

TigerHomes Visit & Update

By: C.M.Shorter (Ace) ~ Gold Sponsor



Recently I visited Dave and the animals at TigerHomes Sanctuary and would like to share my experience with those who have never had the privilege to go. Dave extends an open invitation to all Gold Sponsors to come to see the Sanctuary and animals in person, so long as you have made advance arrangements. It is one of the most beautiful ways you can spend the day, get involved and no better way to actually see the benefit first-hand of our support for the work being done at TigerHomes.

I found TigerHomes Cams on the internet 3 years ago and have been a strong supporter of the mission of the Sanctuary since day one. It has been a little over a year since my last visit. This is the first time I witnessed the devastation along with the tremendous progress made here at the Sanctuary after both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Wilma sheared across South Florida. With Katrina we had heavy rain fall and flooding for days in the area surrounding the Sanctuary. Wilma left her calling card packing 140 mph sustained winds for almost 5 hours and the overall damage was staggering.

Of course, I had my own damage as did so many other South Florida residents who felt the aftermath of this storm. The efforts here at TigerHomes are tremendous. Not one animal was injured during the storm due to preventative and professional handling. Afterwards we all struggled with power outages lasting in excess of 3 weeks or more. Once I could log back in on my computer, I saw the photos of the damage at the Sanctuary. Dave then gave us regular updates as he worked day after day to remove truckload after truckload of debris to clear the grounds.

The animals received the best of care after the storm and Dave quickly settled them back into their normal routines. Cams, wiring, and fencing had significant damage. The website was back up and running after many struggles with the host providers to get service restored. The entire roof over the Main House needed to be repaired and replaced and that work is in progress now. We are now in the middle of our Rainy Season. The fruits of hours of endless labor to restore the Sanctuary is finally paying off as this tropical paradise regenerates under Dave's watchful care and is apparent in the Photos you are about to see.

The Sanctuary Big Cats – Tigers, Lions, Leopards are healthy and robust, paired together with companions for the most part. Living together in "Troops" are the many species of Lemurs you will see housed here at the Sanctuary. Every habitat is a work of art. Designed for comfort, shelter, & stimulation is a peaceful setting created uniquely suited to the requirements of each of the many species of animals who have permanent homes here.

TigerHomes Sanctuary, through the love and dedication given is a delicately balanced, living, breathing entity. Each animal, each plant, every tree and species of wildlife that also finds its way to the Sanctuary becomes woven together as an integral part of this man-made ecosystem unto itself. Just as each person who discovers TigerHomes and makes the decision to help support the animals and mission of the Sanctuary becomes part of this chain. We all have an opportunity to be a link in this conservation and preservation chain that is quickly becoming the world's future.

Dave Hartsock, President and Founder of TigerHomes has a way of making this task at hand he created and directs look easy. Rest assured from the size of the grounds, the habitats and the quality care these animals receive – it is no easy chore! It is a lifetime commitment to work on a project of this magnitude. After caring for the animals day-in and day-out, the emphasis is directed toward TigerHomes Educational Mission increasing awareness for these animals and global conservation issues. Sharing these photos with you will give you a better insight into the world of Tigerhomes and good reason to become a Sponsor.

Dave Hartsock – Showing us the Way to FEED THE LEMURS!



The day begins with GIGANTIC bowls of Lemur food – fresh fruits & vegetables mixed with fortified primate biscuits soaked in Spring Water. Dave has the claim to fame of cutting up mass quantities of produce faster than any other human. The large mixing bowls are divided into smaller feeding bowls and we all got to help carry them. A couple, Callie & Keith had made arrangements for an appointment with Dave to visit TigerHomes to see the animals. It was their first time at the Sanctuary and, needless to say, they were impressed! We all set off to FEED THE LEMURS....

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – RING-TAILED LEMUR HABITAT



The Lemurs see Dave coming with their morning food bowls. The first stop is the main Ring-Tailed Lemur Habitat. Much excitement and Dave is greeted eagerly as he brings them this rich diet. It is such a joy to see them each picking out their favorites – cantaloupe, mangos, papaya, apples, peaches, pears, grapes, greens and assorted vegetables but their favorite is BANANAS! The colors and sounds at the Sanctuary are breathtaking.

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – RING-TAILED LEMUR HABITAT



Ring-Tailed Lemur getting into the “Breakfast Club” ~ picking out favorites.

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – RING-TAILED LEMUR HABITAT



Lemur Highways & “Stairway to Heaven”

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – BLACK & WHITE LEMUR HABITAT



The Black & White Lemurs are very sociable. They are also very active and have quite a pecking order. I-Hop and the Baby are back in the main BW Lemur Habitat as we approach the baby going on 4 months of age. Lemurs are a matriarchal society, with female dominance exerted. Shredder, the male of this troop is ever watchful & very quick to defend his "girls" if he feels the need or is threatened. The animals are all used to Dave's contact but you can never forget these are Wild animals with Wild tendencies and you have to be a professional to handle them. The thickness of the BW Lemur's fur markings and coloring contrast against the backdrop of the landscaping is exquisite.

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – BLACK & WHITE LEMUR HABITAT



Lovely Lemurs ~ these animals are simply beautiful. Look at those LONG tails. In the wild these tails are used as stabilizers or “balancing beams” to help them when climbing. Lemurs have tiny hands that come complete with unique palm markings and small black fingernails. Little know FACT: Eating is one of a Lemur’s favorite past times! When they are not eating you will find them springing 10-20 feet in one pounce, as they exercise and play. If you watch carefully sometimes you can see the Lemurs dive-bombing harder to reach plants and coming up with handfuls of tender shoots. Lemurs are exceptionally intelligent, resourceful and inquisitive and have a tendency to lick or eat anything within their range!

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – BLACK & WHITE LEMUR HABITAT



Dave takes a moment for a “Lemur Hug”. When showing the animals Dave makes a point to teach us a little more about them, about their behaviors and answer any questions we may have! One of the best ways TigerHomes helps all these animals is teaching the public how the animals must be cared for daily, about their nutritional needs, behavioral patterns and habitat requirements. Against the backdrop of the main BW Lemur habitat here you see the secondary Lemur relay area – elevated and shaded where the Lemurs sometimes gather off-cam to rest and get out of inclement weather.

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – BLACK & WHITE LEMUR HABITAT



Black & White Lemur "Alarm Call". Whenever the Lemurs sense a change or danger, and often just to communicate with the other troops, you will hear a high-pitched warning call that is several octaves above a human's vocal range. Normally the first call stimulates the rest of the animals to join in and we have "Lemurs Talking". Troops communicate in the wild this way and it is a basic survival skill. The Ring-Tails may join in and even the Big Cats. These naturalistic behaviors are all signs of very healthy and well-adjusted animals. Every step is taken at TigerHomes to create a natural environment suitable to each species.

TIGERHOMES SANCTUARY – BROWN LEMUR HABITAT



The Sanctuary is permanent home to two Brown Lemurs. Until recently, the Brown Lemurs were housed with the Ring-Tailed Lemurs but recently were separated while the Ring-Tails have young. Lemurs have a tooth-comb they use for grooming. It is razor sharp and also used as a very effective defense mechanism. One small squabble can lead quickly to an Emergency Vet visit. The Brown Lemurs were placed in the "Howdy Habitat" right next to the main Ring Tail Habitat for a short time and just recently moved into a much larger habitat while the mother Ring Tails are so protective. The regular Sanctuary members often refer to the Brown Lemurs as "Aunties" because they seem to take such an interest in caring for the all members of the Ring-Tail Troop, but especially for the young.