



HAVING FUN

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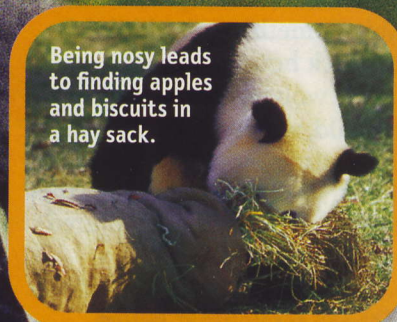
Cool Tales
About How
ZOOS
Challenge
Animals
in Captivity

YET?

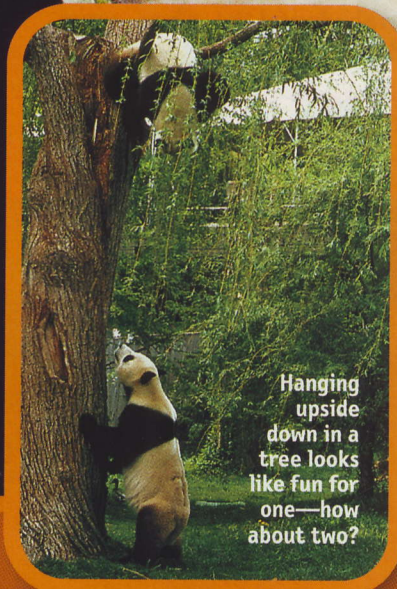
BY ALINE
ALEXANDER
NEWMAN



Honey-coated cardboard is a tasty treat.



Being nosy leads to finding apples and biscuits in a hay sack.



Hanging upside down in a tree looks like fun for one—how about two?

Splashing his paw and dunking his face into the water-filled rubber tub, Tian Tian the giant panda makes a lame attempt at grabbing a snack of carrots and apples. Wanting his chow *now*, Tian Tian finally dumps over the entire tub and sucks up the grub. But for Mei Xiang, the female panda at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., that's not her style. She patiently swirls her paw in the tub, fishing out food as it floats by. For 20 minutes, she delicately stirs the water until she's eaten her fill.

Zookeepers used to just toss the panda food into the animals' enclosure. Not anymore. Giving captive animals things to do to let them behave normally and prevent boredom is called environmental enrichment. It includes giving animals choices, allowing them to forage for food,

providing toys, and building realistic exhibit areas, such as Tian Tian and Mei Xiang's enclosure (above, all).

"For enrichment to succeed, zookeepers must watch their animals and figure out what they need," says Tim Desmond, an animal behavior specialist from Lompoc, California.

"Without enrichment programs, animals' behavior can become abnormal."

Starting this year, rules governing zoos in the United States require enrichment programs. Many zoos are already years ahead of the ruling. Here are seven other stories zoos told **WORLD** about animals having fun.

Once Upon a Time...

FOLSOM CITY ZOO, CALIFORNIA

Onyx the gray wolf never read the story of the three little pigs. But when make-believe straw, stick, and brick houses sprang up in her zoo enclosure, she and her eager pack charged forward to investigate—first the straw house, then the one made of sticks, and finally...*sniff...sniff*. Wait. Something was hiding in the brick house!

The wolves wimped out! “In the wild, wolves evaluate risks all the time,” says zookeeper Lee Houts. When wolves attack, they stand a chance of being injured by the prey animal.

That’s why these guys did lots of “head-scratching” before they’d enter the brick house. And then it was only Onyx who dared. So she found the prize—a raw chicken stuffed in the chimney!



Digging In!

SAN ANTONIO ZOO, TEXAS

A fierce-looking warthog terrified his keepers. Every time they opened his exhibit door, the hog would charge. That’s how he got his name—Diablo (Spanish for “devil”).

But the ornery oinker wasn’t really mean, says animal behaviorist Tim Desmond. He was bored. To prove it, Desmond had the keepers use food rewards to train Diablo to go inside his barn and let



Taking the Plunge

CENTRAL PARK ZOO,
NEW YORK CITY

Treats were frozen inside three balls of ice that curator Don Moore gave the polar bears one day. Fish was inside two balls; the third had chicken, the bears’ favorite. One polar bear, Ida, grabbed the chicken ball and jumped into the pool. Smart move! Why? Because Lily, the other polar bear, hates getting wet. So she’s stuck with fish. Or is she? Clever Lily, standing on her hind legs at the water’s edge, tossed a fish ball into the water. Intrigued, Ida left her ball and swam toward Lily’s. That’s when Lily made her move: She dived in, snatched the prized chicken, and paddled to shore. When it came to getting chicken, Lily didn’t chicken out after all.



his keeper close the door.

While Diablo was locked up inside, Desmond buried turnips and sweet potatoes in the warthog’s outdoor area. When Diablo returned, he sniffed the ground and began racing around like a little kid on an Easter egg hunt.

“He was so happy!” says Desmond. “He kept jumping up and down and kicking his heels.”

Which just goes to show: Let a bored boar root for his food and the devilish demon disappears.

A sprinkle of perfume around an enclosure stimulates animals

Let 'im at It!

FOLSOM CITY ZOO, CALIFORNIA

Fisher, a black bear, was in big trouble for stealing fish from fishermen. But a local zoo offered him sanctuary. Now Fisher spends his days helping other bears stay out of trouble.

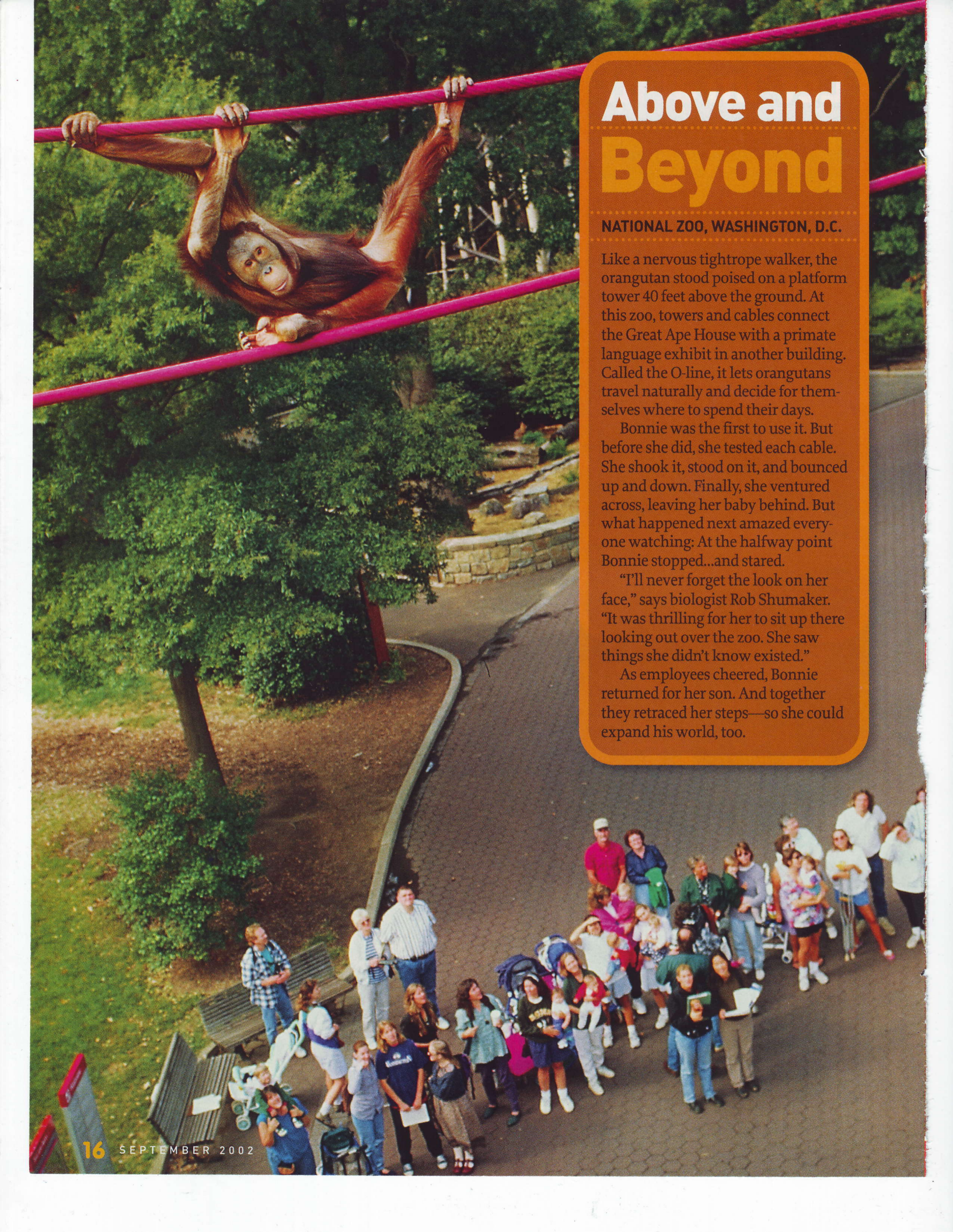
"He's extremely strong and very intelligent," says zookeeper Lee Houts. "And he doesn't give up easily." Which is why a bear biologist at Yosemite National Park suggested Fisher become an official "product tester."

This means that Fisher gets to bang around new gear to see whether it's bear proof. (And most of it isn't!) Fisher shreds backpacks with his claws. He rips the lids off coolers and shreds them (right). He squashes aluminum trash cans. One time the 450-pound bear easily picked up and threw a giant 500-pound food locker into his pool.

His "work" finished, Fisher relaxed and nibbled grapes—while several grumbling workers struggled to remove the waterlogged container.

to explore their surroundings.





Above and Beyond

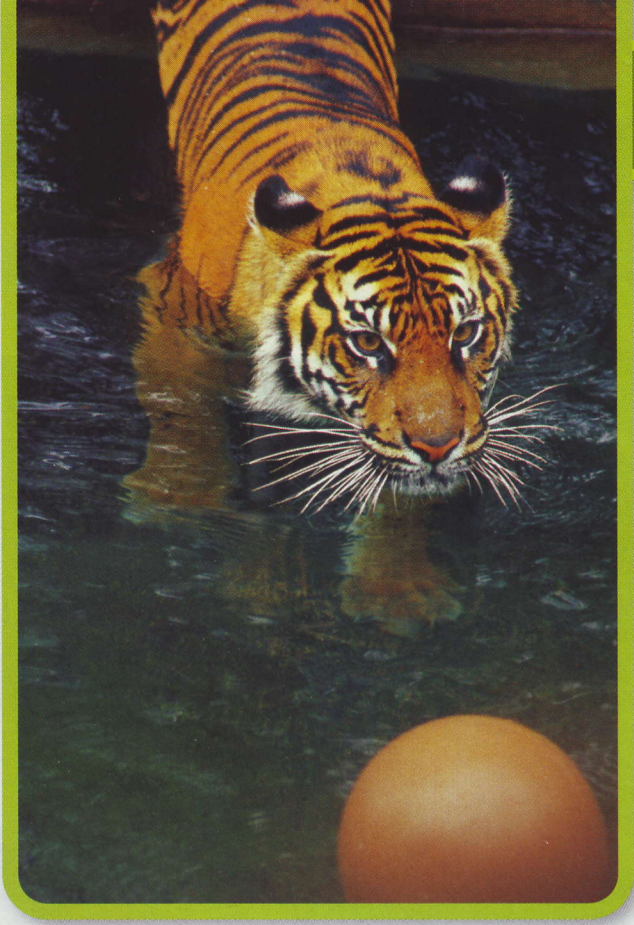
NATIONAL ZOO, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Like a nervous tightrope walker, the orangutan stood poised on a platform tower 40 feet above the ground. At this zoo, towers and cables connect the Great Ape House with a primate language exhibit in another building. Called the O-line, it lets orangutans travel naturally and decide for themselves where to spend their days.

Bonnie was the first to use it. But before she did, she tested each cable. She shook it, stood on it, and bounced up and down. Finally, she ventured across, leaving her baby behind. But what happened next amazed everyone watching: At the halfway point Bonnie stopped...and stared.

"I'll never forget the look on her face," says biologist Rob Shumaker. "It was thrilling for her to sit up there looking out over the zoo. She saw things she didn't know existed."

As employees cheered, Bonnie returned for her son. And together they retraced her steps—so she could expand his world, too.



Scaredy-Cat

OREGON ZOO, PORTLAND

Many Siberian tigers like fishing. But Nikki, a captive-born female, had never hunted or fished. So when her keepers first put a live trout in her exhibit pool, Nikki ignored it. Then they lowered the water level and tried again.

Nikki eyed the fish cautiously, unsure about what to do. Suddenly the feisty trout turned and charged! Startled, the 400-pound cat burst straight up and out of the pool. "It was as if she levitated," laughs Jill Mellen, a research biologist who worked at the zoo. "Nikki never did catch that fish and eventually we gave it to our jaguar."

After that, Nikki stuck to the safer sport of playing ball in the water. On dry land, she enjoyed rubbing her face in the strong scents of cooking spices that her keepers sprinkled around her enclosure.



Water's Fine!

CINCINNATI ZOO, OHIO

Wild penguins spend 70 percent of their lives swimming. But when Rickey Kinley became the penguin keeper at this zoo, swimming birds *weren't* what he found. These penguins just stood around.

Kinley decided to change the birds' routine and make them swim for their supper. He tried pushing the penguins into the water and tossing in a fish. But the birds scrambled back onto the bank.

Kinley persevered. Finally, a 2-year-old named Bonnie caught a fish while swimming to shore. Within four months, all 20 penguins jumped into the pool for supper.

These days the birds rocket through the water, swimming figure eights and making porpoise-type leaps. They blast out of the pool onto "shore" when they're finished.

"Now they're acting more like penguins!" says Kinley.

