

AFA Convention 2010

AVY Award

AFA presents the award for the first U.S. breeding the Shoebill Stork (*Balaeniceps Rex*)

By Linda S. Rubin

The American Federation of Aviculture AVY Award Committee presented a First US Breeding Award to Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo during the 36th annual convention in recognition of the successful breeding of the rare Shoebill Stork. The award marks the accomplishment of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo as the first institution in North America, and the second institution globally, to hatch an African Shoebill Stork chick in captivity.

Accepting the award on behalf of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo—presented during the Saturday evening banquet—were Vice President and Director of Collections Lawrence E. Killmar, Ph.D.; and Animal Care Manager of The Aviary, Julie Tomita. Bird Keepers Kelley Campbell and Marcus Kowitz were acknowledged as part of the team effort.

The team worked diligently to observe and document parental feeds, nutrition, health, safety and growth of the chick. The detailed application and accompanying photographs provided by Dr.



Members of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo staff at the Convention. From left, they are Marcus Kowitz, Kelley Campbell, Julie Tomita and Dr. Lawrence E. Killmar.

Killmar were presented to the AVY Award Committee members for investigation and confirmation in order to verify the award.

Born Christmas day 2009, the hatchling pipped the shell at approximately 7:30 a.m. and was observed fully emerged, vocal, and alert by the following evening. The first egg, laid Oct. 3, 2009, was produced when Tampa's Lowry Park turned its North Lake into a giant free-flight aviary with other storks, flamingos, pelicans, cormorants and a group of ring-tailed lemurs on an island. The egg was accidentally crushed, however, a second

egg was laid in November that hatched successfully after 42 days of incubation.

The zoo maintains two adult pair of Shoebills within its Ituri Forest exhibit. Many of the AFA members who signed up for the behind-the-scenes tour of Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo during the convention Wednesday afternoon were able to observe the Shoebills, including the fully weaned chick that appeared as tall as the parents.

The Shoebill Stork, (*Balaeniceps rex*), is also commonly known as the Shoe-billed Stork, Whale-headed Stork, or Bog Bird.

These darkly colored blue-grey storks flaunt overly large bills that measure upward of 12 inches long, and 5 inches wide, which are reminiscent of the shape of a wooden shoe, hence their name. Adults stand at 3.5 feet to 4 feet high, with a broad wingspan and long straight legs that accentuate their stork-like appearance. The youngster appeared as large as the adults and was fully capable of flight.

Shoebills have been called one of the great bird species of their native Africa where they dwell in dense marshes and swamps in the East-Central area

of the continent. The species is rare in captivity with only some 12 adults in North American institutions, including four adults at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo. In the wild, their numbers are estimated at 8,000–10,000 with the species listed as IUCN Vulnerable.

Because the Shoebill population is rare in captivity, and uncommon in the wild, the First North American breeding is heralded an impressive success and achievement for Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo. The information acquired on the Shoebill will help in the conservation and continuation of this highly

unique species, rarely if ever seen in zoos.

Additionally, as part of the requirements of an AFA First U.S. Breeding AVY Award, Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo has provided an article on the Shoebill for this AFA *Watchbird* journal.

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is operated by the Tampa's Lowry Park Zoological Society, a 501(c)3 charitable organization, and accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. It is located at 1101 W. Slight Ave. in Tampa, Fla. Visit the Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo pages on Facebook and Twitter; the zoo has been named

the Number 1 zoo in America by *Parents* magazine (2009) and *Child* magazine (2004).

The 2010–2011 AFA AVY Awards Committee members include Josef H. Lindholm III; Jason Crean; Philip J. Ryan, Ph.D.; Jerry Jennings; and Linda S. Rubin, chairwoman. A sincere thank you to the committee members for their diligence, dedication and time working to investigate and confirm this historical award.

Award recipients need not be a member of AFA, although nominations may only be made by AFA members. AFA members

who wish to nominate an individual or institution for an AFA First U.S. Breeding Award, or another AVY Award category, may visit the AFA website at <http://AFAbirds.org>. Click "Awards" on the navigation bar for further information, or contact AFA AVY Awards Chairwoman Linda S. Rubin at Awards@afabirds.org.

References

- AFA First US Breeding AVY Award Application 2009.
- TBNWeekly.com, "Shoebill Stork Chick Hatches at Zoo." Tampa Bay Newspapers.
- Killmar, Lawrence E., Ph.D., "Shoebill Stork First Hatching in North America at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo" -speaker presentation at AFA 2010 Convention and personal interview.



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