



Georgeanne Irvine

Brief biography, March 2009

Georgeanne Irvine, “George,” has devoted 31 years of her colorful career to the Zoological Society of San Diego. She is currently communications manager for the development department but spent her first 22 ½ years with the Zoological Society in the public relations division of the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park. George usually has the inside scoop on everything, and has served in many capacities during her tenure with the Zoo. Her duties have ranged from being a media spokesperson to escorting celebrities around the Zoo and animals to television shows (such as Johnny Carson’s “Tonight” show) to accompanying an endangered Sumatran rhinoceros from Indonesia to San Diego. She has been chased around a hotel room by a clouded leopard, flown first class with a tree kangaroo to New York, and bunked with a harbor seal (the harbor seal slept in the bathtub; George slept in the bed).

George’s passions include traveling, photography, storytelling, freelance writing,

musicals and, of course, animals. She is the author of more than 20 children's books about animals and the Zoo and the Wild Animal Park, including the Zoo World series published by Simon & Schuster, plus numerous magazine, newspaper and Web articles.

George's newest writing project, "The Katrina Dolphins: One-Way Ticket to Paradise," is a 170-page, non-fiction coffee table book that debuted in late 2007. It features more than 400 photos as well as compelling narrative about the "Hurricane Katrina dolphins" from Gulfport, Mississippi's Marine Life Oceanarium, who were swept out to sea during Hurricane Katrina. They miraculously stayed together in a polluted ocean filled with debris until they were discovered 10 days later from a helicopter. A massive rescue effort ensued, and all of the dolphins were eventually brought to safety but only after their trainers and other marine mammal experts trained the dolphins to "beach" on floating "mats" provided by the U.S. Navy. The dolphins now live in an 11-acre lagoon environment, Dolphin Cay, at Atlantis, Paradise Island resort in The Bahamas.

George lives for adventure travel and loves seeing animals in their native habitats. Her journeys have taken her to wilds of Australia, Africa, Asia and South America, and she often leads international tours for the San Diego Zoo. Life is never dull on a trip with George: she has wrestled with baby giant pandas in China; she was charged by an elephant and chased by poachers in Africa; she rescued an orphaned kangaroo from a roadside in Australia; and she confronted and photographed illegal loggers, who were cutting down protected rain forest habitat in Borneo.

George is dedicated to wildlife conservation and habitat preservation through her

San Diego Zoo job but in her spare time she also volunteers her photography and writing skills to various organizations including the Orangutan Foundation International (OFI), the Australian Koala Foundation, and the Orang Utan Republik Education Initiative. One of her most unusual projects: she organized and supervised an orangutan painting project at OFI's Orangutan Care Center and Quarantine Facility in Borneo — orphaned orangutans actually painted pictures that were auctioned and sold in the United States to raise money to support the Care Center.

George is the president of her own non-profit organization, The Gordy Foundation, named after the lead character in her book, "Raising Gordy Gorilla at the San Diego Zoo." The Gordy Foundation is funded by a percentage of her book royalties and speaking engagements, and provides grants to grassroots wildlife conservation programs around the world.

###