

Acknowledgments

Large projects require lots of enthusiasm, encouragement, and support. We received all three in abundance. When the idea of a book about the natural history of the okapi was first presented to Warren Iliff and Dr. Ron Kagan, then director and general curator, respectively, at the Dallas Zoo, they encouraged us to move forward with this endeavor. And how did each of us move this project, so soon to take wing, from thought to reality? Mary Neel Green's original idea was first shared in muted tones with Susan Lyndaker Lindsey in the okapi barn, with an audience of okapi looking on. Like Susan, Cynthia L. Bennett had been concentrating her research on the okapi, and both had grown very interested in helping to preserve and support this unique animal. Mary Neel's considerable artistic talent was often glimpsed during her long stays in the okapi barn while assisting with the research. Even through a job change and a move, Susan never lost optimism about the project. Mary Neel never gave up despite delays and sent along new art work and historical information to inspire additional prose. Along the way we were encouraged and supported by that essential abundance of others.

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Since illustrations would be of primary importance in telling the story of the okapi, we asked the volunteers and keepers of the Dallas Zoo to share their photographic skills. In particular we need to acknowledge the portfolio of Elizabeth Pyle Stolze and photos from Gena Dodson, Mary Margaret Underkofler, Naomi Henderson, Darla Brodsky, Julie Evans, Jan McKenney, and Mackie Harper. These photos, along with many we took, provided a large base of poses from which to draw. Some commercial photos were used as inspiration for depicting a particular behavior. Most of all, the extensive okapi collection of the Dallas Zoo provided ample material and inspiration.

For those who encouraged us by just being interested in our project and who took the time to ask, "How's the okapi book coming?" we would like to say thank you. Your interest often reminded us that for those who care about okapi and the Ituri rain forest animals, this was a story that had to be shared. Without all those who so willingly helped us, we would never have been able to complete this book on one of the most charismatic animals discovered in the twentieth century—the okapi.

Finally, on behalf of the multitude of globally important species that inhabit the most biologically diverse area in Africa, we thank you for assisting in its preservation through the purchase of this book.

The Okapi

