

Orangutan SSP Spotlight



Name: Cindy Cossaboon

SSP Job Title: Vice Chair and Husbandry Advisor

Brief info about yourself: I have been a zookeeper for 20 years. When I am not obsessing about orangutans, I love to go hiking and camping with my husband and 3 dogs.



Your job title (not SSP, but the zoo you currently work at): Denver Zoo Primate, Orangutan Keeper

Your history with orangutans: Started working with Great Apes at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. Began working at Denver Zoo in 2002. Became lead in the orangutan section in 2008. Denver Zoo has supported me in my traveling to both Sumatra and Borneo to see wild orangutans. It is a life changing experience. It has made me a better care taker and a better spokesman for orangutans.

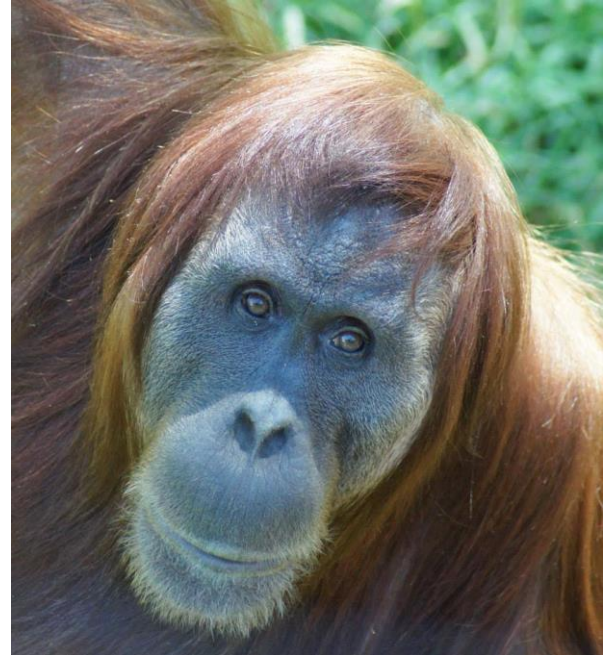


Why orangutans? When I was finishing college, I was writing my senior thesis on cheetahs. I had the opportunity to do an internship at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. The internship was for big cats, but also included primates. It turns out, that when I worked with the orangutans, I fell in love with them. They are so independent, but so hilarious. I just love how they think and interact. It takes time and work to develop a relationship with them, but once you do, it is life changing. I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with them.

Best experience with orangutans: Witnessing Hesty's birth. While she was in labor, Nias moved her nest in front of me and gave birth right there. It was truly an amazing experience and such an honor that she trusted me enough to share it with me.

Worst experience with orangutans: Sally's abdominal surgery. Sally is our 46 year old Sumatran orangutan. This was a life or death surgery. It was torture waiting for the surgery to finish, but she pulled through and is back to her normal self.

Biggest career accomplishment involving orangutans: Teaching Nias to nurse and care for her baby. Pulling a baby orangutan from its mom is one of the worst things you can do for a baby orangutan. Nias loved that baby from the moment she was born, but she didn't know how to care for it. Teaching her how to nurse, gave Nias the opportunity to flourish. She is just an amazing mom now.



The most unique form of orangutan memorabilia you own:

While in Indonesia, they had a local shop that sold carvings from waste wood and the profits went back to the orangutan rehabilitation center. So I bought a 2 foot by 1 foot, wood orangutan carving.



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