

# HILDA TRESZ

**Behavioral Enrichment and International Animal Welfare Coordinator at the Phoenix Zoo**

## Autobiography

Born and raised in Budapest, Hungary, Hilda now resides in Mesa, Arizona, where she has lived since 1990. After graduating high school, she began working as a zookeeper and has been working with animals ever since as a caregiver, enrichment specialist, trainer, educator and behavioral manager, focusing on chimpanzees and general behavioral management for all species.

### ***Budapest Zoo, animal keeping***

At the Budapest Zoo she worked mainly with small mammals and primates, as well as raising infant animals. At the same time, she was introduced to a group of chimpanzees who changed her life forever. Shortly thereafter, she began specializing in primates and bears.

***University of Lorand Eotvos.*** In 1984 she left the Budapest Zoo to attend University of Lorand Eotvos where she received her triple-major degree in biology, geography and education. During her college years, she continued her involvement with bears with a focus on the biology and distribution of the species.

### ***Primate Foundation of Arizona - worked with 85 chimpanzees!***

Hilda and her husband, Zoltan, immigrated together to the United States in 1989. They were hired at the Primate Foundation of Arizona (PFA) and had the privilege to work with chimpanzees as zookeepers. This was an unforgettable experience which left a considerable impression, leading Hilda towards becoming an advocate for the species in her later years. Hilda also started her behavioral research while at PFA.

### ***The Phoenix Zoo, focusing on behavioral management***

Her zookeeper years continued at the Phoenix Zoo where she began working with a variety of species, but primates remained the focus at all times. Later, she specialized in African and native Arizona animals. With orangutans being the only great apes at the Phoenix Zoo during her employment, she shifted her interest to behavioral management for all species to enhance the psychological well-being of the collection. In 2002 she became the Behavioral Management Coordinator for the Phoenix Zoo. In this newly created position, she combined her teaching skills with her animal keeping experience. By overseeing the zoo's comprehensive behavioral management programs, she was allowed to mentor staff, interns, and volunteers about training animals, providing proper environmental enrichment, and conducting scientific research. Hilda also developed a Contra Freeloading program focusing on captive animals working for their food to extend foraging time.

Hilda is currently the Behavioral Enrichment and International Animal Welfare Coordinator at The Phoenix Zoo. This safety sensitive position is responsible for developing and overseeing the Phoenix Zoo's Behavioral Enrichment Program to include the behavioral enrichment philosophy, application across the collection, and techniques for its application. Additionally, this position travels as an ambassador of the Phoenix Zoo consulting on animal welfare issues locally, nationally and internationally.

### ***The Jane Goodall Institute- back to working with chimpanzees.***

In 2007, ChimpanZoo Director Virginia Landau, PhD contacted Hilda regarding cooperative work on implementing similar enrichment concepts used at the Phoenix Zoo but with more focus on chimpanzees. Hilda then became a mentor and later the volunteer coordinator for the Jane Goodall Institute. Since then, she has been holding workshops at ChimpanZoo conferences and has worked with zoos all over the world (including India, Israel, Qatar, Egypt, UAE, Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, China, etc.) to enhance the psychological well-being of chimpanzees and other primate species as well.



*Photo by Melinda Dean. Liliana Pachero and Richard Champion*

### ***Behavior Scientific Advisory Group***

As part of the Behavior Scientific Advisory Group (BSAG) of the Association of American Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Hilda provides technical advice to meet the husbandry, social, and behavioral needs of animals cared for by AZA-accredited institutions, and promotes opportunities to gain an understanding of their sensory, cognitive, and physiological abilities which can be applied to conservation strategies. The BSAG advises the Wildlife Conservation and Management Committee, Conservation Department and Animal Program Leaders on issues related to behavioral ecology. It is overseen by the Animal Welfare Committee.

Hilda Tresz is specializing in the following:

### Fast and easy programs



Brown bag used as safety zone by black-footed ferret at Phoenix Zoo  
Photo by: Tara Sprankle

### Free or inexpensive ideas



Puma smells elephant fecal at Phoenix Zoo, USA  
Photo by: Hilda Tresz

### Green Earth and recycling



Female chimpanzee Rita receives shredded paper  
at the Doha Zoo in Qatar Photo by Jenny Stands Wilson



Male chimpanzee drinking from plastic bottle  
at the Buenos Aires Zoo, Argentina  
Photo by: Santiago Ricci

**Please review video examples:**

Chimpanzee given shredded paper and T-shirt at the Doha Zoo in Qatar:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMnk8oYrWik&feature=email>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8o1vZGQLZs&feature=email>

Chimpanzee playing with new tires at the Doha Zoo in Qatar:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVsXAeAcCj0>

Asiatic black bear playing with bobbin at the Doha Zoo in Qatar:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuzN\\_4H-FWU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kuzN_4H-FWU)

Tiger receiving new boomer ball at the Doha Zoo in Qatar:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egH7PifeQE0>

**Resourcefulness**



Pine cones used as puzzle feeder for domestic chicken at Phoenix Zoo, USA  
Photo by: Hilda Tresz

**Species-appropriate behaviors**



Black-handed spider monkey utilizing structural enrichment at Phoenix Zoo, USA  
Photo by: Hilda Tresz

## Contra Freeloading (helping animals learn to work for their diet)



Miniature zebu and domestic goats foraging from boomer ball feeders  
Phoenix Zoo, Photo by: Bridget Caldwell

## Minimum space increase



Floor space increased by flat hay mat at The Phoenix Zoo  
Photo by: Crystal Chavas

## Training:

(Basic husbandry and medical training)



Hilda Tresz is training Bolivian squirrel monkeys to take medicine on cue at Phoenix Zoo, Photo by: unknown

## Chimpanzee introductions:



Argentina, India, Egypt  
Photo by Santiago Ricci, Hilda Tresz and Housien El Shamy

Primate foundation of Arizona  
Buenos Aires Zoo, Argentina  
Doha Zoo, Qatar  
Cordoba Zoo, Argentina  
Giza Zoo, Egypt  
Alexandria Zoo, Egypt  
Abidjan Zoo, Ivory Coast  
Dakar Zoo, Senegal  
National Zoo, Chile  
Mysore Zoo, India  
Giza Zoo, Egypt  
Hangzhou Zoo, China  
Changsha Zoo, China

**Behavioral problems:** Stereotypic behaviors, animal introductions, infant care, etc.

Krakow Zoo, Poland chimpanzee introduction and infant care program  
Phoenix Zoo, USA mandrill self-mutilation study  
Phoenix Zoo, USA Hamadryas baboon introduction  
Phoenix Zoo, USA Common squirrel monkey introduction

**Behavioral research:**

Phoenix Zoo, USA elephant aggression study  
Zoo Barcelona, Spain elephant stress study  
Honor's research project at University of Brighton, U.K., study on behavioral enrichment (Tanya Conway-Grim)  
Phoenix Zoo, USA elephant foraging study  
Phoenix Zoo, USA elephant social study, part I.  
Phoenix Zoo, USA elephant foraging study, part II.  
Phoenix Zoo, USA mandrill self-mutilation study

**Education:**

Experimental learning activities to educate zoo guests via behind the scene tours  
Enrichment classes for domestic pets  
Lectures and workshops in conferences and zoos

**Protocols:**

Environmental Enrichment Protocol  
Primate Enrichment Protocol  
Training Protocol  
Specific Guidelines for Diet Based Training  
Behavioral Observational Team Protocol

**Volunteer Programs**

Hilda tresz is the Program Manager of the Behavioral Observation Team (BOT) at The Phoenix Zoo since 2005. This volunteer group functions to support research and apply the techniques of Behavioral Management as a response to the physical and psychological needs of the living components of the collection and to engage the public in understanding the needs of living creatures and the applications of Behavioral Management resources in responding to those needs, thereby informing and inspiring the development of caring attitudes.

## **CONSULTATIONS VIA EMAIL AND SKYPE regarding:**

1. Animal behavioral problems
2. Establishing environmental enrichment programs
  - Teaching animals how to work for their food similar to their wild counterparts
  - Developing programs in a simple, fast, easy way with minimal or no cost while incorporating recycling methods
  - Increasing minimum space by utilizing more floor space and three dimensions
  - Providing protocols and other documentation templates according to AZA and USDA standards
3. Creating training programs
  - Developing of a zoo wide training program at your facility
  - Help you with the training of problematic animals
  - Providing protocols and other documentation templates according to AZA and USDA standards
4. Animal introductions
5. Developing and conducting behavioral research

## **WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

Five-day workshops are introductions to understanding the importance of behavioral management, animal behavior and developing the skills required to elicit species-appropriate behaviors by utilizing proper behavioral enrichment. Workshops are a combination of lectures and hands-on experience with all species, especially focusing on chimpanzees. Hilda Tresz leads each participant as they put into practice the skills they have learned in the lectures; understanding of current standards, the logistics of applying zoo wide behavioral enrichment techniques, the importance of individuals to make a difference in an animal's life and developing team work.

The information in this workshop includes:

1. Understanding the principals of Behavioral Management
2. Developing basic skills of staff of providing fast, easy, sensible and inexpensive/free enrichment
3. Recycling
4. Developing basic skills of finding and utilizing resources
5. Everyone can make a difference!
6. Developing team work
7. Problem solving

## **Hilda's work is published worldwide**

### **Presentations:**

Coyote desensitization program, California Association for Behavioral Analysis. California, 2004  
Behavioral Management at the Phoenix Zoo, New Strategies and Perspectives, Elephant Management Conference, Copenhagen, September 2005. Presented by Alan Roocroft  
Let them be elephants! Elephant Management Association, Oregon, 2005  
The role of enrichment, Behavioral Enrichment = Behavioral Management, The Jane Goodall Institute, Chimpanzoo: Research, Education and Enrichment Conference When Apes and Humans Communicate, 2007  
Mentor program for ChimpanZoo, ChimpanZoo Conference, Oakland Zoo, California. 2008  
ABMA Behavioral Managers Workshop, Phoenix, AZ 2008  
Tactics for training apprehensive animals, ABMA 2008  
Contra freeloadng at the phoenix Zoo, ABMA, 2008  
The lack of substrate use in zoos, ICEE, 2011  
Beneficial Browse, ICEE, 2011  
Chimpanzee- To understand, to mentor, to save ICEE, 2013  
Growing grass in the desert environment; if we can do it so can you! ICEE, 2013

## **Publications:**

In English:

Tresz, H. 1997. Providing enrichment at no cost, The Shape of Enrichment, Vol.6 (4): 1-4

Tresz, H. 2001. Providing enrichment at no cost, Part II. The Shape of Enrichment, Vol. 10 (4): 8-9

Tresz, H. 2002. Behavioral enrichment 101, Animal Keeper's Forum, Vol.29 (2): 54-56

Tresz, H. 2005. A successful introduction of 2.20 wild common squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri sciureus*) into captivity at the Phoenix Zoo, Neotropical Primates, 13(3):39-41.

Tresz, H. 2005. Training two coyotes (*Canis latrans*) through extensive desensitization techniques, Wellspring magazine, Animal Behavior Management Alliance, Pg 4-10

Tresz, H. 2006. Community Involvements in Behavioral Enrichment at the Phoenix Zoo, Animal Keepers' Forum

Vol. 33 (1): 12-16

Tresz, H. 2006 Behavioral Management at the Phoenix Zoo, New Strategies and Perspectives, JAAWS (Journal of Applied Animal welfare Science)

Vol: 9 (1): 65-71

Tresz, H. 2006. Let them be elephants! International Zoo News

Vol. 53 (3): 154-161

Tresz, H. 2007. Providing enrichment in highly controlled environments: black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) enrichment program at the Phoenix Zoo, International Zoo News, Vol. 54/6, No. 359 (2007), pp. 324-331

Tresz, H. 2008. The use of behavioral enrichment in Galapagos and Aldabra tortoises at Phoenix Zoo, International Zoo News Vol.55/3, No.364 (2008), pp.147-151

Tresz, H. 2009. How volunteers can aid a zoo's behavioral management program, International Zoo News, Vol. 56, Number 3, pp. 151-156

Tresz, H. 2009. Incorporating Behavioral Enrichment into Husbandry, ABMA Wellspring, Vol. 10, Issue 3.

Tresz, H. 2010. Contra Freeloading at the Phoenix Zoo Part 1 and 2, ABMA Wellspring, Vol. 11, Issue 2.

Tresz, H. 2010. Enrichment at Phoenix Zoo for animals with limited space, International Zoo News, Vol. 57, No. 7, pp. 399-404

Tresz, H. 2010. Specific guidelines for diet based training at the Phoenix Zoo, International Zoo News, Vol. 57, No. 8, pp. 466-471

Tresz, H. 2011. Rita chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*): The start of an enrichment program at the Doha Zoo, Qatar, Laboratory Primate Newsletter [50] 1

Tresz, H. 2013. Introduction of Wali at Mysor Zoo, Ex-Situ Updates of Central Zoo Authority of China, Vol.2, Issue 2

In Hungarian:

Tresz, H. 2004. Providing Enrichment in no cost, Part I., Vadon Wildlife Magazine, Budapest, Hungary Vol.5: 12-16

Tresz, H. 2005. Providing Enrichment in no cost, Part II. Vadon Wildlife Magazine, Budapest, Hungary Vol.1: 20-24

Tresz, H. 2005. Behavioral enrichment 101, Vadon Wildlife Magazine, Budapest, Hungary Vol. 6: 37-39

In German:

Tresz, H. 2005. Enrichmentangebot ohne Kosten- Teil I, Arbeitsplatz Zoo, German Zookeeper Association Magazine

Vol.17 (1): 15-20

Tresz, H. 2006. Behavioural enrichment bei Galapagos-Riesenschildkroten (*Geochelone nigra*) und Aldabra- Riesenschildkroten (*Geochelone gigantea*) im Phoenix Zoo, Arbeitsplatz Zoo, German Zookeeper Association Magazine



In French:

Tresz, H. 2008. Procurer de L'enrichissement dans des environnements hautement controles: programme d'enrichissement du putois a pieds noirs ou putois d'Amérique (Mustela nigripes) au zoo de Phoenix, [www.afsanimalier.com](http://www.afsanimalier.com)

Tresz, H. 2009. Training de deux coyotes (Canis latrans) par des methoses approfondies de desensibilisation, [www.afsanimalier.com](http://www.afsanimalier.com)

In Arabic:

Tresz, H. 2010. رطب ة حودلاب ناوي حلا ة ق يدح يف بي ص خ ت ل ا ج م ا ن ر ب ة د ب ل ا ا م و ع د ي و , ا ت ي ر .

In Indian :

Tresz, H. 2013. Introduction of Waly in Mysore Zoo. Ex-situ updates, Central Zoo Authority, India Vol. 2, Issue 2

## **Consultations and Workshops :**

Singapore Zoo behavioral enrichment program, 2005

Chester Zoo elephant enrichment program, 2006

Zoo Barcelona, Spain black rhino stereotypic behavior problems, 2007

Zoo Barcelona, Spain elephant stress study, 2007

Delhi Zoo chimpanzee enrichment program, 2007

The Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo and Gardens, Hawaii capuchin monkey training programs, 2008

Yonso Project, Ghana enrichment and training programs, 2008

Tel Aviv Ramat Gan Zoo, Israel chimpanzee training programs, 2008

Jardín Botánico y Zoológico de Asunción, Paraguay, chimpanzee enrichment program 2008

Krakow Zoo, Poland chimpanzee introduction and infant care program, 2008

Zoo Barcelona, Spain chimpanzee enrichment, 2009

Mona Foundation, Spain chimpanzee enrichment, 2009

Ouwehand Zoo, The Netherlands general enrichment program, 2009

Centro Ecológico de Sonora, Mexico Asiatic black bear and general enrichment program, 2009

Mysore Zoo, India Bennett's wallaby training program, tiger and chimpanzee enrichment program, 2010

Doha Zoo, Qatar chimpanzee introduction and enrichment program, 2010

Giza Zoo, chimpanzee welfare, 2010

Limbe Wildlife Center, Cameroon chimpanzee enrichment program, 2010

Cordoba Zoo, Argentina chimpanzee introduction and enrichment program; elephant enrichment program, 2010

Buenos Aires Zoo chimpanzee introduction and enrichment program, elephant enrichment program, 2010

La Plata Zoo chimpanzee enrichment program, 2010

UC DAVIS, California, primate enrichment and training, 2010

Lima Zoo, Peru, general enrichment and educational programs, 2011

Temaiken Zoo, Argentina colobus monkey introduction, 2011

Abidjan Zoo, Cote d'Ivoire, basic husbandry program, 2011

Seoul Zoo, Korea infant chimpanzee reintroduction, 2011

Antalya Zoo, Turkey baboon welfare, 2011

Chimfunshi, Zambia, chimpanzee welfare, 2011

National Zoo, Chile chimpanzee introduction and enrichment program; elephant enrichment program, 2011

Giza and Alexandria Zoo, Egypt chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs, 2010-11

Abidjan Zoo, Ivory Coast chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs, 2011-12

Dakar Zoo, Senegal chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs, 2011-12

Al Ain Zoo, United Arab Emirates behavioral enrichment program, 2012

Mysore Zoo, India, chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013

New Delhi Zoo, India, all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013

Giza Zoo, India, chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013  
Hangzhou Zoo, China, chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013  
Fuzhou Zoo, China, all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013  
Changsha Zoo, China, chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2013  
Mysore Zoo, India chimpanzee research program 2014  
Chengdu Zoo, China chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2014  
Guangzhou Zoo, China chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2014  
Taiyuan Zoo, China chimpanzee introduction and all species husbandry, enrichment programs 2014  
National Zoo, Chile chimpanzee stereotypic behaviors, 2014  
Temaiken Zoo, Argentina, howler monkey introduction 2014  
Planckendael Zoo, Belgium, slender-horned gazelle stereotypic behaviors and enrichment program 2014

Hilda has created several comprehensive behavioral management programs and, in 2005, received the American Association of Zookeepers (AAZK) Lee Houts Environmental Excellence Award for her work.

How to contact:

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## Testaments:

"Hilda Tresz has been known to me for several years. The former director of our ChimpanZoo program, Virginia Landau, contacted me after reading an article in which Ms. Tresz was advocating enrichment activities for captive chimpanzees – ideas which she and I had been advocating for years. Dr. Landau told me "I have found a jewel". Because of her skill, dedication and persistence, her diplomatic approach to sometimes complex situations, and because she truly cares, Ms. Tresz has been able to help many chimpanzees and zoos in many parts of the world".



*Jane Goodall PhD, DBE  
Founder – the Jane Goodall Institute  
& UN Messenger of Peace*

"You were a hero at the Portland Conference. A mere goddess that works miracles. Actually, joking aside, I think you are truly the goddess of chimpanzees! Your insightful assessment of the need of self sustaining systems reminded many attendees that enrichment is not one or two activities whenever possible. Needless to say, you are the "Queen Bee" of enrichment ideas as well as the author of a practical plan for enriching zoo animals. In addition, you provided zoo personnel with an excellent opportunity to rethink the word enrichment". (*Virginia Landau, Ph.D. Vice President Director of ChimpanZoo: Research, Education and Enrichment Program, The Jane Goodall Institute*)

Bless you Hilda - angel of animals on ground. Love you. (*Dina Zulfikar, Member of supervising joint committee of General Organization of Veterinary Services and Civil Society*)

"We are fortunate to now have the help of an extraordinary enrichment specialist, Hilda Tresz, who heads our Mentor Program to work with zoos caring for chimpanzees that may lack funding or staff. Ms. Tresz has developed an amazing program of low and no cost enrichment for chimpanzees and other species". (*Erica Grimm, Assistant to the Director, ChimpanZoo: Research, Education and Enrichment, A Program of the Jane Goodall Institute*)

"You are a wonderful person. Love you for what you are doing and for the way you are doing it. We love your positive approach to life, people and animals. It is hard to believe how far you managed to take this project in today's unfriendly world. My hat goes to you - a beautiful human being, to your knowledge,

wisdom, love of the animals and life itself. You believe in people and their goodness and this is probably part of the secret of your success in making things happen". (*Zofia and Stan Kurylowicz*)

"Hilda's performance at the MAETP class was excellent and her presentation at the elephant meeting was impressive and made a significant impact on elephant managers and caretakers (not an easy audience!). I was particularly impressed by her attempts to bring a high level of objective quantitative evaluation to the elephant husbandry changes that she instigated. Indeed I have subsequently cited Hilda's work as an example to be emulated by other elephant caretakers in my own presentations". (*David Shepherdson Ph.D., Conservation Program Scientist, Oregon Zoo*)