

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 126, No. 21, November 24, 1984

E. G. Sherburne Jr. Publisher
Joel Greenberg Editor
Dietrick E. Thomsen Senior Editor/
Physical Sciences
Laurie Jackson Phillips Managing Editor
Wendy McCarren Production/Design
Director
Bruce Bower Behavioral Sciences
Deborah Franklin, Joanne Silberner Biomedicine
Stefi Weisburd Earth Sciences
Julie Ann Miller Life Sciences
Janet Raloff, Ivars Peterson Policy/Technology
Jonathan Eberhart Space Sciences
Susan Welch Assistant to
the Editor
Steven I. Benowitz, Christine Miot Science Writer Interns
Jane M. Livermore Books
Donald R. Harless Business Manager
Schicago Associates Advertising
Fred Dieffenbach, Sales Director
1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036

Copyright © 1984 by Science Service, Inc.,
Editorial and Business Offices,
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS
without written permission of the publisher is
prohibited.

Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50;
3 yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is
required. Please state exactly how magazine is to be
addressed. Include zip code. For new subscriptions
only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in U.S.A. Second
class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Title
registered as trademark U.S. and Canadian Patent
Offices. Published every Saturday by SCIENCE
SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C.
20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Born to be wild?

In reading "The Mating Game" (SN: 10/13/84, p. 232), I wonder if other readers caught the undertone of desperation, and perhaps of ultimate futility, in trying to keep endangered species alive in zoos. The attempt should be strongly supported, since it is better than letting these species, with all their rich store of genetic information, die off. But at best it is a delaying action.

As with analogous attempts to preserve our original wild grain plants, the only long-term solution is natural habitat. The natural stresses and nurture of wild places allowed the evolution of these species in the first place; only the preservation of wilderness habitat will keep them alive over the long pull. Some could be misled into thinking that the zoo programs described in the article are all that we need.

G.E. Schindler Jr.
New Providence, N.J.

This Week

- 324 Modeling the Movement of Magma
- 325 3D graphics 'peel apart' human body
- 325 Baby Fae dies
- 326 Satellite salvage: High-tech handwork
- 326 Conducting a new polymer into batteries
- 327 Power to the whale's tail
- 327 Kosher pig? Hold the bacon
- 327 Building a better rabies vaccine

Research Notes

- 328 Earth Sciences
- 329 Biomedicine
- 329 Environment

Articles

- 330 The Unpacking of a Knapsack
 - 332 In Pursuit of the Hit-and-Run Starfish
- Cover: A large crown-of-thorns starfish (orange shape near center) has colonized Hopkins Reef, part of the Great Barrier Reef of Australia's east coast, and will soon devour huge amounts of coral. Crown-of-thorns was once thought to represent a grave new threat to the Great Barrier Reef, but scientists now believe that it has been a longtime predator of coral and that reefs can recover after an attack. They still do not know from where the starfish comes or what role it plays in reef ecology. (Photo: Peter Moran)



Departments

- 322 Science on the Air
- 322 Books
- 323 Letters

Science Service Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.
Board of Trustees—*President*, Glenn T. Seaborg; *Vice President*, Gerald F. Tape; *Treasurer*, Willis Harlow Shapley; *Secretary*, Julius Duscha; Joseph W. Berg Jr.; Edward Bliss Jr.; Bowen C. Dees; David A. Goslin; Milton Harris; Hilleary F. Hoskinson; Elizabeth F. Neufeld; O. W. Riegel; H. Guyford Stever; John Troan; Deborah P. Wolfe.

Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver; Business Manager: Donald R. Harless.

We suggest a third section to "The Mating Game" in which you reveal the liaison between zoos, game ranches and medical research. The first article only hints at "propagation...for the supply of domestic, laboratory and game animals."

Captive breeding may produce an animal that looks like a tiger but whose behavioral patterns are very different. To return it to the wild is cruel indeed. And the "guaranteed kill" of exotic and rare animals on game ranches that accept the overflow of zoo-bred animals is a great sickness.

A direct analogy to the modern zoo is the street-caging of insane people in Elizabethan times for the entertainment of the public. Such exploitation of animals cannot be condoned by a civilized society.

Alice Herrington
President, Friends of Animals, Inc.
Neptune, N.J.

Much of the very interesting work going on in zoos is completely unheralded at this point. Although academic scientists are aware of the work of individual researchers in zoos in their own areas of expertise, there is little awareness of the potentially valuable role zoos can play in basic research, evolutionary biology and reproductive physiology—in addition to the very necessary work on conservation biology that is being aggressively tackled by the zoo community.

Oliver Ryder
Zoological Society of San Diego
San Diego, Calif.

Address communications to
Editor, Science News,
1719 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Please limit letters to 250 words.

NOVEMBER 24, 1984

323