

Orangutan SSP Spotlight



Name: Lyn Heller

SSP Job Title: Steering Committee Member

Brief info about yourself: I have been at Zoo Miami for 5 ½ years. I have been in the zoological field for over 30 years. I live in Key Largo in the Florida Keys. I love paddle boarding on my weekends and hanging out with my dogs.

Your job title (not SSP, but the zoo you currently work at): Animal Science Manager

Your history with orangutans: Working at Zoo Miami is my first experience working with orangutans. I have had the opportunity to work with 1.1 Sumatran and 0.2 Bornean orangutans.

What did you study in school, internships, volunteering, etc. that helped you get to where you are today? I studied biology and animal physiology in school, I have a BS in Biology. I worked with one of the PhD students and a professor at the University of Central FL studying sea turtles. We did nesting surveys, nest inventories, catch and release with sea turtles to get morphometrics and DNA samples, placed tracking devices on some individuals, and tagged turtles. My first aquarium/zoo job was as a husbandry assistant at Sea World in Orlando, FL. I worked with several species of penguins and worked my way up to senior keeper and also worked with a large variety of exotic birds and marine mammals. I worked at Sea World for 10 years then went to work at Disney's Animal Kingdom shortly after it opened. Disney has an amazing leadership program and this, along with the opportunity to work with many different species from all taxa, helped me move up into curatorial positions. I worked at Disney for 15 years.

Why orangutans? Initially they were part of the area I manage at Zoo Miami, but it wasn't long before I couldn't get over how amazing and cool they are.





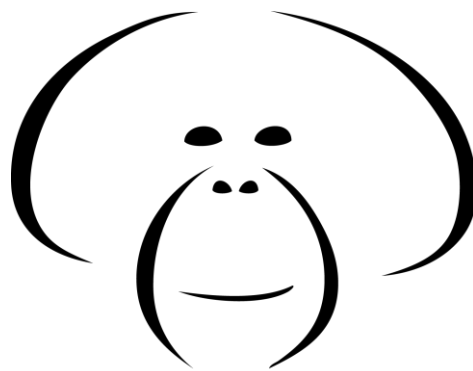
Best experience with orangutans: When we first received our young female Bornean, Bella, from Seneca Park Zoo (she was 5 years old at the time). It was so fun (still is) doing training sessions with her and relationship building with her, she would come off doing the funniest things.

Worst experience with orangutans: When our Sumatran orangutan, Bonnie, lost her baby before it was born, and then a few hours after that, losing Bonnie as well. It was heart breaking.

Biggest career accomplishment involving orangutan: Becoming a part of the OSSP and having the opportunity to learn so much more about how to help and make a difference in the lives of these incredible animals, both in the zoos and in the wild.



The most unique form of orangutan memorabilia you own: This is extremely embarrassing, but I have an orangutan water bottle I got at the last workshop at Fort Wayne Children's Zoo and it is significantly damaged (although still usable) by our adult female Bornean orangutan, Kumang. I set it down where I thought it was out of reach while I was visiting her and Bella, She snatched it and proceeded to bang it around and then trade it back to me for a juice flavored ice cube. Not my proudest moment. So I have an orangutan water bottle that was beat up by an orangutan.



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