

The Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, Paignton Zoo
Environmental Park, Living Coasts & Newquay Zoo

Annual Review & Accounts 2010-11



From the Chairman

David Stradling

The actions we took last year to control costs in the light of declining visitor numbers to the south-west of England have been proved correct. However, in the face of yet another miserable August weather-wise, the decline continued during 2011 and another financial loss will be recorded, albeit substantially less than in 2010. This is probably just a cyclical effect, but if it is not, and something has fundamentally changed in the way that British people take their holidays, then further re-structuring of the finances of our Trust and its zoos may be required in the future.

These are challenging times and trying to predict what will happen in 2012 and beyond is extremely difficult so caution must prevail. As a result we carried out very little capital work during the year and even maintenance spending had to be reduced. Despite this our animal collections have done very well, with lots of new and important births and acquisitions to report. Additionally our conservation programmes in the UK and overseas have continued to function well and we hope that the world's biodiversity is a little less at risk as a result of our efforts.

I would therefore like to extend my thanks to all our staff and trustees for their hard work. In particular I would like to say goodbye and grateful thanks to Paignton Zoo's long-serving Head of Education, Rob Lovell, who has retired, and to trustee Jamie Christon who was made an offer he could not refuse and has moved to Anglesey.

Southern cassowary



Animal collection



Golden mantella

Reduced capital and maintenance spends at all three sites have given us the opportunity to focus on our core activities, conservation and education, without, for the most part, the distractions of budgets, building schedules and creative exhibit design. Having said that, some small scale renovations did allow the re-opening of Toad Hall at Newquay Zoo, and construction of a 'mini-beasts' exhibit at Living Coasts, but mostly we were able to concentrate on animal husbandry.

Overall it has been an outstanding year for births and hatches, including a number of first breedings such as red river hogs, Marabou storks, emerald starlings and toco toucans at Paignton, crowned lemurs, forest dragons and Philippine cloud rats at Newquay, and blue-spotted stingrays at Living Coasts. Given the investment in new facilities in recent years the success with amphibians, where no less than 15 species reproduced across the sites, was particularly pleasing. The demands of breeding programmes meant that the opportunities to add new species to the collections were, on the face of it, limited but Philippine crocodiles, Philippine ducks, radiated tortoises, Eurasian oystercatchers, red-necked ostriches, and ring-tailed lemurs were all highly significant additions and increase the diversity and conservation significance of our holdings.

Departures were relatively few but the transfer of Gringo and Luna, our South American fur seals back to Hamburg Zoo, and of Paignton's black rhino, Zuri, to Chester Zoo were noteworthy. Finally, the veterinary skills of the team at Paignton were extended further when glaucoma and cataracts necessitated the removal of one of Duchess' eyes. Elephant and vet team came through the ordeal with flying colours.

Money matters

Financially, 2011/12 was another difficult year for the group as the effects of the recession continued to be felt. Total visitor numbers fell for the third successive year from 741,875 in 2009/10 to 724,061 in 2010/11, a fall of 2.4%.

Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust (WWCT) increased the funds available to its charitable activities with a surplus for the year of £49,569. The Field Conservation and Research department achieved an income of £28,116. It continued to provide financial support to several research projects in Africa and elsewhere and assisted the Field Studies Council by contributing to the running of Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve. The Net Assets of the Trust on 31st October 2011 stood at £10,614,077

South West Environmental Parks Ltd (SWEPL) continued to operate Paignton and Newquay Zoos. It provided financial support to Living Coasts totalling £310,000 and to conservation projects in Africa and elsewhere of £81,799

Paignton Zoo's visitor numbers fell from 467,704 in 2009/10 to 454,474 in 2010/11. Visitors to Newquay were up 4.4% to 167,614 as a result of discounted entry prices. Income however was slightly down as a result of the discounting. The income for the two zoos was down by nearly £1/2 million and despite

cost cutting measures SWEPL recorded a loss for the year of £235,160. This is an improvement on 2009/10 when the loss (before exceptional items) was £656,290, but still disappointing.

Visitors to Living Coasts fell to just under 102,000; a reduction of 10.5% and the company remains heavily dependent on donations from SWEPL. A number of factors impacted on the visitor numbers in 2010/11 and the forecast for 2011/12 is for a modest increase in numbers as Living Coasts will be opening its new otter exhibit. The expectation is that Living Coasts will continue to require support for the foreseeable future.

South West Zoo Enterprises Limited, the group's trading company, performed very well given the difficult economic conditions and the reduced number of visitors. Turnover of just over £3.45 million was 5.5% down on last year; however the company increased its profits (which it donated to SWEPL) by 8% to £543,311.

In light of the 2010/11 performance further cost cutting measures have been implemented for 2011/12 as the group continues to restructure its finances to ensure that it will be able to support its charitable activities in the future.