

## **Palm oil and Sustainability: Chester Zoo's perspective' - *Cat Barton, Chester Zoo***

As the cheapest, most high yielding and versatile vegetable oil on the market, palm oil is widely used in; around 50% of packaged foods, soaps, lotions, shampoos, cleaning products and cosmetics. With demand increasing every year, rapid and unregulated expansion of plantations has occurred, replacing natural forests in Indonesia and Malaysia and destroying the homes of many species throughout the regions. The clearing of rainforests for plantations also contributes significantly to global warming, releasing huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. There is an urgent need for all palm oil to be grown and managed sustainably; the most widely recognised certification standards are being developed by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) – bringing together different stakeholders in the palm oil industry; from growers and processors to manufacturers, retailers and environmental NGO's. The RSPO standards aim to protect primary forests, areas of high conservation value and the rights of local communities and plantation workers. Engaging with various stakeholders locally, nationally and globally to find solutions to this conservation problem is one way in which Chester Zoo and partners have been a part of influencing many sectors in the palm oil supply chain and promote the use of sustainable palm oil.