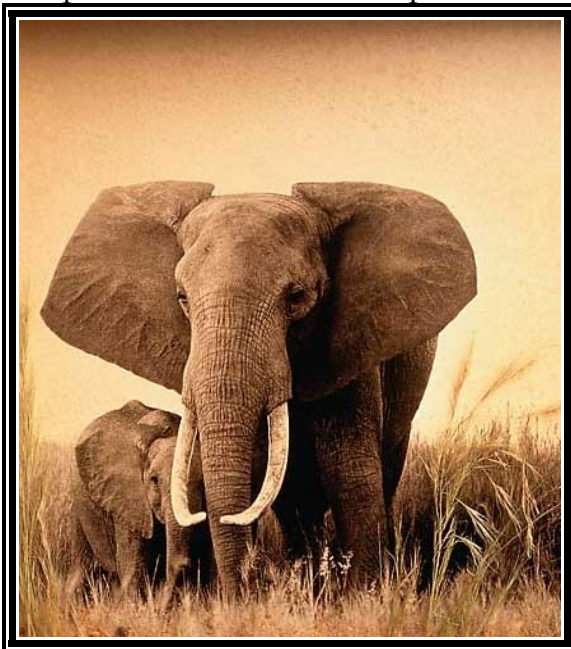




Some Notes on the Zoogeography of Tarzan Movies

We are fans of old Tarzan movies, though as a biologist I shudder at the liberties the film makers have taken with the species of animals depicted. Although most Tarzan movies were set in Africa, only a couple were in South America. Elephants play an important role in all the movies, though all shown are Indian (Asian) elephants. There are major differences between the two groups of elephants. African elephants are virtually undomesticatable and are extremely dangerous to work with. They are larger, and have gigantic ears compared with their counterparts.



As movie fans became wiser, large fake ears were hung over the small ears to simulate African elephants.

In virtually every Tarzan movie one sees sulfur crested cockatoos, with their distinctive head feathers spread. None ever fly in the movies because they are all exhausted after flying from their home in Australia and Tasmania. They are not found naturally in Africa or South America. One of the most numerous birds calling in the background are mourning doves, which are found only in the New World, Central and North America. The calls and song of common California birds



in virtually every movie usually startle me.

Alligators appear in isolated scenes, along with crocodiles, which doesn't happen in Africa. Gators are New World species. South American giant anteaters sometimes wander through a scene, and of course, lions and zebras, hyenas and wildebeasts, plains animals exclusively, are seen in the simulated African rain forest where Tarzan lives, the jungle to viewers. Long-tailed New World monkeys are occasionally seen to flit through the supposedly African trees.

One must set aside a critical mind when watching such movies. I generally see too much in movies – the shadow of a microphone boom, or shadows that conflict with one another in the direction they are cast, and such.

One of the greatest curiosities about an animal which starred in many Tarzan movies, concerns Cheeta, the chimpanzee. Most chimps live to a ripe old age of about 45 years, but Cheeta has beaten the odds and has lived much longer. She celebrated her 76th birthday on April 9, 2008, and is known as the world's longest living chimpanzee.

Despite so many distractions, we still enjoy the fictional simpler moral world of Tarzan and Jane and Boy and Cheetah. Only Boy and Cheeta survive today, but the movies they made seem eternal. We are lucky to have such a rich history preserved on film, and on DVD and other electronic storage devices.



An Unfair AAPA Policy

By banning e-journals from qualifying for consideration for laureate awards, it has eliminated some, if not most of the best writing in the association. I speak of the sparkling prose of David Griffin and Hugh Singleton, and the gifted authors who contribute articles which are published in their journals. The restrictions border on misoneism, long practiced by ever declining and shrinking amateur journalism groups. National and international blogs are where the writing action is in our modern times. Have we locked ourselves into the limited age and world of Tarzan? We are getting too old to continue to try to swing through the trees on vines in an artificial rain forest jungle. Be sure to check out Dave Griffin's web page listed in the AAPA web site for what I consider some of the best writing the AAPA has ever had.

This small e-journal is the work of J. Hill Hamon, a long-time AAPA member, who started the hobby as most others did, with a Kelsey hand press and a few cases of monotype. The amassed voluminous printing equipment and supplies are being passed on to members of a younger generation – to letterpress printing students and friends. 1515 Evergreen Road, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601.

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