



Lubee News

Spring/Summer 2005

Lubee Launches Education Outreach Program

Nocturnal Adventures

Lubee is excited to announce the start of Nocturnal Adventures, our educational outreach program, designed to bring the fascinating world of bats into the classroom. Our programs are designed for all ages and can be applied to a variety of curriculums. More information about the presentations, as well as scheduling can be found on our website at www.lubee.org or by emailing us at info@lubee.org



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Update on Madagascar Flying Fox Conservation Initiative in Eastern Madagascar

Since 1998, a small Malagasy non-profit group called ACCE (Arongam-panihy Culture, Communication, and Environment) has been working in Eastern Madagascar to help conserve local populations of flying foxes and their forests. The Madagascar Flying Fox (*Pteropus rufus*) is the largest of the three endemic fruit bats existing on the island, and is the most severely threatened by hunting for food by people and destruction of its remaining roost sites through slash and burn activities.

In 2003, Lubee joined forces with ACCE and Dr. Richard Jenkins, who leads “Madagasikari Voakajy”, a national organization working to protect the threatened bats of Madagascar, to support a pioneering conservation initiative engaging local volunteers in monitoring bat roost sites. Using local volunteers (rice farmers) trained by ACCE and Dr Jenkins, “Ekipa Lubee” or Team Lubee was created. Members of Ekipa Lubee made monthly counts of bats at seven flying fox roosts during 2003 and 2004. Participants not only recorded flying fox activity throughout the year, but also patrolled the areas for brush fires and human disturbances.

The team found a great deal of variation in the numbers of bats found at the roost sites throughout the year, with only two of the seven sites being used consistently. Some absences from particular roosts were attributed to disturbances nearby, such as large herds of cattle and their tenders passing through, or the presence of hunters. However, it is still uncertain whether these patterns of movement between sites are driven mainly by human interference, or if they are a regular part of *P. rufus* behavior. This issue becomes particularly important this year, as a local timber company gets ready to harvest its planted pine forests that surround the roosts. These pine forests serve as a buffer, and without these buffer zones, the roosts become even more exposed

to human contact and interference. ACCE and Madagasikari Voakajy (MV) have actively engaged the timber company that owns the pine forests set to be cleared in bat conservation meetings, and as a result they have agreed to leave 1 km buffer zones of pines around each of the flying fox roosts. Currently ACCE/MV are working to ensure that these zones are marked before clearing begins. Funds are urgently needed to help secure this agreement. If you would like to contribute to this specific project please visit www.lubee.org to make an online donation.

Future plans for Ekipa Lubee involve expansion of monitoring to include additional roost sites, and local education efforts aimed at preventing and containing brush fires. Further study is proposed to determine the causes for roost site switching. This data will help predict not only the potential impact of future habitat changes, but also help focus continued conservation efforts.



Madame Julie of Ekipa Lubee - who walked over 5 hours to take Prof Paul Racey and the English Ambassador to visit one of the *Pteropus* roosts being monitored.

AZA Bat TAG Regional Collection Plan Meeting



Bat TAG participants (Photo courtesy of Steve Wing)

In February of this year, Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, IL hosted the Bat Taxon Advisory Group's Regional Collection Plan Meeting. Lubee director, Dr. Allyson Walsh, and curator Dana LeBlanc attended along with Steven Wing, Peter Riger, Kim Lengel, Colleen Lynch, Sarah Long, and Louise Bier. Their goals were to help set priorities for North American breeding targets for 13 species of bats that are current or proposed Population Management Plan (PMP) or Species Survival Plan® (SSP) species. Using Population Management 2000 (PM 2000), a software designed to interpret and manage genetic data, they examined the genetic diversity

of each population. Based on the studbook and ISIS data for each species, as well as the expertise of the participants, and using a minimum goal of maintaining at least 80% of original gene diversity over the next 100 years as the standard for determining breeding viability, each population was considered and breeding goal targets were set. These were set to maximize genetic diversity, as well as accommodate limitations of space constraints, and requirements for bat exhibits in zoos across North America. These goals included a shift towards managing *P. hypomelanus* as a mid-size flying fox species for display over *P. giganteus* due to lack of genetic

diversity in the *P. giganteus* population. *P. pumilus* and *P. poliocephalus* both received DERP classification - an animal for Display, Education, Research, and Planning, while *P. vampyrus* maintained its status as a PMP. *P. rodricensis*, an SSP, will continue to be bred to maintain a stable population. Although some new founders are expected in Philadelphia, Lubee's focus is to remain on the existing population.

Flat Stanley Visits Lubee

This spring, the Lubee staff enjoyed a visit from Flat Stanley. Flat Stanley is a school project based on a book by Jeff Brown, in which a boy named Stanley is squashed flat by a falling bulletin board, and ends up traveling the world through the mail. Each participating school class draws their own unique version of Stanley and sends him off to see the world. Stanley gets his picture taken on his travels, and the photos are sent back to the classroom for the kids to learn about the world

through the experiences of their own creation. There are pictures of Stanley in Antarctica with penguins, in space, at the Oscars, in Egypt at the pyramids - all over the world - including Lubee!! Our particular Stanley came from Highlands Elementary School in Huntsville, Alabama, and spent the day with the keepers and bats. He particularly enjoyed hanging out with Kuri, our Spectacled Flying Fox who never misses a photo opportunity.



Flat Stanley & Kuri (Photo courtesy of Pamela Thomas)



Because of their feeding habits, flowering and fruiting trees are an important part of the daily lives of our bats, not only a source of food, but also as an excellent source of enrichment in their lives. Some of the most common plants used for enrichment purposes include, but are not limited to, Wax Myrtle, Figs, Hibiscus, banana, pear, roses,

Browse Garden Project Underway

daylilies, Wisteria, Willow, Jujube, and grapevines. One of the challenges we face in keeping these animals is in providing them with such a wide range of appealing flowering and fruiting trees & plants to eat. While we are able to grow some plants within the bats enclosures, mostly we search for trees & plants that grow on our property to take cuttings from, and hang these cuttings along the inside of the bats enclosures. Unfortunately, in an effort to cut back trees from nearby power lines, the city

recently removed many of the trees and plants we use, leaving us without an adequate supply for the bats.

To replace the lost plants, we are currently planting a browse garden that will be protected from being cut down in the future. With a limited budget we are unable to plant such a garden without outside assistance. Having received the offer of several plant donations from local nurseries, including Grandiflora, Barr Nursery, Tropics Traditions, West

Farms, Harmony Gardens, and Willis Nursery, along with the Alachua County Extension Master Gardeners help and advice, we are able to finally begin this valuable project. If you would like to help, either with plant donations or help planting and maintaining the garden, your contributions would be very much appreciated. Please email us at info@lubee.org for more information.