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Zoo To You: A WILD Halloween

Halloween is just around the corner, and many are gathering up the last of the needed items to celebrate. After such a wonderful turnout for Boo! At the Zoo last weekend, I can vouch that most of the Garden City community has their Halloween costumes ready to go, but have you bought treats to hand out on Halloween? If not, I have some helpful tips for you to consider as you finish preparing for Halloween.

Candy is a classic choice to hand out to trick-or-treaters, but have you ever considered what goes into making that sweet treat? If you read the ingredient list on most processed food or household items, you would be surprised at the number of times you'll find palm oil there. From beauty products to candy, palm oil is a part of our daily lives, and most of the time we don't even realize it. The use of palm oil leads to problems in nature because of how the demand for palm oil is met. To fulfill demand, the rainforest is being clear-cut to create space for palm trees to be planted. The loss of the rainforest habitat makes it harder for wildlife to find food, water, shelter, or space. With the loss of these important resources, rainforest animals like the orangutan, Sumatran tiger, and Sumatran elephants have all experienced declines in their populations. These three species are now considered critically endangered because of how small their populations have become. Even though the demand for palm oil isn't affecting wildlife in our own backyards, we can still choose to take steps locally to help fight the habitat loss occurring to meet the demand for palm oil.

By choosing a candy company that is a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil you are supporting an organization that is committed to using certified sustainable palm oil. This means that the company does not rely on deforestation of the rainforest to produce palm oil instead, preserving the habitat and its resources for the wildlife that needs it. You might think that researching and identifying these companies is going to be extra work, but the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo has simplified the task by creating the Sustainable Palm Oil Shopping Guide App to help you identify smart choices for your Halloween candy. You can find it by visiting cmzoo.org/palmoil to download the app. If you aren't a fan of apps, Cheyenne

Mountain Zoo has also created the Orangutan-friendly Halloween Candy Guide that you can download and save to your computer or print off to take shopping with you.

Do your part this Halloween in helping to protect wildlife around the world, and make smart choices about which companies you support. By handing out Reese's, M&M's, or Starburst this Halloween, you can help reduce habitat loss caused by the demand for palm oil.

We can also help protect wildlife closer to home this Halloween. One way you and your little ghoul or goblin can help the wildlife of southwest Kansas is to make sure you don't litter while you are out trick-or-treating. Pollution is one of the four main ways that humans impact wildlife populations. The litter can be an obstacle for animals, preventing them from accessing resources in their habitat, and wildlife can become sick from eating trash. Make sure to remind family or friends to bring all candy wrappers home with them and dispose of them properly. Another way to help protect wildlife is recycling. After you give out all your Halloween candy, check the plastic bag that the individual pieces of candy were packaged in and see if it can be recycled. If it has a recycle symbol on it, then it can be recycled with grocery bags at recycling locations. For example, both Dillon's and Target have recycling bins for plastic bags.

Even selecting just one of these wildlife-friendly Halloween tips will help you to have a "wild" Halloween.