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The Keeper

The American Association of Zoo Keepers San Diego Chapter Quarterly Newsletter—Winter 2008

Message from the President

by Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President

Goodbye 2008, hello 2011. Another year has flown by. Here's a recap of 2008.

We recently held our annual WAP Photo Caravan. Twenty-four members and guests enjoyed a beautiful afternoon aboard two trucks in several of the WAP's exhibits. No matter how many times you've been to the WAP, and how long you've worked with animals, it's amazing to see them behaving naturally there. If you have never been on the Photo Caravan, you really should try it sometime!

Our biggest annual event, Bowling for Rhinos (BFR), raised over \$15,000 for rhino and habitat conservation. We had a great time! BFR is always a fantastic group effort; we extend many thanks to the people and local businesses for their participation. Watch our [website](#) for the date of next year's BFR.

Janet Hawes, one of the Children's Zoo nursery keepers, enlightened us about the work and details of hand-rearing animal neonates in need of extra care. The neonatal workshop was an excellent way to learn about changes that are coming and information that these hard working keepers have accumulated throughout the years.

Our March and October fundraising swap meet events were successes thanks to Rosa and the Rancho Bernardo Warehouse folks, everyone who contributed items, and the swap meet volunteers. We donated \$500 to the [Red Panda Project](#) and \$600 to [Polar Bears International](#). We also began saving for our 2011 conference (more in moment).

We relived the 2007 Witch Fires through presentations by Joan Embrey, Patrick Valentino (CA Wolf Center in Julian), and Rob Hutsel (San Diego River Project). Their accounts of the fires demonstrated their dedication and how much they have learned from past experiences.

SD AAZK members attended various conferences throughout the year and described their experiences. Our chapter's conference fund helps our members enhance their professional experiences.

We asked for your votes this year, too. Some board members moved around, others are new to the board. SD AAZK's board is a great group of people dedicated to making things happen for keepers and conservation.

Additional events—a hoof trim workshop, the 2nd Southern CA Keeper Exchange, and a conservation fundraiser with a photo contest—made 2008 a highly diverse year.

In 2009, we'll have presentations, gatherings, and additional fundraisers in preparation for SD AAZK to host the 2011 AAZK Conference. This is very exciting for us! The Zoological Society of San Diego has great facilities, collections, and employees who are enthusiastic and proud of what they do for a living. The 2011 conference will be a unique opportunity for keepers from all areas to share their experiences and stories.

SD AAZK would love to have your help and support. Every little bit helps. So *join us!* Email (TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net) or call (619 231-1515 ext. 4672) us.

I Do It for the Money...Not San Diego and National Zoo Keeper Week '08

by Adam Ruble, Mammal Keeper, Zoo

There is nothing better than waking up every day excited to get to work and see what the day has in store for you. Zoo keeping is one of those unique jobs that makes getting up in the morning an effortless task. It is a job in which the main motivation usually revolves around a passion for animals and a mission of conservation and education. As a keeper, we are limited in the opportunities we have to share our perspective and passion for this great profession. With the creation of National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW), we have been given a great reason to celebrate our job.

Last year was the first year that zookeepers were nationally recognized for their work, and as if one day wasn't enough, we were given a week to carry out the festivities. In my biased opinion, I feel the city of San Diego has a strong pride for its Zoo; so when NZKW started this past July, our Zoo and our community were right there supporting us.

To kick off the festivities, all keepers were given a breakfast accompanied by a special performance of "Telamasca," which is an entertainment show that is put on for the public during our summer nights. The great thing about the show this year was the incorporation of the keepers. The theme was "story-tellers" in which a keeper would share an experience or opinion that was played on a big screen followed by a correlating acrobatic and song performance. Many keepers volunteered to be in the film, so we all got to watch each other on the big screens. We were also given an unedited DVD version of the interviews, which was great for some uncensored keeper stories.

The next event during the week was a happy hour event sponsored by the Zoological Society's Human Resources Department. On behalf of HR, WAP and Zoo keepers were able to feast and socialize with their friends and co-workers after a hard day at work. I must admit—the way to a keeper's heart is definitely via the stomach!

Later in the week, keepers were honored at a Padres game. Before the baseball commenced, a handful of keepers from several different animal departments was given the chance to walk out on the field for recognition. Not only did each animal department get to send a keeper, but a few were able to bring some animals onto the field for applause and a shot on the jumbo screen. This year a warthog, pangolin, and porcupine were the star attractions. One of our managers, Nicki Boyd, who raised the most money during our annual Bowling for Rhinos fundraiser, got to throw out the first pitch. The Zoo also helped us out by providing cheap tickets to the game, so we had a great turnout of Society employees.

The last edition of the week's events was a keeper tent set up around the front of the Zoo. This was a wonderful opportunity for keepers to directly answer any questions to the public about zoo keeping. The keepers were surrounded by an array of posters, information, books, and pictures for the public to interact with. It was nice to see the public's interest in our profession and to have an outlet to answer any queries. Of course, the success of an idea like this relies on the hard work and time of a few dedicated and knowledgeable keepers, so thank you to Yvette, Laurie, and Suzanne.

The process to become a keeper can be very long and arduous. However, to work with animals, an organization, and a community that appreciate your work collectively like this, well, I can't think of anywhere else I would want to be.



SUPPORTED BY
Fostering professionalism
in animal care
among Zoo Keepers

Neonatal Workshop with Janet Hawes

by Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President; Sr. Hospital Keeper, Zoo



On September 16, Janet Hawes, one of several knowledgeable nursery keepers at the San Diego Zoo (SDZ), shared her experience and expertise in hand raising some of SDZ's animal neonates.

Janet emphasized how hand-rearing has changed throughout the years and how the number of young animals that are hand-raised now has drastically decreased. The reason—there is much more emphasis on keeping animals with their mothers. Babies are pulled for hand rearing only if there is a true need such as an illness, low birth weight, or medical necessity.

Examples included a lowland gorilla (Imani) who only weighed 900g at birth (normal weight is 2.3 kg), a sun bear whose feet were ulcerated due to his search for milk that the mother wasn't able to provide, and a margay who was buried in the sand near its mother. In these cases, Children's Zoo Nursery staff was called by veterinarians to step in.

The first few weeks of neonatal care are very important and there has to be a lot of attention to detail. Since some species have longer neonatal periods than others, a variety of issues must be addressed. Some of the major medical concerns relate to hyperthermia and infection of the umbilical cord. Nursery keepers must make sure their charge is warm, add IVs if needed, and offer physical and psychological security such as providing surrogates in the form of stuffed animals (they even have a bear that has a heart beat sound). All items must be developmentally and age-appropriate for each patient.

Besides medical care, nutritional care is a large component of hand-rearing neonates. Milk composition always goes through the nutritionists first. They determine the type of formula, nipple size, nursing positions, bottle washing, and knowing when to start providing a transitional diet. Hand rearing is a round-the-clock job and the Zoo's nursery has several shifts which depend on the care needed.

Janet noted that when it is time to hand rear an animal, everything can affect its outcome. Prior to any feeding, the neonate must be weighed. The correct nipple must be used because the wrong size can cause aspiration (fluid entering the lungs). When there isn't an appropriate nipple size, nursery keepers are resourceful and make something that works.

Even bottle washing is important in the hand rearing process. There are specific procedures used to wash milk bottles and anything else that comes into contact with the baby. Cleanliness is important to prevent infections and illness. Those are also the reasons why areas where animals are being hand raised become quarantine areas, require footbaths to decrease the possibility of any cross contamination.

When the animal becomes older and able to begin a transition to the adult diet, nursery keepers provide the regular diet items that are appealing. They must also habituate the young animal to the enclosure where it will live in the future. Daily supervised excursions into the exhibit accustom the neonate to what will become its home later on.

Habituating neonates to exhibits is common practice with primates and great apes. When possible, hoof-stock neonates are raised in the exhibits where they were born. Nursery keepers condition the neonates to respond to a signal so they can be bottle fed in an area within the exhibit.

Nursery keeper responsibilities are numerous. Besides all the tasks of raising a usually critical neonate, they must be extremely observant and keep meticulous records. SDZ's nursery staff has been so successful in their hand rearing ability, and in the variety of animal species reared, that they have shared their experiences with other zoos worldwide.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

by Yvette Kemp, President, SD AAZK; Sr. Hospital Keeper, Zoo

Since 1990, the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) has been participating yearly in raising funds for rhino conservation through Bowling For Rhinos (BFR).

BFR began by supporting the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) in Kenya. In 1994, funding was expanded to include Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, Indonesia. In 1996, Bukit Barisan Selatan and Way Kambas National Parks in Sumatra, Indonesia were added. This expansion enabled AAZK to assist endangered rhinos and the various species that live in their habitats.

Through these bowl-a-thons and other similar events, AAZK chapters have raised over \$3 million. One hundred percent of all money raised at these events is donated to protect rhinos.

With money raised in just the last few years, LWC in Kenya has purchased a single engine spotter airplane, a large transport truck for the relocation of animals, solar-powered electrical fencing for the preserve, and more. BFR also now supplies part of LWC's annual operating budget of \$850,000.

LWC has helped rhinos and also created a variety of programs that focus on other animals and the people in the area. In 1999, in collaboration with Princeton University scientists and the St. Louis Zoo, LWC began a study of Grevy's zebras. With less than 2,000 left in the world, this unique species could become extinct within the next 50 years.

In 2004, LWC created the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) to link wildlife and the local African communities. LWC recognized that if wildlife conservation was to succeed, there had to be a way for humans and animals to co-exist. NRT has set up community health clinics, developed community grazing policies, and established an education trust which supports eight primary schools and an adult literacy program.

So you can imagine our excitement when the founder of LWC and NRT, Ian Craig, visited the San Diego Zoo. On September 21, SD AAZK's board attended a presentation on LWC's current projects and future plans. We met Ian Craig and the new NRT chairman, the Honorable Francis Ole Kaparo.

Ian went into detail about the projects LWC has developed and how their work is making a difference in their conservation efforts. He spoke of how animal numbers have changed from 1977 to the present—Grevy's zebras from 106 to over 400, elephants from 62 to over 392, and black rhinos from so few they couldn't even find them to over 48. Eight black rhino births are expected this year alone!

Ian and Francis emphasized how AAZK's support has been crucial to the work they do. LWC has grown larger, more effective, and stronger with assistance from AAZK, the San Diego Zoological Society, and many other contributors. SD AAZK is proud to be a regular supporter of LWC, the Grevy's Zebra Project, the Westgate Community's elementary school, and NRT. We hope to do more every year!

To learn more about LWC, visit their website at www.lewa.org. To find out how you can help AAZK with this and other fundraising efforts, email us at TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net.



AAZK 2008 National Conference Summary

by Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK Liaison

Over 250 zoo keepers from across the nation attended the 2008 National Conference at Salt Lake City, Utah. The conference hosts, Utah AAZK, organized one of the best conferences to date. The conference theme, "Elevating Animal Care," was evident throughout the conference using a very creative theme structure of creativity, initiative, inform, and empower.

The keynote speaker of the conference was Dr. Robert Sapolsky, renowned author and the world's funniest neuroscientist. Dr. Sapolsky is the author of many popular books including *A Primate's Memoir* (which won the 2001 Bay Area Book Reviewers Award in nonfiction), *The Trouble with Testosterone*, *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*, and *Monkeyluv and Other Essays on Our Lives as Animals*. His articles have appeared in publications such as *Discover* and *The New Yorker*.

Conference workshops included a full day Neonatal Symposium and a team building workshop. For the first time, the national board hosted a workshop on getting involved with AAZK on a national level. During this workshop, all of the national committees were introduced and explained, providing attendees with an opportunity to learn how to get more involved with the many facets of AAZK.

Additional guest speakers were Amy Sutherland, author of *Kicked, Bitten and Scratched—Life and Lessons at the World's Premier School for Exotic Animal Trainers*, and Tony Vecchio, director of the Oregon Zoo.

SD AAZK debuted Zeke the Zoo Keeper in a video that highlighted San Diego as the destination for the 2011 conference. The video, shot throughout San Diego, captured some of San Diego's finest tourist attractions (including the World Famous). *Stay tuned for SD AAZK's video bid for AAZK's 2011 conference, our chapter's first since 1992.*

On a personal note, I enjoy the conferences tremendously; the networking opportunities are endless. I enjoy seeing familiar faces and meeting new keepers each year. During the paper sessions, I am always impressed by the initiative that keepers take in dealing with challenges in animal care and uplifted by the energy of so many keepers who have a strong devotion to improving animal care and our profession. The AAZK conference is a promotion of AAZK's mission to exchange ideas and discuss new methods of professional care, observations on animal behavior and other information.

My Journey to Salt Lake City

by Aimee Goldcamp, Sr. Mammal Keeper, Zoo; Treasurer, SD AAZK

AAZK's national conference is attended by only a small number of national members. I was fortunate enough to receive a fully paid registration from the Chapter Challenge program. Chapter Challenge is an incentive program for each chapter to send AAZK a donation which enters them into a drawing for one of their members to receive a fully paid registration. 2008 finally was San Diego's year to win.

This year's conference theme was "Elevating Animal Care: Professionalism, Creativity and Initiative." Each day's paper sessions focused on one of these areas. This was also the first year for the national conference to host an all-day workshop. The topic was neonatal hand rearing which covered avians and mammals. Other workshops included professional development, enrichment, and advanced training. They were hands-on, encouraged outside thinking, and gave opportunities to pick colleagues' brains. The two workshops I attended were "Team Building" and "Advanced Training."

"Team Building" explored differences in how people or keepers approach a goal and how they work together to accomplish that goal. In the hands-on exercise, we formed four teams and assembled a PVC animal play pen. Each team had a kit but no instructions. Assembling the play pen wasn't the hard part. It was how all these strangers were going to work together to accomplish this goal. Each team took a different approach, then we all discussed how we got there.

"Advanced Training" first reviewed a lot of operant conditioning terminology. It may seem mundane, but I was glad to get a refresher on concepts I hadn't covered in years such as reinforcement schedules and when to use intermittent vs. continuous reinforcement. From there, we broke up into species-specific groups to discuss particular training problems and steps one could take to extinguish them. It opened the doors for networking with colleagues on the same (or similar) species.

What one can gain from attending AAZK national conferences is priceless—I hope more keepers participate!

Bowling For Rhinos Update

by Yvette Kemp, President, SD AAZK

Thanks again to everyone who participated during our 2008 rhino fundraiser. Patty Pearthree, AAZK's national BFR coordinator, sent us a letter with the latest numbers.

Our chapter's new fundraising total is \$147,625.02. BFR has now raised over \$3.1 million to help rhinos and their habitats. Great job everyone, and we hope to see you again next year!



American Association of Zoo Keepers
Bowling For Rhinos
Sponsored by Blue Rhino



September 6, 2008

Dear San Diego AAZK,

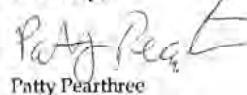
Thank you for your donation of \$ 15,004.40 for the 2008 "Bowling For Rhinos" (BFR) fund - raiser. It is through your efforts that Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) has become one of the most successful rhino sanctuaries in all of Africa and we hope to do the same for Ujung Kulon (UJ) and Bukit Barisan Selatan (BBS) in Indonesia. It is through everyone's continued support that successes like this will occur. I know how much work it takes to hold an event and you will be happy to know we are now saving wildlife worldwide!

This year, LWC will use the funds to partially pay the \$2.3 million operating costs of the sanctuary which includes such items as new vehicles (the rough roads are tough on jeeps) and salaries for guards who have the duty of keeping LWC wildlife safe. Ujung Kulon will use the funds to train and support the continued use of Rhino Patrol Units and pay for maintenance of existing buildings and equipment. Bukit Barisan Selatan will use the funds to train more anti-poaching teams and get them into strategic locations. There is now an **Indonesian Rhino Conservation Program (IRCP)** that includes all parks with rhino populations. **BFR has become part of this program** by allowing extra funds from UJ and BBS in any given year to be used in top priority locations for top priority needs determined by the IRCP. We will be supporting the most urgent needs to save rhinos and other wildlife within the parks!

The first \$150,000 we raise now will continue to go directly to LWC in Kenya. Anything raised above that amount will be split between **Ujung Kulon National Park** in Java, Indonesia and **Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park** in Sumatra (where a substantial number of the remaining 250 Sumatran rhino live). Thank you for doing a great job in saving ecosystems worldwide!

Once again, thank you for your dedication.

Sincerely,



Patty Pearthree

SD AAZK's Annual Photo Caravan

by Kym Nelson, WAP Mammal Keeper; SD AAZK Board Member

SD AAZK's annual Photo Caravan event on Tuesday, October 14 was a huge success. Twenty-four AAZK members and guests toured the South Africa and East Africa exhibits of the Wild Animal Park (WAP) and had the opportunity to meet some of the animals up close and personal. Two trucks carrying 12 guests each visited various animal residents. We hand fed a one year old giraffe, spotted a newborn cape buffalo and waterbuck, and learned a lot!

Even as an employee of the WAP, I thoroughly enjoyed the Photo Caravan. It is not often that, as a keeper, you are able to simply sit back and appreciate the animals.

We would like to thank everyone who made this incredible tour possible—Andy Blue and the Mammal Department for donating the trucks, Jason Van Hest for booking and staffing the trucks, Dami An Jones for coordinating the passes, and Bob McClure for donating the labor. Finally a huge thank you goes out to the caravan staff—Steven, Jamie, Cat, and Melinda. You were all amazing and mad the event such a success! I am already looking forward to next year.



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the latest issue of *The Keeper*
is available at our web site.**

CALENDAR

LOCAL EVENTS

TBA—stay tuned!

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

January 16–18, 2009
International Symposium on
Bat Migration in Berlin,
Germany. For further info:
<http://www.izw-berlin.de>

February 24–28, 2009
International Association of
Avian Trainers and Educators
17th Annual Conference—
hosted by the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens. Further info at
www.iaate.org

April 30–May 2, 2009
Prosimian Husbandry
Workshop—hosted by the
Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.
More info at
www.clemetzoo.com/prosimianworkshop

May 17–21, 2009 **Rhino Keeper**
Workshop—Busch Gardens, Tampa, FL.
Updates at www.rhinokeeperassociation.org

May 31–June 5, 2009 **Ninth**
International Conference on
Environmental Enrichment—
Torquay, Devon, UK. Details at
www.reec.info

Sept 24–29, 2009 **Joint 36th AAZK**
& 3rd International Congress on
Zoo Keeping—Seattle, WA, hosted by
Woodland Park Zoo and Puget Sound
AAZK Chapter. Info at
www.pugetsoundaazk.org

Go to SD AAZK's web site, www.sdaazk.org, to find out more about upcoming events!