

Orangutan SSP Spotlight



Name: Dina Bredahl

SSP Job Title: Steering Committee Member

Brief info about yourself: Animal Behavior Assistant at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. Dina has worked at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo since 1999. She traveled to Indonesia and Malaysia numerous times to research the palm oil crisis and other threats to orangutans, and has attended several RSPO conferences. She has been a member of the Orangutan SSP Steering committee since 2011 and is a member of AZA's Palm Oil Task Force.



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

Your history with orangutans: I worked for three years as a keeper with orangutans at the Topeka Zoological Park, helping to establish a formal positive reinforcement training program. I then worked as a keeper with orangutans at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo for two years and was a supervisor/manager of orangutans for about 16 years.

Why orangutans? I think each animal of every species shows us that they are a unique individual, but orangutans really top the list for me. I have never met or heard of two orangutans that are alike –each orangutan truly has their own personality, preferences, ways of doing things, skills and vocalizations. Some orangutans really seem to enjoy interacting with people (in a zoo setting), and it is easy to get sucked into their world! Their natural history is extremely unique, and I learn new things about orangutans all the time.

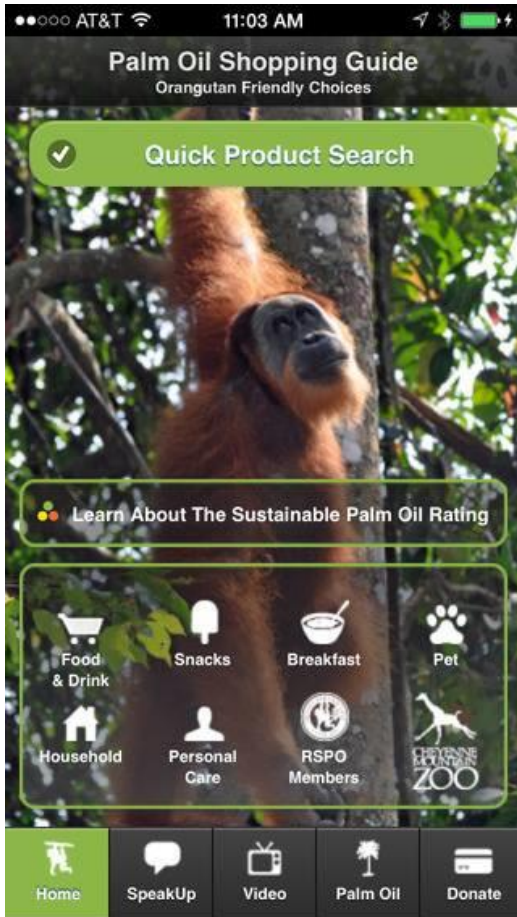


Best experience with orangutans: One of my favorite experiences was seeing orangutans who had been returned to the wild, at a reintroduction site in north Sumatra near Jantho. The young rehabilitated orangutans chose to stay high in the trees (where they belong!) –that was such an awesome experience.

Another favorite moment was introducing Mahal, a Bornean infant we hand-reared at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, to a 51 year old Sumatran orangutan named Sandra. Sandra had raised nine of her own infants but had never been given the opportunity to serve as a surrogate. She accepted Mahal immediately and did a wonderful job caring for him.



Worst experience with orangutans: When Sandra, the surrogate mentioned above, died about three weeks after adopting Mahal.



Biggest career accomplishment involving orangutans: My participation on Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's palm oil awareness team, and the contributions we have made in sharing our experiences and tools with many other zoos and aquariums.

The most unique form of orangutan memorabilia you own: I have a handprint of Bornean orangutan Sabtu, a wonderful orangutan who I worked with at CMZ until she died years ago. As we know, no two orangutan handprints are exactly the same –so in that way it is totally unique, and I absolutely treasure this piece of Sabtu.

