

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
COLCHESTER ZOO
EST. 1963

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BY CLARE (AGE 68)

Over half a lifetime of visits with family and friends,
I remember seeing my children learn to be still and wait.
Watching my grandchildren with their youthful hawk-eyed vision,
notice amazing things that I would, once upon a time, have seen first.
When my son cleaned an Elephant's horny toenails and put her to bed.
The time my grandson lay on the cold concrete to watch a Giant Tortoise
move a yard on dinosaur feet.

The time my niece danced between her cousins on the way to the train
and we stopped for ice creams and missed it.
So we waited for the next one and were entranced by the antics
of the Bush Dogs playing 'Follow the Leader' on their webbed feet.
When we held bunches of leaves for the Giraffes and wondered at their prehensile,
blue-black tongues.
Staring as glistening haunches of meat were hidden for Tigers
to find and tear into with hungry, ruthless passion.

We counted cubs and marvelled at their fierce energy and their abandoned sleep.
We admired the golden agile beauty of the Tamarins and felt blessed
by rare sightings of the Binturong who like to spend their time high in the trees;
we call them 'Bearcats' even though they're neither.
We learnt about Aardvarks and were surprised, after watching them twitching
in their sleep visit after visit, to see them playing with their
human 'keepers' like puppies.

We've eaten picnics in the sunshine down on the boardwalk, counting Dragonflies.
We've eaten hot, salty chips under the chilly winter sun while we look in vain for the
Terrapins that bask on logs in the summer.
We've come home and drawn pictures and written stories and looked things
up and planned our next visit.

We've questioned whether zoos should exist, and then we've recalled
the Sun Bears rescued from cruel captivity.
And the Amur Leopards and Orangutans saved from extinction
so that one day our great great grandchildren will see them,
respected and safe in their natural habitats.
We put our coins into the bucket after our train rides and know that
in a tiny way we too are part of UmPhafa.
We love Colchester Zoo.

