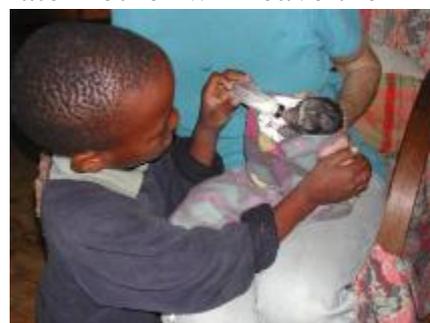


THE STORY OF NGOME AT A.P.E.S. (OCT 2008)



Ngome arrived at A.P.E.S. on the 10th January 2008. He was no more than 3 weeks old. A tiny mite with silky black fur, white face with 2 shiny bright eyes, that seemed to be asking for help! For one so young he showed a lot of spirit. Crying out with the usual stress call of infant vervets, a Brrrr! Brrrr! It is a very plaintive call and anyone dealing with these primates can't help having their heartstrings pulled, he was trying desperately to free himself from his captors I immediately held out my hand and he clung to it, I then cuddled him next to my heart beat, he immediately stopped crying and cuddled

closer. On enquiring from the 2 young African youths how and where had they found him, to which they replied, that they had found him in the bush near the road in our area of Ngome (hence his name) and that his mother ran away and left him! I am afraid to say that this is not true at all as any vervet or any other primate mother will leave their young and in many cases will fight to the death to protect their young. I informed them of this and both were rather taken aback that I should know such things. On enquiring what they had fed him on I was told they had tried a mixture of maize meal and cow's milk, but he would not have it and because they were afraid he would die the decided to bring him to us at the sanctuary. I gave them a good talking to but also thanked them for bringing him to the sanctuary. They said that they new that Mandlovu (that's me) would be very very angry if they had not done so. Ngome settled in well and what surprised me the most was how he, even though so young, managed to feed himself grapes, chopped apple etc even though he was very clumsy. His hunger had got the better of him. I also put him onto a formula (the same as human infants have) he really was so very thirsty and suckled straight away, which is unusual as in may cases it is difficult to get vervet infant's to suckle on a teat how ever small it is. This too showed that he was also very close to getting dehydrated a very serious situation, which can lead to death very quickly in one so young. The same day he arrived our Beta female Mandy who had given birth a few weeks before showed great interest in the "new arrival" he too was excited to see her at



the front door, I let him go to her both were extremely interested in each other and the two infants were as well. Karen our Alpha female who had given birth a few hours before Mandy was also equally interested. Very shortly all the other outside troop arrived to see the new baby and accepted him without any fuss. As he was still far too small and need constant care and not having a mum of his own I had to take over the task. From the first night he spent in his Basket he slept right through the night without

a murmur from 6pm to 6am. He still needed his 4 hourly feeds and his cereal and fruit. As he grew and became more independent he spent more and more time with his adopted vervet family and age group friends Walt, Kirsten and of course his very best friend

Nungu Sherry's son who is practically the same age as Ngome not forgetting his adopted Nanny Tomisina, Thombi's 3 year old daughter who is such a frustrated mum its comical to see. She claimed Ngomi as her own, but Ngome still ran back to me if there was any danger or he was worried. If I was wearing my usual old maroon jersey, his favourite all the better, his trick is to climb in at the neck snuggle and go to sleep. April saw him spending practically all day outside only coming in to sleep in his night basket. And as he was now off the bottle he also had various snacks fruit etc. If he didn't want to be fed he turned his face away or shook his head, just like a human infant! Ngome is now 9 months old and like most teenagers human or otherwise "Knows it all" so consequently being disrespectful to one of the older monkeys he got bitten at the top of his tail, rather a nasty wound but not fatal, apart feeling very sorry for himself and seeking his human mum for comfort and of course medication, he is fine but like all moms I worry especially when it is wet or cold but he is doing what he was born to do being a FREE PRIMATE not a pet or one in a cage. He now also spends most of the day with the others in the wattle forest foraging and doing what monkeys do best. More about him in the next issue.

