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Primate expert joins S'pore zoo

By [Arlina Arshad](#)

THERE'S a new man at the zoo.

Dr Ken Gold, 46, has joined the Singapore Zoological Gardens as general curator, a new position that puts him in charge of the veterinary and zoology departments.

Dr Gold visited the zoo in January and found it to be an 'innovative, visionary place'. 'I like the open concept, the way the animals roam around freely in their enclosures...It's very different from other zoos in Asia and I'd like to make a contribution here,' he said.

The primatologist, who obtained his doctorate from Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States, has worked with gorillas, orang utans and chimpanzees in captivity for many years.

He has spent 25 years in world-class zoos, such as the Phoenix and Lincoln Park zoos in the US and the Apenheul Primate Park in the Netherlands.

Dr Gold started his 44-hour week on March 15 and hopes to stay for at least five years.

His wife, Patie, 51, an industrial welder and bat enthusiast, is in Chicago. The couple have no children but keep seven bats, orphaned or injured, at their Chicago home.

'It'd be nice to stay permanently or end my career here,' said Dr Gold.

He works with eight curators and assistant curators. Besides staff training, he plans to look at individual animal collections, assess their conservation value, and see if the manner in which they are exhibited suits the animals.

'I'd like to see how we can contribute to global conservation plans, what role we can play in saving endangered species,' he added.

If there are two animals that particularly interest him, they are the douc langur and proboscis monkeys. The zoo has successfully bred 12 douc langurs and eight proboscis monkeys, he said, adding: 'We need to study further how we can add to the captive population.'

He also stressed the importance of public education to change popular perceptions about animals such as fruit bats. 'People always think that bats are bad. Some of them are being hunted for food. It's sad because bats help to pollinate flowers.'

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