



Carmen



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Daily releases to the Learning Forest have enabled Carmen to go from strength to strength. Her climbing abilities are outstanding for an infant her age. It seems that her active and confident personality has propelled her to becoming an adept and coordinated climber. Carmen's interest has recently shifted from the forest floor to higher places!

Carmen has worked on manoeuvring through the canopy with a particular focus on the act of swinging from one tree to the next. This ability to effortlessly "brachiate" from tree to tree – usually with great distance in between - requires among other things, a thorough understanding of her body weight and the reach she can achieve in stretching out her arms. Equipped with this knowledge, Carmen can frequently be seen building up momentum by repetitively pushing off from a trunk in an attempt to transport herself from one tree to another. Carmen will experiment with any kind of tree to achieve this. Vines, in particular, provide the most fun for Carmen to utilise in this manner. In many ways Carmen can be considered as the orangutan "Tarzan" of her peers, swaying and sweeping from one place to another using vines, in the nursery playground, and high up in the canopy. When a break is needed from this continuous and energetic form of locomotion, Carmen has developed the skills to make a nest. This not only provides the caregivers a great deal of pleasure to observe, but also is a fundamental skill Carmen requires for her adult life.

Carmen reflects many of the personality traits of her friend Kobe when it comes to the forest. Carmen prefers to independently climb and explore, rather than play-fighting or discovering areas with her peers. When Carmen is alone she seems the happiest. This independent streak has allowed her to discover and learn a great deal of what the forest has to offer. Carmen still remains tentative around new people and requires time to build up trust. Nevertheless, this personality trait in no way reflects an unfriendly orangutan as Carmen is always gentle and calm natured with those she has come to know well.

Additionally, Carmen is an orangutan with a number of mannerisms that make her distinctive. Like a child who sucks her thumb for comfort, Carmen enjoys rolling her lips and sucking them inwards. She will do so from time to time when she is concentrating hard, climbing, or looking at her surroundings on the back of a caregiver on the way to the Learning Forest. When there is a cool wind breeze – and when she is feeling particularly playful - Carmen enjoys holding on to the trunk of a tree and dramatically panting out air with her mouth wide open, much like a dragon supposedly does!

Observing Carmen in the canopy is incredibly satisfying. With every daily release she continues to develop skills and successfully prepare for a future we all hope will be in the wild. Although Carmen spends all the time possible high in the canopy, she will always return to her caregivers diligently, full of memories from her canopy exploration, when she hears the call that the excursion for that day is drawing to an end.

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