

Gazette van Detroit

SINDS 1914

The only Belgian newspaper in America serving the Belgian communities around the world for 94 years.

Vol. 94 No. 18

Belgian Publishing, Inc. • 18740 E. 13 Mile Rd. • Roseville, MI 48066-1378

September 4, 2008

Nieuws uit België

Mechelse beiaardier vindt "verloren" Rubens

Jo Haazen, de stadsbeiaardier van Mechelen, heeft tijdens een bezoek aan Rusland een verloren gewaande Rubens teruggevonden. Het werk werd gemaakt voor het altaar van de Mechelse visverkopers in de Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk in Mechelen en maakte deel uit van het veelluik "Wondere visvangst".

"Dat werd in 1794 door de Franse Republiek verbeurdverklaard en naar Parijs vervoerd. Het bovenste drieluik keerde in 1816 terug, maar het onderste gedeelte, bestaande uit drie schilderijen, bleef in Frankrijk. Van die drie werkjes ging er een verloren", aldus Haazen.

Tot zijn eigen grote verbazing merkte Haazen het werkje op bij een bezoek aan een tentoonstelling in Nizjni Novgorod. Het werd uitgeleend door de Hermitage in Sint-Petersburg.

Het is een raadsel hoe het in Rusland is terechtgekomen. De kans is ook klein dat het werk ooit terugkeert naar Mechelen.

Het museum van de Beiaard-school in Mechelen zal wel een reproductie tonen in het kader van de Monumentendag op 13 en 14 september. (www.deredactie.be)

News from the GSFA: Going places

My daughter Anna had decided to skydive in honor of her upcoming 30th birthday. She chose August 30th as it was the perfect date and it also turned out to be the perfect day for skydiving. The weather was cooperating: the sky

was a bright blue and clear as far as the eye could see. There was a slight breeze and it was not too humid. Anna and five of her friends were already there when my husband and I arrived, so I joined the group in signing four pages of waivers!

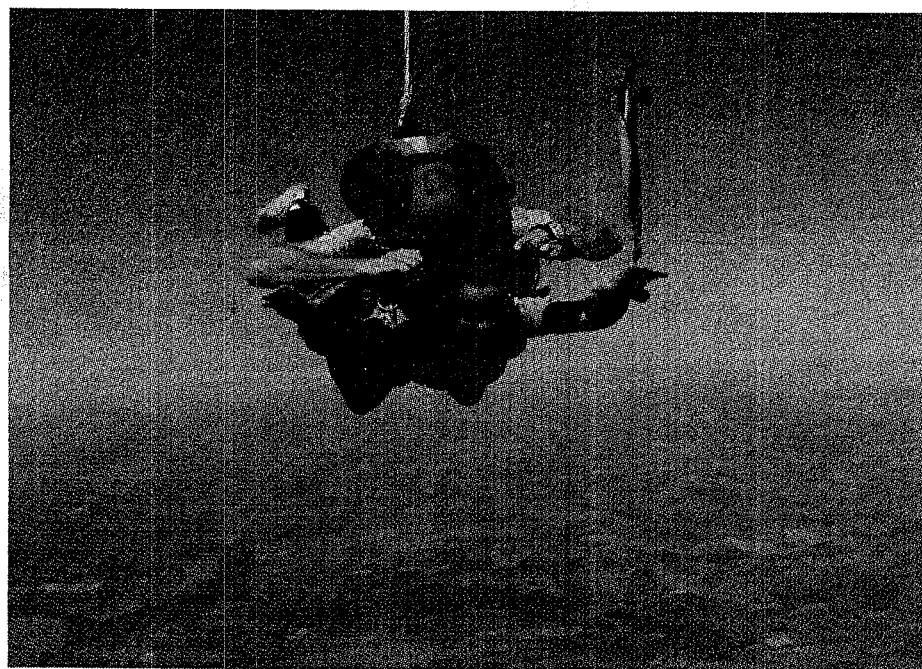
By Cheryl Heckla

They want it to be very clear that they are accepting no responsibility whatsoever for any "bad outcome."

The drop zone was at Al Myers Airport, off the Clinton-Tecumseh Highway, just a bit north of the town of Tecumseh, MI.

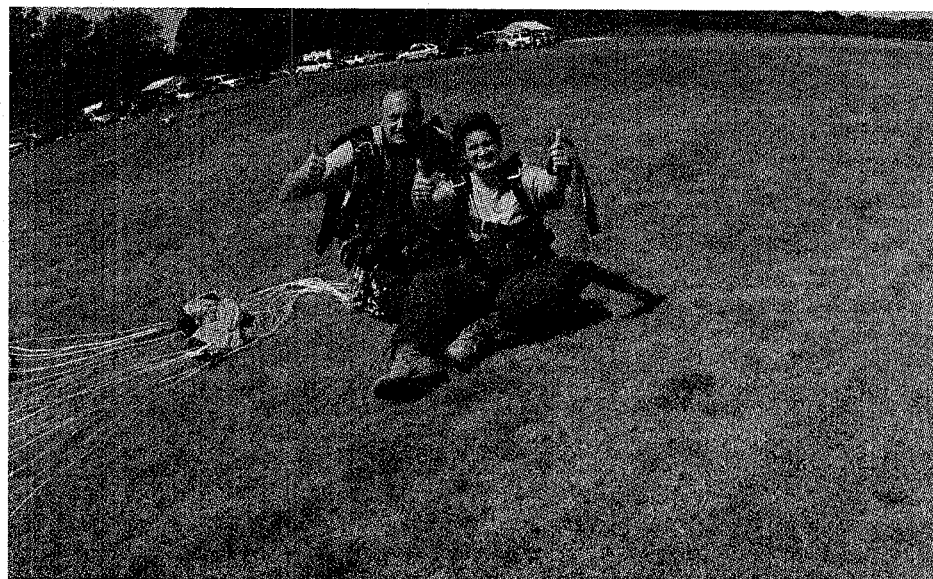
They seemed to be quite busy; there was a small campground near the facility. You could see a flea and farm market going on across the airstrip, and there were signs posted everywhere for a pig roast that evening. Visitors and spectators were sitting in the courtyard under the only shade tree watching the people as they descended from the planes. The planes were taking off about every thirty minutes. Each plane held about fourteen people and that included up to three tandem jumpers with cameramen; the rest were single jumpers. The plane would take off with the tandem jumpers in the back, climb to about 10,000 feet and the tandem jumpers would exit the plane. Then it would

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If you've ever wondered what it feels like to jump out of an airplane with a Belgian-flag windsock tied to your left wrist, just ask GSFA librarian Cheryl Heckla.

Photographs courtesy C. Heckla
and Skydive Tecumseh
(www.skydivetecumseh.com)



Cheryl the Intrepid and her instructor safely back on the ground.

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Paula's Place



If you could see them through my eyes... Paula Marckx monkeys around with Jan Verpooten

For as long as I can remember, I've had a special attraction for apes and monkeys. They fascinate me in a very pleasant way. I think it has to do with that gentle gaze when they look into your eyes. Not that I had been any closer to them than in our Antwerp Zoo, but while my little classmates were idolizing Errol Flynn and Clark Gable, I went for Cheetah. My aspiration was to live with Tarzan in the trees of Africa, with the chimp taking care of me so that I wouldn't fall off a branch. In anticipation I collected all the pictures of monkeys I could lay my hands on. When later on I went to Africa for my job, I did see monkeys in the wild, but I was properly dressed and they ran away from me. Maybe I wasn't their type after all.

Imagine how thrilled I was when, a couple of weeks ago, I finally met some kind of Tarzan, not in the trees but in the lobby of the Hilton Hotel. Jan Verpooten was about the same age as the ape man. But I no longer was, and neither was I prepared to swing in trees, monkeys or no monkeys. Never mind, this was a minor detail. The young man facing me had been living for an entire year among the spider monkeys in the forest of Yucatan. An ordinary boy from our region left everything behind and traveled to Mexico and the unknown to study the social behavior of apes, how they are a reflection of human beings and how understanding them could build bridges between all of us. Having completed his licentiate's thesis on golden-headed lion tamarins, and convinced that the differences between humans and other primates, however considerable, are a matter of degree, he went to find out for himself.

He arrived as a solitary gringo in the small Maya villages far away from what we call civilization to work with the local villagers in a hut with a palm-leaf roof, without any comfort whatsoever, from where he could hear the playful screams of his new neighbors for months to come. It didn't take long for him to be accepted. Spider monkeys usually

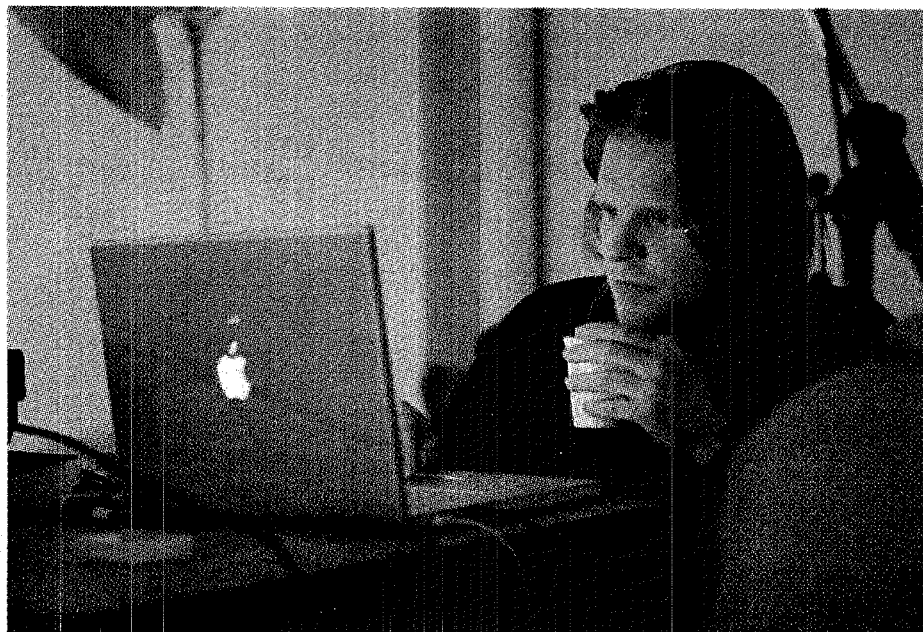


Photo courtesy J. Verpooten

Primate researcher Jan Verpooten did experience some culture shock when he returned to "civilization" after a year among the spider monkeys of Yucatan, Mexico. As a painter and a biologist, he aims to bridge the gap between science and the arts.

live in a community of about forty, mostly in the trees, swinging from their tails, "their fifth leg," from branch to branch. Only the little ones play on the ground sometimes. Together with his assistants, he made up names for the newborns. Wasn't it difficult to tell apart individuals? No, not at all, they all had distinct features. After a couple of days, they'd greet Jan when he came across them in the trees. They actually nodded hello. I wondered if, meeting a different species of primate, they considered him to be a monkey like them, or something else? According to Jan, they do realize that there is a difference, but they are smart and can tell friend from foe.

MONKEYS AND APES
What's the difference?
Monkeys have tails. Apes do not. Technically speaking, chimps, orang-utans, and gorillas are apes (but they won't mind if you call them "monkey").

They also have their own language: high tones when they are happy and sharp alarm tones, much like barking, when there is danger. He recalls one morning when the alarm

tones kept on and on, much longer than usual. Finally Jan found himself face to face with a puma, not exactly the kind of visitor he expected for breakfast. He had no idea what to do next; it was probably the instinct of self-preservation that told him not to move, so he just stood there staring at the predator. The puma didn't move either and kept looking at him, until it finally turned away and left. The monkey's alarm noises stopped.

Monkeys live in their own territories, which they seldom leave, and where they find all the necessary food and protection. Within their territories, they move very fast to find the juicy fruits and leaves that are their main food, although a very small part of their diet consists of insects, larvae and birds' eggs. It was not easy to follow them around on the rocky limestone forest floor covered with dense vegetation, but Jan had always been sporty and that helped. When they were about to enter the territory of another group, they'd stop. It's a kind of survival tactic; as I see it, in this respect they are a lot smarter than we are. However, there are naughty ones, too. Once Jan noticed a couple of intruders who were trespassing.

They did not swing from one branch to another; that would have been too obvious. A couple of males came down to the ground and walked, nearly tiptoed, into the next region. They looked funny, as they were not used to walking. First they had camouflaged their body scent with fragrant plants (chewing leaves and rubbing the paste on their chests and armpits, much like we use deodorant). They managed to approach a sexy female monkey of the other family, but as soon as their improper behavior was discovered, her fierce, adolescent son came to the rescue. In fact, fights among monkeys are exceptional: they are very peaceful animals. They like to hug and kiss each other. Jan told me that my friends, the chimps, even shake hands to reconcile after an argument.

So what is the main difference between monkeys and humans, I wanted to know? According to Jan, unlike us, monkeys are genetically adapted to a specific biotope, meaning their natural environment, whereas we are not. A human with African roots can function perfectly well at the North Pole. With apes this is totally unthinkable. Why? Culture enables humans to adapt to many different environments; so humans depend more on culture for their survival. Apes and monkeys, on the other hand, still survive without "cultural traditions," although they do pass on some learned behaviors. They are natural actors and full of humor. The reason monkeys are so very smart is that they have very big brains in comparison with their body size. Did you know that chimpanzees have a way of finding medicines in nature, just like our ancestors did?

Spider monkeys have an average life expectancy of 25 years. In Mexico, Mayas and monkeys live peacefully together, especially since the place where they live was recently recognized as a national reserve. The danger is that tourists may want to feed the animals, and the monkeys could lose their interest in looking for food themselves (Why do things the hard way when life

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USEFUL ADDRESSES

Belgian Tourist Office:
Headquarters for US and Canada:
220 East 42nd Street, Suite 3402
(34th Floor, between 2nd and 3rd Ave.)
New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 758-8130
Fax: (212) 355-7675
www.visitbelgium.com

**Belgian Consulate General
New York**
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22nd floor (entrance on 40th Street)
New York, NY 10018
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Canada
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**"Als apen er zouden in slagen zich
te vervelen, dan zouden ze mensen
kunnen worden."**

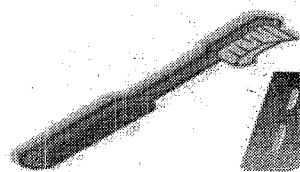
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Duits schrijver en dichter
(1749-1832)

GAZETTE VAN DETROIT - MISSION STATEMENT

The Gazette van Detroit is a non-profit organization aiming to form a bridge to unite Belgium with the United States and Canada. Its goal is to enhance the social, cultural and commercial ties that exist between these countries. The Gazette is independent and neutral, i.e. not affiliated with any political or religious organizations.

The Gazette provides news from various Belgian social and cultural organizations across the USA and Canada, as well as organizations in Belgium that are interested in the historical link between the three countries. It also aims to provide recent immigrants and temporary expatriates with a network of compatriots and relevant information intended to facilitate the transition brought about by a transatlantic move.

Created by and for Flemish-speaking Belgians, the Gazette aims to maintain a cordial, respectful, and open-minded relationship with French- and German-speaking compatriots and our Dutch neighbors who share our language.



Brush up your Flemish

by Nathalie Padilla

HET WEER (THE WEATHER)

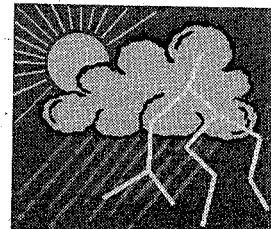
I cannot believe we haven't talked about the weather yet, when it's often the first thing people bring up when starting a conversation!

Hoe is het weer in Michigan? (How's the weather in Michigan?)

| | | |
|------------|---------|--------|
| Het is ... | zonnig | sunny |
| It is... | bewolkt | cloudy |
| | warm | warm |
| | koud | cold |
| | fris | chilly |

WAT VOOR WEER IS HET VANDAAG?

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Het hagelt. | It is hailing. |
| Het bliksemt. | There is lightning. |
| Het sneeuwt. | It is snowing. |
| Het regent. | It is raining. |
| Het dondert. | There is thunder. |



| | |
|------------|---------------|
| de hagel | the hail |
| de bliksem | the lightning |
| de sneeuw | the snow |
| de regen | the rain. |
| de donder | the thunder |

Fill in the gaps in the weather report

Morgen blijft het _____ maar _____. Er is kans op _____ in het zuiden van het land, maar we verwachten geen _____ en _____. Overmorgen wordt het _____.

Tomorrow it will stay sunny but chilly. There is a chance of rain in the south of the country, but we don't expect thunder and lightning. The day after tomorrow it will be cold and cloudy.

If you could see them through my eyes

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can be so much easier?), which is not unique to their species.

Jan, meanwhile, is back in Belgium. How did it feel to return to our hectic society after a year of life in the bush? There was some culture shock. He had the feeling that, in our society, there is "much ado about nothing." And yes, he misses his family, meaning the Mayas and his beloved monkeys. I wonder if they missed him, too. Would the animals recognize him if he went back? Jan doesn't know the answer. But one day he will return to find out. I feel

sure that he will not be able to forget the paradise he has left and that makes me dream.

At the moment, he is working on a project he initiated at the University of Antwerp in which he has biology interacting with the arts - he studied painting before he became a biologist. Jan believes that bridging the gap between science and the arts will help the West regain an integrated view of the world. It's essential for this to be a two-way street. As an artist he explores the narrative powers of evolution, and how insights can be developed and communicated in a non-scientific way. As a biologist, he studies art from the perspective of Darwin's theory of evolution. Recently he presented a paper about his hypothesis addressing the question of why art evolved in humans in a conference at Leibniz University, in Hannover, Germany.

Jan is also interested in other art-like behaviors in various animals, like the phenomenon of dancing cockatoos*, the building and decorating skills of bowerbirds, and, of course, painting chimps (in 2005,

three paintings by a chimpanzee named Congo were sold at auction in London for a total of \$26,250). In all this he wonders about the importance of culture - as a separate system of transmitting knowledge, via social learning, apart from the genetic system of inheritance - in both humans and other animals. Culture is common in the animal kingdom, but strangely enough, only humans are extremely cultural.

I believe our world needs more Jan Verpootens to share the lives of those lovely creatures swinging around in the trees of Mexico, Africa, or wherever, and learn from them. After what Jan told me, I am certain that we need each other and if we could see them through the eyes of this passionate researcher, maybe we all would understand. The planet of the apes, indeed: we are part of it.

*You may have seen the YouTube video of Snowball the cockatoo bobbing its head and kicking its legs in time with Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust." Some scientists say it could be more than a neat trick. If Snowball really feels the beat, it could teach us whether there's a biological basis for rhythm perception.