

# NEWS FROM...



## **Amanda Haug, Zoological Manager of Carnivores at Palm Beach Zoo Appointed to Manage Regional Fennec Fox Studbook**

May 11, 2007 – West Palm Beach, FL - Amanda Haug, a 27-year-old zoological manager at the Palm Beach Zoo has been appointed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to manage the North American regional studbook for the threatened **Fennec Fox**. Haug, originally from Renville, Minnesota, received her B.S. in Zoology at North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND and now lives in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. She has been employed at the Palm Beach Zoo since 2003.

The Fennec fox (*Vulpes zerda*) is a favorite of Palm Beach Zoo visitors. These furry little mammals are the smallest of all canines, at 8" high, and 3 to 3.5 pounds. Very large ears on a very diminutive head and a sharp, tiny muzzle give this little fox a very distinctive look. The large ears help them dissipate the heat and provide excellent hearing for night hunting. Their coat, usually a sandy color, helps repel sunlight during the day and conserve heat at night. Their coloration allows them to blend in with the desert sand. The soles of their feet are protected from the hot sand by thick fur between the toes. Typical of a fox, the fennec has a very bushy tail and thick, luxurious fur. Their natural habitat includes Northern Africa, across the Sahara, the Sinai Peninsula and Arabia.

Their diet in the wild includes large insects like beetles and locusts, small rodents, lizards and occasionally birds, plus some plant material, when available, like berries and succulent leaves. The fennec foxes in the zoo are fed mice, wet and dry dog food, fruit and vegetables.

Typical of all foxes, fennecs are very agile. They can jump straight up as much as 2 feet and can make a horizontal leap of 4 feet from a standing position, remarkable for its small size. Such feats are useful in both escape and prey capture. Pups have been observed bouncing, in play, like little balls.

The Palm Beach Zoo has three Fennec foxes: Male "Mulder" - 13 years of age, Female "Maggie" 10 - years of age, and Male "Zuri" - 2 years of age. There are currently 65 individuals managed under the Fennec Fox Species Survival Plan and of those, there are only 15 pairs that have been recommended for breeding due to age and genetics. In the past five years, only five litters have been produced, and all in the same year (2005). Infant mortality rate is also high at 55%. The animal's lifespan in captivity is up to 17 years, and they have been known to breed into their 13<sup>th</sup> year.

The mission of the AZA's Species Survival Plan Program is to help ensure the survival of selected wildlife species. The SSP program began in 1981 as a cooperative population management and conservation program for selected species in zoos and aquariums in North America. Each SSP manages the breeding of a species in order to maintain a healthy and self-sustaining population that is both genetically diverse and demographically stable.

Beyond this, SSPs participate in a variety of other cooperative conservation activities, such as research, public education, reintroduction, and field projects. Currently, 107 SSPs covering 161

individual species are administered by the Association of Zoos and Aquarium, whose membership includes accredited zoos and aquariums throughout North America.

An Association of Zoos and Aquariums studbook, such as the Fennec fox studbook which Amanda Haug will keep, is a record of the history of a population held in zoos or aquariums. It includes pedigrees of animals and a listing of the various locations in which animals have been held. The studbook traces the entire history of each individual in a population; these collective histories are known as the population's genetic and demographic identity.

However, studbooks also contain a wealth of other information: data on the general biology and ecology of the species, the status and distribution of wild populations, as well as a bibliography of relevant publications.

Regarding her appointment, Amanda Haug said, ““Being appointed regional studbook keeper for the Fennec Fox population is an amazing opportunity for me being such a young professional in the zoo field. I am very excited about the opportunity to help conserve the population not only in captivity but in the wild as well. There are many things that are undiscovered about these animals and I feel blessed to have the opportunity to help them in any way I can. I got into this field because ever since I was a young girl living on the farm, I knew I loved animals. Working with animals always made me happy and I knew I wanted to make a career of it. I love to go to work every day.

I started my career at Chahinkapa zoo in Wahpeton North Dakota. I started volunteering there when I was at NDSU and was hired as a keeper after my internship. The moment I started at the zoo, I knew that I was meant to be in this field. I started as a Keeper I at the Palm Beach Zoo in 2003 and have worked my way up to the zoological manager of carnivores (since 2005). In August I will have been at the Palm Beach Zoo 4 years.”

Amanda is the daughter of Viann and Paul Haug of Renville, Minnesota. She is the sister of Jeremy Haug of Minneapolis.

The Palm Beach Zoo is an accredited AZA facility and recently completed a successful reaccreditation review.

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