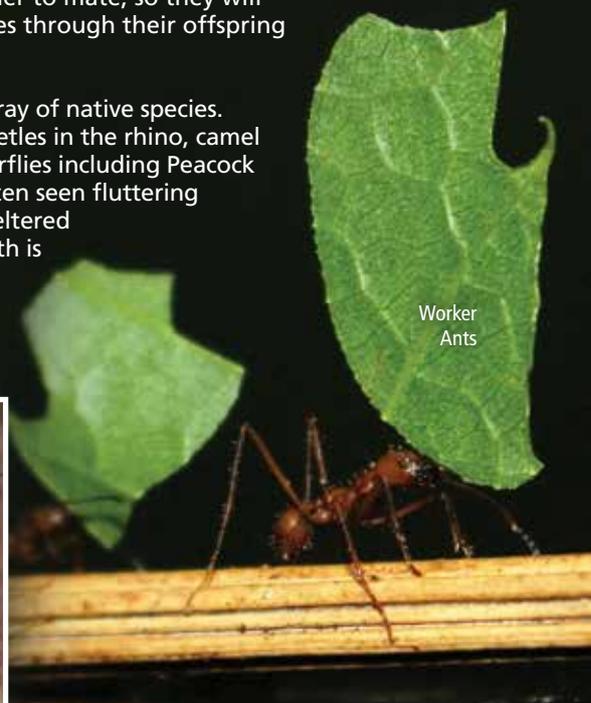
The tailless whip scorpions are an unusual species, originating from Tanzania, Africa. These bizarre looking creatures are neither spider nor scorpion but are in their own family group, the Amblypygids, which translates as "blunt rump". They have no venom, instead relying on quick reflexes and huge grabbing claws to catch their prey. We are home to a communal colony of 50, which breed regularly. The mother is very caring and once hatched, the young scorpions will climb onto mother's back as protection until they are big enough to fend for themselves.

We have many types of stick insects, which originate from all over the tropics. All these species thrive on a diet of bramble and privet which is found on the Park's grounds. Some of our largest grow to 30cm long, others such as our Myranoides stick insect wear beautiful greens and metallic blue colouration. Some stick insects take their stick career so seriously in the wild they may never come across another to mate, so they will produce direct clones of themselves through their offspring to ensure the species continues!

The Park is also home to a huge array of native species. Keepers often find native dung beetles in the rhino, camel and giant tortoise paddocks. Butterflies including Peacock and Gate keeper butterflies are often seen fluttering around the open grassland and sheltered woodland. The elephant hawk moth is a very common moth and is often seen in the early evenings feeding on the huge array of plants that call the Park home.



Tailless Whip Scorpion



Worker Ants

A Celebration of the Gardens at the Park

Harriet Rycroft, from our Gardens Team, tells us about a brand new Park publication...

We wanted this 128 page book to cater for visitors and knowledgeable gardeners alike, so the emphasis is on pictures – we have 470 in the book! It works both as an attractive souvenir and as an insight into the work that goes into the gardens here.

Roy Lancaster did us the honour of writing a lovely foreword, not only is he a great friend of the Park (and of Head Gardener Tim Miles) but he really understands how fascinating the world's flora and fauna are and the joy of being able to see such a wide variety of both in one place. We hope our book will help to spread that joy to an even wider audience.



Price £15. Available from the Park gift shop or online shop at www.cotswoldwildlifepark.co.uk

All Butter Shortbread

Catering Manager Steve Spooner lets us into the secret of one of the Park's delicious home bakes.



This is a firm favourite with our visitors and is so simple to make. It's also a good first baking project with young children.

- 330g Butter
- 330g Plain flour
- 165g Ground Almonds
- 165g Caster sugar

Place all the ingredients into a mixing bowl and on a slow speed mix into a dough. Remove from the bowl and

press into a 10 inch/25cm round flan dish. Don't worry too much about how level it is as it will self-level while cooking. Bake in a preheated oven at 160oC or gas mark 3 for about 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and sprinkle liberally with caster sugar while still hot. When warm cut into 12 equal triangles.

If you want to move it up to a different level try making coconut rice pudding to serve it with.

Coconut Rice Pudding

- 1 tin coconut milk
- Milk to make up to 2 pints
- 4 oz Butter (half a block)
- 8 oz Pudding rice
- 4 oz Sugar
- Desiccated Coconut to garnish

Make a bain-marie by putting a small pan into a larger one and half filling with water. Into the smaller pan put the coconut milk made up to 2 pints with some milk. Add the butter and warm on the stove top. When the butter has melted add the rice and sugar. Cover with a lid and continue to cook for two hours stirring occasionally. Remember to keep topping up the large pan with water.

Once cooked, serve with a dusting of toasted desiccated coconut and a piece of shortbread. Enjoy!



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