



The Crash

IRKA Newsletter

IRKA

August 2008

2008 Board of Directors Election Results

The International Rhino Keeper Association held our 2nd annual elections for the Board of Directors. Three positions were voted on this year, and current board members Jane Kennedy, Vice President from the San Diego Wild Animal Park, and Wendy Shaffstall, Secretary from the Cincinnati Zoo have been elected to serve another term. The newest member elected to the BOD is Paige McNickle from the Phoenix Zoo. The BOD positions will begin on September 1, 2008 and last for three years. We would like to extend our congratulations to Jane, Wendy and Paige. A big thank you goes out to all our members that participated in this years election process.

Dorothy Forman
Election Committee Chair

The Vote

Just a reminder for everyone to mark your calendars for our next workshop to be hosted by Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida!! The workshop committee has told us that the hotel will be The Embassy Suites, and that room rates are \$119.00. Those rates will apply for three days before and after the workshop. Derek Weatherford is hard at work with his committee finalizing details that will follow in the December newsletter. For those who may need additional financial assistance for the workshop, please remember that the IRKA promotes continued education through the workshop scholarship program. This program has limited funds, so download the form from our website www.rhinokeeperassociation.org, and get those sent in as soon as possible!



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From the Editor :

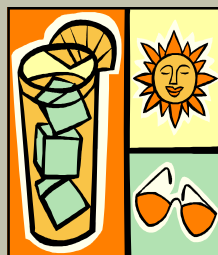
Greetings!

This summer while on vacation in Canada, I had the opportunity to visit with fellow rhino keeper Brad de Wolde at the Toronto Zoo! I was able to see first hand some wonderful training that Brad is doing with their pair of Greater One Horned Rhinos, and also be present for a "Meet the Rhino Keeper" program that is provided for guests at the zoo. I highly recommend this beautiful zoo to any one traveling in the Toronto area. See, even on vacation you can stretch those brain muscles!

We would also like to encourage further education and experience by using the Keeper Development Program Scholarship Fund. I will be travelling to Cincinnati Zoo in September to learn more about GOH's!! Ray Hren from Milwaukee County Zoo took advantage of this program this summer to go to the Columbus Zoo. So remember to expand those horizons!

Best wishes,

Christine Bobko



Brad de Wolde during the "Meet the Rhino Keeper presentation at the Toronto Zoo

The Rhino Resource Center Rhino May Day : by Jane Kennedy

In November of 2007, I was invited to speak at the 15th Annual Rhino May Day to be held at the Huxley Conference Theatre of the London Zoo. Dr. Kees Rookmaaker of Cambridge University, Director of the RRC, extended this invitation asking me to represent both the San Diego Wild Animal Park and the IRKA. (Adam Felts was going to attend also, but fatherhood took precedence!) I was to be the first non-Zoological Society of London ex-situ speaker to present a paper to this prestigious conference. On May 14th of this year, as vice-president of the IRKA, I was able to share our goals for the IRKA with the participants. I also spoke on the successes of the San Diego Wild Animal Park's rhino breeding program - the most successful in the world with 160 births to date. It was a great day of informative talks and provided me with the opportunity to connect with other rhino professionals and enthusiasts, many of which had not heard of the IRKA. Over 100 people from Europe, Asia, Africa, and two people from the United States participated.

The day was organized by the Rhino Resource Center in conjunction with Save the Rhino International and the Zoological Society of London. Focusing on in-situ programs, the talks highlighted diverse subjects in rhino conservation. The plight of the western black rhino was discussed, (now considered extinct) as was the work by Esmond Bradley Martin on the decreased use of rhino horn as jambias in Yemen. Abstracts of the papers presented during the Rhino May Day are available at the Rhino Resource Center's website: <http://www.rhinosourcecenter.com/about/rhino-may-day-2008.php>

My primary purpose was to connect the audience with the IRKA. I shared our goals to make meaningful contributions to the care of in-situ and ex-situ rhinos. Additionally, I spoke about the IRKA sponsored biennial workshop that brings together rhino professionals from around the world to help disseminate information. Our workshops are much like the Rhino May Day, only longer and more geared toward ex-situ rhinos. The Rhino May Day has traditionally focused on in-situ projects. Additionally I shared about the IRKA's recently adopted Keeper Development Program to help develop hands-on skills within the zoo-keeping community. Several European keepers expressed interest in participating in the program.



Dr. Kees Rookmaaker and Jane Kennedy



Jane and other May Day participants Cyrielle and Irek



Jane and Dr. Rookmaaker at Cambridge

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Prior to the conference I was able to visit the Port Lympe (sounds like "limb") Wild Animal Park (a private preserve established on the estate of John Aspinall) and the Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, which is a part of the Zoological Society of London. While visiting Port Lympe, I discussed black rhino health and nutrition issues with the rhino staff. One discussion with Paul Beer – the lead rhino keeper - regarded eosinophilic granuloma syndrome (EGS) which can be fatal in black rhino. He related that one of Port Lympe's females had suffered from EGS and that the staff had found a successful steroid treatment for her condition. In keeping with the missions of the San Diego Wild Animal Park and the IRKA to share knowledge and experiences of other keepers, I was able to suggest similar treatment for our black rhino in San Diego. The staff of both facilities worked together to come up with the best plan possible for the San Diego rhino. Our bull rhino has responded very well to the treatment suggested by the staff at Port Lympe, and we are very grateful for their help. In addition to the sharing of professional knowledge, the staff highlighted their successful black rhino breeding program, having had 10.19 calves born at their facility - a captive record. Nutrition is suspected in their bias towards female calves, but that's a later discussion.



Port Lympe lead rhino keeper - Paul Beer

Port Lympne Zoo



ESG syndrome in Black rhino



Black rhino butts on parade!!



Jane with Black rhino at Port Lympne

At Whipsnade, I visited with the keepers of the greater one-horned Asian rhinos and the southern white rhino collections. Whipsnade has had its best success in multi-generational southern white rhinos, a rarity in captivity. They have also had success breeding GOHA rhinos as well. One keeper from Whipsnade has even started the process of coordinating a trip to the San Diego Wild Animal Park next year to participate in the Keeper Development Program. He will be joining the IRKA, and hopes to get the Zoological Society of London to join as a Supporting Institution. When they do join, it will bring our SI memberships from England to three, joining both the Paignton Zoo and Cotswold Zoo. Hopefully they will encourage other European Zoos to join our truly International Rhino Keeper Association!

Serving as your Vice-President and being a liaison for the IRKA while visiting a number of zoological institutions has been my pleasure and a privilege. I encourage all of you to spread the mission, vision, and good work being shared through the International Rhino Keepers Association as often as you can by visiting other facilities during your travels. I hope to host one of you soon at the Wild Animal Park.

Whipsnade Wild Animal Park



Nepal exhibit



Kaya and mother Goalpara



Whipsnade rhino keeper – Joy



Beautiful view from Whipsnade



Jane with some GOH's



GOH exhibit

Facility Focus: The Buffalo Zoo - by Melissa King

The Buffalo Zoo houses 1.2 Greater One Horned Indian Rhinoceros. The male Dhaulagiri, also known as Henry, was born in Philadelphia July 24, 1991. Henry's father, Billy, was one of the oldest living Indian rhinos in captivity, documented to be at least 44 years old. Tashi, our breeding female, was born in Oklahoma City December 6, 1996. Tashi recently had our second calf born at the Buffalo Zoo. Her first female calf, Ashakiran, was born September 15, 2004. She was shipped to the Toronto Zoo in October of 2006. Clover, also female, was born March 1, 2008. Both pregnancies were a result of natural breeding between Henry and Tashi. To Prepare for their introduction they first had a visual intro through a howdy gate inside of their barn. Both occasions of breeding were monitored by staff and they were separated after.



Female Tashi and Clover out in yard the 1st day



Outside yard that is used alternately and shared

We currently weigh our calf Clover about once a week so that we can monitor her growth. We are able to separate her from Tashi which will also help to prepare them both for her departure in the future. When Asha was shipped to Toronto we had done crate training with both her and Tashi, and will probably do the same with Clover in the near future. Inside the rhino barn there is a stationary chute where we are able to do hand injections and foot soaks with Henry. We are currently also working on blood draws with him. Tashi is accustomed to walking through the chute as well.

We are currently performing surgery on Henry every 6-8 months to alleviate his pododermatitis on his rear feet. He is hand injected in the chute and then shifted into another stall where the surgery is performed. Any excess tissue is surgically removed from between his pads and nails. We also trim his nails and check his teeth while he is anesthetized.

For enrichment they get different items such as browse, barrels, hanging toys and also have mud wallows. In the winter we make snowmen with produce hidden in them. We also celebrate each of their birthdays to try to involve and educate the public. We have even had baby showers for each of our calves.

We look forward to the long lives of Henry and Tashi. And hope to continue their successful breeding to further ensure the future of the species.



Male Henry in pool where he spends most of his time

2009 Rhino Keeper Workshop

First Call for Papers

Beginning September 1st, persons interested in presenting a paper at the 2009 Rhino Keeper Workshop, can submit their abstract electronically to wendy.shaffstall@cininnatizoo.org. Abstracts should be in Word and no more than 500 words. After abstracts are reviewed by the workshop presentation committee, presenters will be contacted. Thank you for your interest in the International Rhino Keeper Association.



Rhinos. Elephants and Bears... Oh My! By: Ray Hren

There comes a time in everyone's career when you need a new set of ideas and way at looking at things. After taking care of black rhinos at the Milwaukee County Zoo for the last twelve years, I thought it was time to gain a new perspective. I thought what better way than to take advantage of the International Rhino Keeper Associations Professional Keeper Development Program. Out of the four choices (San Diego WAP, Cincinnati Zoo, The Wilds, and Columbus Zoo) Columbus Zoo seemed to be the best fit since they have black rhinos, and the rhino keepers also take care of elephants as we do at the Milwaukee County Zoo. I would be able to check out their elephant program while learning about the rhino program as well.

Upon arrival in Columbus, I was picked up at the airport and taken to the Columbus Zoo's late 19th century farmhouse, where interns and visiting professionals stay. I was a little hesitant when I heard the house was haunted. Luckily, I didn't experience any ghosts during my stay. After settling in, I was taken to the zoo's pachyderm barn, where I was told that I came at an exciting time. My visit coincided with the arrival of three visiting Asian elephants from the Buffalo Zoo, where they are renovating their elephant barn. The night before, two out of the three females had already arrived. I had the opportunity to watch the unloading of the third female arriving early the next morning. I was definitely tired waking up around three a.m., but I was treated to a smooth and efficient elephant unload. The other two female Asian elephants from Buffalo where excited to reunite with their herd mate. The rest of Columbus Zoo's large pachyderm house was abuzz with the new visitors as well.

The rest of my stay, I shadowed on the daily duties of the black rhino and Asian elephant beats with zookeepers Adam, Matt, Laura, and Heather and learned a lot about their routines. It was refreshing to learn a different routine since I've only worked at one zoo my whole career. I learned a lot about differences in diets, cleaning, training, and enrichment. My favorite training demonstration with the rhinos was a training session for a mock head x-ray with Matt training.

I was impressed with how still Kulinda the black rhino held steady with a ladder nearby for desensitization. Another exciting day was the weekly blood draw where the Columbus Zoo's veterinarian Dr. Gwen Myers drew blood from all the black rhinos and Asian elephants. I was a little intimidated, being a protected contact elephant keeper, stepping inside with their 5-6 ton Asian bull elephant "CoCo". I got to hunch down between his rear legs and feel the vein collection site. Unfortunately, I felt like a bad luck charm, because they had a hard time drawing blood on a few animals. Boy, do I know those days! Luckily, they were 100% successful the next day without me around.

I also got a chance to see some other areas. As a pachyderm keeper in Milwaukee, I have three different beats that I rotate into and care for a variety of animals including: African elephants, Nile hippos, warthog, reticulated giraffes, black rhinos, Asiatic black bear, Malayan tapir, and bongo antelope. So it was nice to see a couple other areas during my four day stay. I got the chance to hang out with Troy, who takes care of the sun bears, to see what kind of husbandry ideas I could bring back to our Asiatic black bear. I was very impressed with Columbus Zoo's new Asia Quest building where the sun bear exhibit is located. Talk about spacious, with its indoor two story sun bear exhibit with climbing logs bisecting the floors, and the nice outdoor exhibit with grass, trees, waterfall, and pool. Troy gave me some background on their bear training, enrichment, and exhibit design. I also got to visit the okapi barn. I've always been fascinated by these shy animals, and was interested to learn more about them. Dr. Myers invited me to observe a North American otter pup work-up, where I got the chance to hold a few of the pups. What can I say? I'm still a sucker for that kind of stuff!

Taking part in the International Rhino Keeper Association Keeper Professional Keeper Development Program was definitely the jumpstart I needed. I came back to Milwaukee with a list of new ideas for enrichment, diet, exhibit design, and training. It was refreshing to learn all the nuances of a different zoo, routine, and pachyderm team. I enjoyed sharing stories and ideas. I'd like to thank Adam Felts and the rest of the Columbus Zoo staff for making my stay a comfortable one. From picking and dropping me off at the airport, housing me, and enjoyable dinner company at various restaurants. I definitely recommend this program to everyone in the field. Not only can you learn more about rhino management, but also with other animals in your charges.



Blood draw on male Asian Coco



Black rhino at Columbus Zoo



Otter pup evaluation and workup

Institutional Supporters

The Supporting Institutional Membership is for any conservation organization , or zoological institution which supports rhino conservation in accordance with the objectives and purpose of the IRKA. These memberships are available for \$100, \$200, \$500 and \$2000. Why should your zoo be interested in joining on this level? If your institution contributes on the \$500 level then all rhino keepers membership fees at your zoo are waived! It is important that as the IRKA grows that we continue to garner the support from all facilities that are responsible for the protection and management of all species of rhinoceros. We would like to extend our appreciation for this substantial support to the following institutions, and hopefully we can add your zoo to this growing list! If you have questions about institutional memberships or any other questions please contact us at

internationalrhinokeeperassoc@gmail.com.

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