

November 2006

LEMUR LATITUDES

critters with attitude VOL. 4 #2

New Lemurs Arrive on the Red-Eye Flight

The Myakka City Lemur Reserve welcomed two new mongoose lemurs to the reserve on October 13th. Felix and Estella made the long journey from Portland, Oregon to Tampa, including an unexpected four hour delay in Houston, Texas. Despite arriving in Florida at 2AM, both lemurs adapted quickly

to their temporary home in the Michael & Jean Martin Quarantine Shelter, boldly exploring their new surroundings. Felix is ten years old and, until now, he has never had the opportunity to breed. Estella is fourteen years old and has given birth to several offspring. The transfer of the pair was

recommended by the AZA's Mongoose Lemur Species Survival Plan (SSP) with the mandate to breed. The breeding of Estella and Felix will make a positive contribution to the genetic and demographic diversity of the captive mongoose lemur population.



Estella (left) and Felix (right) sit in their nest box, waiting for breakfast.

Anticipated Arrivals

On November 11th, LCF staff members travel to Duke University Lemur Center (DULC) to pick up five Sanford's lemurs, *Eulemur sanfordi*. These spectacular lemurs are listed by the most recent IUCN Red List as endangered. Like many *Eulemur* species, the Sanford's lemur captive population is troubled by demographic and genetic challenges: the entire population is derived from only four lemurs and the aging individuals have not reproduced in many years. LCF hopes that the first five individuals will be only the beginning of a larger research group. By emphasizing research as well as captive breeding, the reserve's captive population can make a greater contribution to conservation efforts in the wild. The reserve is

also expecting three common brown lemurs, *Eulemur fulvus fulvus*, from ZooAtlanta the third week of November. The pair were seized by government authorities in response to unacceptable housing and care provided by their original owners. ZooAtlanta offered to provide temporary homes for the pair, ensuring a safe location for the female to give birth to a healthy male. Hearing of LCF's dedication to lemurs, and especially brown lemurs, officials at ZooAtlanta generously donated the three lemurs to the reserve. Look for further updates and photographs of these lemurs to be posted to the LCF website in mid-December - follow the "What's New!" and "Our Lemurs" links on the homepage.

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Report from the Field: Tampolo Forest Station

Penelope Bodry-Sanders

In September, I went to Madagascar with Mary Fussell, LCF artist and one of my closest friends. While we had several adventures, our main objective was to spend time at Tampolo Forest Station, our sister reserve, and to inspect the LCF guesthouse under construction. Our days were packed with official meetings and unexpected delights but my report here will focus specifically on time spent at Tampolo.

Our partners in Madagascar, *ESSA-Forêts* - the Forestry Department at University of Antananarivo - hosted our visit with aplomb. Mary and I were accompanied by Jo Alijimy, executive assistant to and sister of our principal partner, Joelisoa Ratsirarson, and by Joel's colleague, Jeannin Ranaivonasy, who set schedules, answered endless questions with affability and patience, and served as chief translator. Ndrina was our excellent driver who safely negotiated the mountainous roads. Joel's tight schedule, due to his responsibilities as Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests, did not permit his joining us in Tampolo. However, we did manage to meet him in Antananarivo at which time he announced the good news that Tampolo Forest Station was elevated to the status of *Système des aires Protégées de Tampolo* (Protected Area System of Tampolo) as part of the Durban Convention promise made by President Marc Ravalomanana to increase the protected areas of Madagascar by a third.

I'd been to Tampolo for very brief visits twice before and was happy to finally have the luxury of time to experience its "*geni loci*" (spirit of the place). The staff was on hand to greet us and to ensure a full and pleasant sojourn. It had been raining and cool but that did not deter us from our hike to the Indian Ocean through the forest that was bountiful in blooming orchids and tree ferns. We went with Henri Rafilipoarijaona, Chief of Tampolo, Mad Randrianasolo, his assistant, and Ramaroson, forester. They identified the flora and fauna as we proceeded and Mad, in particular, was amazing at mimicking bird calls and identifying medicinal plants. Even though seven species of lemurs inhabit the forest, including two diurnal taxa, we did not encounter them; we did hear the familiar contact calls of bamboo lemurs and were thrilled to know they

were there. I cannot stress enough how dense the forest is, making tracking of animals difficult and slow. That said, when we went out again for a night walk, equipped with headlamps for catching eye-shine, we saw 29 lemurs, mostly mouse lemurs and woolly lemurs, who seem to favor the cut paths. Our nocturnal trek was enchanting – and exhausting as well after 7 ½ hours of walking!

A project managed by Ramaroson is underway to habituate one of the three groups of brown lemurs so they will be more accessible to researchers. Fruit is distributed on an elevated feeding platform twice a day while Ramaroson sits quietly nearby. It will take time, patience and perseverance to accomplish this goal, but it seems to be working - the lemurs came a couple of times while we were there. We visited the Tampolo fish farm, where cichlids are being bred for food, and the tree nursery, where indigenous saplings are nurtured to replace invasive species and trees that have been cut down for fuel. Tampolo staff is also teaching villagers good beekeeping techniques and sustainable fishing in Lac Tampolo.

After Theogene, one of the foresters, negotiated with Betsimisiraka village elders, we were given permission to visit the sacred tombs near Lac Tampolo. The Malagasy people are known for their distinctive and complex burial rituals which inevitably center on honoring their ancestors. As we neared the tombs, one of the elders addressed the ancestors assuring them that we respected their traditions and meant no harm.



Tampolo Staff (l. to r.) Ramaroson, Vivian, Theogene, Olivia, Miasa, Ndrina, Andre, Henrielson Rafilipoarijaona (Chief of Tampolo Forest Station) Mad, and Jo (missing - Jeannin).

He asked their permission for our visit and offered the ancestors gifts of rum. The ceremonial rum was poured first into altar vessels, then on the ground and finally into folded banana leaf cups and given to all present. The canoe-shaped coffins are massed above ground in family buildings. After our visit and prayers, the elder thanked the ancestors for allowing us to join them in their holy place. We also visited that part of Tampolo Forest where Betsimisiraka village women place their still-born babies in enormous bird nest ferns up in the trees, making the forest off-limits to the living. It may be this practice that has helped Tampolo forest avoid being leveled for slash and burn agriculture. I found the whole experience poignant and was grateful to partake in these intimate yet communal traditions.

During our stay, Mary conducted a couple of improvised art workshops with the children and foresters. While in 2005 Deborah Ross taught the children painting techniques, Mary concentrated more on exercises to free their minds and stimulate their imaginations. As with last year, their work was incredible, prompting Mary to "curate" an art exhibition in the museum and interpretative center LCF helped to build. It was a huge success as the children brought their parents and siblings to the "opening" and everyone had a grand time. One of our main goals was to check on the progress of the Reed & Barbara Toomey Tranosoa Tampolo – the

guesthouse that will serve visiting researchers – and we were impressed with how beautifully built it is. But the experience went way beyond an inspection trip. We loved being with the hardworking staff, enjoying especially meal-times which were always full of good hardy Malagasy food (rice + almost anything), camaraderie, hilarious attempts to communicate and genuine good will. We have forged a tighter bond with our Malagasy colleagues and it is for this that we are so grateful. We clearly share a vision for the future of Madagascar and know that working together we can make a difference in its conservation imperative.



Reed & Barbara Toomey Tranosoa Tampolo, guesthouse underwritten by LCF.

Reserve Acquires Homo Habilis

The Myakka City Lemur Reserve has grown amazingly in the past year : LCF has constructed a second lemur enclosure, the Marilyn K. North Lemur Lodge, and the Mianatra Center for Lemur Studies, and also purchased guesthouse and staff housing, Tranaosa Myakka. These facilities contribute to the mission of the LCF but also increase maintenance responsibilities. Jerry Cade, *Homo habilis* extraordinaire, was hired to help meet the extra demand created by additional facilities and lemurs. (*Homo habilis* or "handy man" was believed to be the first toolmaker). Jerry and his wife, Sheree, recently moved to Florida from Minnesota to escape the snow and cold weather. He and Sheree take advantage of Florida's wonderful climate as they are certified scuba divers and enjoy hiking, fishing, and car shows as well. In Minnesota, Jerry worked for the Wildlife Science Center as their Facilities Manager and Curator. For ten years, Jerry worked with wolves, coyotes, foxes, lynxes, bobcats, black bears, raptors, raccoons, and others. He is experienced in a wide range of skills, from animal husbandry to heavy construction work. Since arriving in Florida, Jerry works full

time for IKON Office Solutions, but every Saturday morning he can be found at the reserve fixing cages and gates, building and improving lemur holding areas, repairing electric equipment, small motors, planting trees or hauling dirt and mulch. His hard work helps the reserve run smoothly and efficiently. Jerry says that he likes working at LCF because he enjoys seeing the lemurs, working with his hands, and just being outside. He hopes to spend more time getting to know and identify each lemur on the reserve. Welcome, Jerry!



Jerry Cade, measuring for a new cage roof.

ABOUT US



The Lemur Conservation Foundation (LCF), Incorporated in Florida (1996), is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit publicly supported organization (EIN 59-3359549) dedicated to the preservation and conservation of the primates of Madagascar through captive breeding, non-invasive scientific research, education, and reintroduction. At LCF's 90-acre, non-public Myakka City Lemur Reserve the lemurs live naturally in pristine forest, yet are readily available for educational and research purposes. Researchers from New College of Florida, Rutgers University, University of Texas at Austin, University of Miami, Yale University and others come to the MCLR to further our understanding of these fascinating primates. In partnership with several universities, the LCF conducts the unique Field Training Program, which teaches students field techniques. The LCF has built an education center at the Tampo Forest Station, its partner reserve in Madagascar, to promote collaborative research projects and a researcher exchange program.

Starting your holiday shopping? Check out the LCF Lemur shop online at

www.lemurreserve.org

Not only will your friends and family appreciate these charming gifts, all proceeds from web sales support the LCF mission - a future full of lemurs.

The Lemur Conservation Foundation's 10th Anniversary Celebration is December 2nd. To RSVP, please call (941) 322-8494 or e-mail bodrylpcf@earthlink.net by Friday, November 24.



LEMUR
CONSERVATION
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