

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**30<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

## **Feasting with Carnivores**

**The Isle of Wight Zoo launches late night snacks with the big cats**

Anyone with business near the Isle of Wight Zoo in the early evening will know that this is the time the big cats attempt to make themselves known to the entire town. The territorial roars of the lions carry far outside the zoo, and may have left people wondering what exactly goes on inside the gates when all the visitors have left.

Now the zoo is offering guests the chance to find out, as it begins hosting **Feasting with Carnivores**. This is an event that allows a small group of guests to stay behind after the zoo closes to enjoy the unique atmosphere as the lions and tigers get ready for their evening meal. A BBQ will be provided for the guests, allowing them to eat their meals while watching the cats have theirs.

As the evening begins to darken guests will settle down round a campfire and enjoy atmospheric conversation with their dessert. On hand amongst the zoo staff will be one of the experienced big cat keepers, who will be able to answer any questions and possibly frighten guests with tales of the chillingly effective predators. As darkness falls, and the lanterns go on, it will become more apparent how such big animals can hunt by stealth. If you want to hear a tiger moving slowly in the dark you need very good ears indeed!

First to sample the unique experience were representatives of Red Funnel Ferries, who are long-time supporters of the zoo. As corporate adopters of the zoo's baby red-ruffed lemurs it is fitting that the lemurs were on hand to meet them as a special treat, particularly as Red Funnel are currently running the competition to name them.

They also had the chance to sample one of the zoo's Hands on Wildlife schemes – the tiger milk feed. Before the tigers had their main meal Red Funnel staff were whetting the animals' appetites with goats' milk, which they fed to the tigers from a spray bottle behind the scenes at the enclosures. With just an arm's length and a single fence separating the humans from the tigers, it was an unforgettable close encounter. As one staff member said: "There have been several special moments in my life including swimming with dolphins and watching the Orca whales and now feeding the tigers and feasting with carnivores has been added to that list."

**Feasting with Carnivores** is an event which will be offered to the public, and the zoo welcomes enquiries from small groups (15 max) who think that a BBQ and a campfire would be vastly improved with the presence of a prowling lion or two.

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Notes to editors:

Isle of Wight Zoo aims to promote the survival of endangered species through first class educational and recreational experiences, exemplary animal management, conservation and research. The Zoo is best known for its work with exotic cats. As a centre for surplus or rescued big cats, all have come to the Zoo at different stages of their lives and from a variety of backgrounds. The Zoo strives to encourage the social development and natural behaviour of each cat in their care. Every species of big cat residing at the Zoo is currently under considerable threat in its natural habitat. Isle of Wight Zoo is currently home to 12 tigers, 3 lions and 2 jaguars

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