

# KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

August 2009

## Too Close For Comfort

Some years ago the **Friends of the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary** purchased a special climate-controlled house for macaws **Bill** and **Bingo** where the birds have the option of hanging around inside the macaw house or outside in their enclosed yard. While macaws and parrots can acclimate to variations of weather and temperature, B&B have compromised lungs. The same “bad air days” that are a problem for you are a problem for them as well. On bad air days they remain inside. Which is fine, until the air conditioner quits.

With a new air-conditioner on order, the macaws moved inside, each bird in a big separate parrot cage. They started out in the Classroom. Which was good. Lots of **Docents** doing their Thing. Good company. But one of the reasons that a macaw might be the pet you wish you had never acquired is the unhappy fact that they scream. Loudly and lots. They stop when any human runs over with a treat. Which quickly reinforces screaming. So Bill & Bingo moved into Zoo Ops, to an area adjacent to both the staff break room and the office. This was good. There were lots of people passing through and each person conversed with B&B. The birds appeared to be OK with this. Until people worked in the office or sat down to lunch. Bill & Bingo will not be ignored.

Sound pressure is measured in decibels (dB). Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is due to exposure to either a loud sudden noise or exposure to loud noises over a period of time. Anything over 85dB (city traffic) can be a problem. While the decibel rating of the screech of a lonely macaw is not readily available, zoo staff would rate it at 165dB (12-gauge shotgun blast) slightly below “rocket launch.” This is why doors to the office and the break-room were shut. Happily, the new macaw air-conditioner has been installed, Bill & Bingo have moved home, and doors are once more open in the Ops Bldg.

## Six Pack

Zoo vet **Mira Sanchez** has zeroed on the fact that male squirrel monkey **Orinoco** is undeniably overweight. The words *six pack* have been mentioned. It’s true that, upon achieving maturity, nature steps in and male squirrel monkeys become Schwarzenegger-buffed without the workouts. Alas, at 14.50 grams, Orinoco needs to cut back on the meal worms. His svelte roomie, tiny female **Monita** weighs in at 5.50g. Orinoco needs to loose “one Monita’s worth.”

## Mesa Games

Walking through the zoo you may hear a Nextel beep where no person is attached to a cell phone. This would be African gray parrot **Mesa**, whose repertoire of sounds

includes beep-beep of backing trucks, and, when she lived inside, the sound of the Classroom door closing.

Birds such as parrots, parakeets and mynas are able to mimic sounds, including human speech, because of a special vocal organ called a *syrix* which lets the bird modulate sound. (Or not. See macaws Bill & Bingo.)

## Demolition!

A landmark of sorts is gone. The small, barn-like original zoo operations building has been demolished. **Sunscape Construction** dealt with some animal-involved problems before the demo crews could begin. A swarm of determined bees had moved into the empty structure through a small hole in a masonry block. The bees were removed by gentle bee guy **Sergey Kachkov** and went on to another life as an active hive. Several days were spent detaching electric and water, etc. Then the building came down and nothing was left but the bulldozed area and a few chunks of concrete rubble.

Many years ago the building started life as a barn. A kitchen sink and a work counter were added, along with a restroom for staff, a cold room for veggies & fruit, and a portable freezer for meat. (By law, an ax hung inside in case the door froze shut.) Steel rafters supported an electric winch that was used when butchering donated meat animals. Zoo Supervisor **Terry Jenkins** had a small office downstairs for some years. Ultimately, the winch was removed and a second floor was built. Terry moved to the upstairs spot she shared with the Zoo Clinic and a staff break room (there was even one of those new-fangled microwave thingies). Supervisor **Jill Lute** acquired the downstairs office. With the building gone portable cages have already been delivered for the long-needed animal quarantine area.

## Goats & Llamas!

A hard working flock of “mother Nature approved” Kiko goats from **Goat Central** is cleaning up the blackberry and dry grass to reduce the fire load of the hilly area next to the Wolf-dog hybrid exhibit. Volunteer llamas **Dolche & Palino** will follow up on the hillside project where they will display their imperious ways to visitors.

## Training

The on-going animal training program at the zoo sanctuary has on-going rewards. A case in point is drawing blood from female mountain lion **Alder**. Because she has practiced moving into the off-exhibit

squeeze cage, and because Alder knows that this behavior will be rewarded with something tasty, a process that could be difficult and alarming to a wild animal can become a good thing. While this may not motivate you, a nice big syringe of blood (left over from carnivore diet meat) presented by keeper **Carole Garret** kept Alder busy at the front end while vet-tech **Lynn Dowling** drew mountain lion blood from Alder's back leg.

### More Training

The Education Classroom is now the official home of the Docent Office and the **COD Desk** (a fish or Chair of the Day, whatever.) Docents share the space with two outreach ferrets and elderly kestrel **MB** who needs a climate controlled environment. Famous rooster **Baby Girl's Baby** and a white hen had been temporarily camping in a big cage in the Classroom as well. Docent **Sandy Johnson** and Carole brought barnowl **Grayson** inside the Classroom for a training session. Ferrets **Cinnamon** and **Missy** slept through the whole thing and fellow raptor **MB** was unconcerned, but the presence of a hunting bird made the chickens very nervous so the scary owl and humans moved out of sight.

**Attendance** during hot August days was 9,492, with the preponderance of zoo fans wisely arriving in the slightly cooler hours before noon.

### Intel Outside

Early one hot morning nearly 30 stalwart **Intel** workers showed up outside the Zoo Classroom armed with gardening gusto. Their mission? To trim overgrown vines, pull weeds, prune, rake, move Heavy Stuff and generally beautify one of the zoo entry areas. Two dumpsters were filled (thanks to Folsom Solid Waste Management for a quick extra pickup) and there was time leftover to meet some outreach animals and a tour. Many of Intel's Million Hours have been spent at the zoo. We needed that!

### Catching Blacktail

Deer **Jane Doe**, **Tallulah**, **Abigail** and **Tomomi** live at the zoo because they were illegally raised by humans and are considered to be *imprinted* by the **CA Department of Fish & Game**. When Tomomi moved to the zoo her two fawns **Sweetwater** and **Little Blacktail** came with her. They spent some quality time with licensed deer rescue / rehabber and zoo volunteer **Dave Cook**. Although Mom is imprinted, the little guys are not. Which didn't matter until Blacktail stepped her dainty left front foot into a 1-inch-high piece of PVC sprinkler pipe. Had this happened to Tomomi, keepers or Dave could have offered a grape and slipped the pipe off her foot. Her wild daughter was another matter.

We all grew up with the Bambi Concept. In real life deer are constructed to survive mountain lion attacks. All deer

are muscular and extremely strong. Their sharp hooves can do damage in a struggle. Given the situation, there were several options. Since darting the deer with a tranquilizer can be risky for the animal, Dave and zoo staff strategized to safely capture Blacktail for the few seconds it would take to remove the PVC pipe fragment.

The zoo corral feeding area was extended and tarps were zip-tied to fence panels to create a deer comfort zone. Over a period of many weeks, Dave and staff tried to net Blacktail and with each lost opportunity both people – and deer - had time to make revisions in capture / escape techniques. The chute grew longer and narrower. Dave was frequently at the zoo with treats to repair his possibly tarnished image with the herd.

One early morning at the end of August, Dave and keepers **Karrie Kolodziej** and **Shawn Harrold** gathered up all the stuff they might conceivably need for yet another attempt, and went to the exhibit where Blacktail and another deer were enjoying a bit of breakfast in the enclosure. Dave carefully approached the youngster. Once more she evaded the net but cornered herself against the fence. In a split second Dave had his arms around the deer. A moment later he and Shawn were both on the ground with the struggling deer. Ultimately, humans prevailed. The piece of PVC ring was removed easily and even though there was no abrasion, Blacktail received a shot of antibiotic just-in-case. Karrie stepped back, Shawn and Dave disentangled.

There was one thing left to do. Years of experience taught Dave that captured deer will bolt when released so he took great care to aim Blacktail so she would have a clear path out of the chute and past the oak trees. Later in the morning Dave returned to the deer area with treats and to make sure Blacktail was OK.

What happened with the other deer? The minute Dave, Shawn and Blacktail were engaged she jumped over the whole struggling mass.

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