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Media Release

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In a rare occurrence, China invited four U.S. primate experts, including from the Sacramento Zoo, for an international workshop on great ape husbandry and welfare

From January 12-19, 2017, four great ape experts from the U.S., including the Sacramento Zoo, were invited to China to participate in an eight-day seminar at Nanjing Hongshan Forest Zoo on the management of orangutans and chimpanzees in Chinese zoos. The workshops opened doors between Chinese and U.S. zoo professionals to improve care for these species around the world, and to enhance the ever-growing body of knowledge used to aid the conservation of these endangered and critically endangered species.

“I was amazed and excited about the involvement of various staff levels at the zoo and how excited they were to meet us,” said Janine Steele, lead primate keeper at the Sacramento Zoo. “I met with a horticulturist, keepers who work with their primates, and even the zoo’s director.”

Along with the U.S. experts, keepers from other zoos in Shanghai and Hangzhou gathered together for in-depth discussions that included:

- Research
- Nutrition
- Exhibit design
- Behavioral management
- Animal welfare
- Primate communication
- Training
- Primate social groups
- Enrichment

The seminar built a bridge for more international communication regarding the care for orangutans, chimpanzees, and hopefully other species in the future. Participants on both sides left with a deeper appreciation for the passion and dedication that each puts into the care of their animals. This visit has built a pathway to China hosting their first national orangutan workshop scheduled for 2018, to be attended by all orangutan keepers across the country, and by zoo professionals from Sacramento Zoo and others in the U.S.

Sacramento Zoo staff will also contribute to the forthcoming Chinese Orangutan Husbandry Manual, comprising the first Chinese-language resource of its kind for any non-endemic species. The manual, to be published later in 2017, will provide native instruction on orangutan care and welfare for zoos and safari parks across China.



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Participants from the United States Included:

Dr. Graham L Banes: Fellow of the Chinese Academy of Sciences; Visiting Scientist in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Research Associate at Madison's Henry Vilas Zoo. Dr. Banes has worked with more than 150 zoos in mainland China and serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the forthcoming Chinese-language Orangutan Husbandry Manual.

Linda Jacobs: Director of Primate Care at Jungle Island in Miami, FL. Jacobs has authored a chapter on enrichment for the Chinese-language Orangutan Husbandry Manual.

Megan Kathryn Fox: Primate Keeper at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens, CA. Fox serves as an Editor of the Chinese-language Orangutan Husbandry Manual.

Janine Steele: Lead Primate Keeper at the Sacramento Zoo, CA. Steele is contributing to numerous chapters of the Chinese-language Orangutan Husbandry Manual, as both an author and reviewer.