

KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

Survivor

Adaptation: a change in structure, function or behavior by which a species or individual improves its chance of survival in a specific environment. Giraffe necks. Camel humps. Teens texting. Or the white rooster who hangs out near the dumpster behind **Folsom Community Center**. He's one of the outliers who apparently shuns the company of competitive zoo chickens. We have insight into his coping techniques. He was spotted emerging from the dumpster covered in white goo, apparently having taken a nose (beak?) plant in a discarded wedding cake.

Adaptation Success

All the European Starlings in North America descended from 100 birds released in **New York's Central Park** in the early 1890's. A group dedicated to introducing America to all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare's works set the birds free. Today European Starlings range from Alaska to Florida and northern Mexico, and their population is estimated at over 200 million birds.

Still Adapting

At the annual **Holiday Party of the Animals** large crowds gathered at bear and mountain lion exhibits, each visitor positioned for optimal views. Since zookeepers let the bears out first, Mountain Lion people became increasingly restive hearing *ohhhs & ahs* from Bear People. Their turn came at last. Holding pen gates went up and mountain lion **Ventura** shot out. Wrapped gifts were scattered throughout the exhibit but he seemed unable to focus on any one box. The crowd helped. "Over here." "To the left." Etc. At that point, young **Rio** raced around Ventura, snatched a raw turkey neck from a box, and disappeared back into the holding pens to eat in peace. Big cats **Willow** and **Alder** made their appearance and got their stuff. Sadly, at one point, a turkey neck was stuck to Ventura's foot: he could smell it, but couldn't locate it. Ultimately, good natured Ventura, who seems to live in a Universe slightly different than ours, found some holiday treats and had a good day after all.

Re Adapting

Face it. Our fellow Americans in Minnesota and Wyoming adapt to winter temperatures that are well below zero: we shiver and complain about toasty 35 degree days. Consider prehensile-tailed skink **Solomon**, whose relatives live in the warm, damp forests of the Solomon Islands. Except for public appearances, Solomon lives in the temperate **Zoo Classroom** reptile room where he has a limb under his special basking lamp. But recently, Solomon didn't

quite shed cleanly. Little bits of his old skin were still attached. After a vet checkup, the humidity in his home place has been increased to 90% which should assist with his shedding process. Envy him.

Snake Eye

Snake eyes and the face of your watch have something in common: both are protected by a clear, removable cover. It's important that snake keepers assure that a snake's eye-caps have been shed along with the skin. Zoo snakes have long, trough-like soaking tubs to assist with their several-times-a-year shedding process. Since ball python **Lucy** recently had a retained eye cap he got an extra bath or two, followed by a terry towel soaked in warm water and wrung out so he could tunnel through, leaving the eye cap behind. (The name *Lucy* is a mistake of early gender ID. On the outside, snakes look pretty much alike.)

Missing BJ

Bobcat BJ is one of the few animals born at the **Folsom Zoo Sanctuary**. His mom **Tinker** and dad **Bobby** were thought to be 'way past parenthood, but Tinker's increasing girth told a different story. With a baby on the way, signs went up near the exhibit, asking visitors to be to be very, very quiet and respectful. People took this to heart and literally tiptoed past, silent kids in tow. **Audrey Warren**, a former volunteer and board member of the **Friends of the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary** suggested the kitten be named Bobby Jr. after his handsome father.

In recent weeks, there had been concern about BJ's health. While he didn't seem ill, BJ had refused food for several days, even when tempted with chopped sirloin purchased by a staff member especially for him. Lab tests showed that he was in the end stages of kidney failure and treatment was not an option. Born in 1983, at age 26 BJ was a very old bobcat. We are all saddened by his passing.

A Little Buddy For Gus

When he first arrived at the zoo sanctuary, 10-year-old Shetland pony **Sterling** was separated from the rest of the pasture residents so that staff and animals could have some calm getting-to-know-you time. It wasn't to be. The moment little Sterling spotted 1200 pound **Gus** he whinnied, starting a whole stampede of animals to check him out. Gentlemanly Gus leaned over the fence to say hello and was promptly nipped. But this was clearly horse business. For several hours Gus herded everyone away. The pasture is peaceful now. Sterling hangs with Gus, sheep **Maggie** and **Princess** tag along with the horses, pig boys **Wilber** and **Templeton** sort of mind their own business, and dogs **Harrison** and **Annabelle** engage in their normal

pursuits of sleeping / running fencelines to warn off dogs in the park. Sterling was rescued by the good people at **The Grace Foundation**. Newbie Sterling is very welcome at the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary. info@thegracefoundationofnorcal.org.

Dentistry?

Tigers **Misty** and **Pouncer** have two hammocks that are fabricated out of huge truck tires and strong firehose. The tigers spend a lot of time on them, sprawled feet up in the sun. And like most of their other stuff, the tigers chew on the tires. It's one of the Laws of Unintended Consequences that Pouncer bit through a silver dollar size chunk of thick, black tire which wedged on her great big, long, sharp, upper right canine tooth. Keepers noticed quickly that Pouncer had a problem. She was pawing at her mouth and drooling copiously. Clearly seeking help from human friends, she came to the front of the cage when called - and stayed, drinking squirts of milk from a syringe held by one keeper while another lifted her lip with a brush handle (no fingers involved) to see what the problem was. At first, it was thought that there was a piece of wood wedged between the teeth of the upper jaw. (It's not uncommon for carnivores to get bones jammed within the arch of the teeth.) After many efforts to dislodge what-ever-it-was, tiger and keepers decided to back off for awhile.

Ultimately, staff wrestled the cougar squeeze cage into the small tiger exhibit holding pen. With lots of encouragement - and meat goodies - Pouncer moved into the cage - one foot in, back out. Two feet in, back out. Etc. With all feet in, the gate was dropped and locked.

The whole point of a squeeze cage is to hinder an animal's natural defenses - teeth and claws - without using drugs. A hand-crank moved one of the cage walls in, essentially bookending Pouncer inside. At the head end, small bars were removed providing a window of access.

There being no specialty tool for this kind of tiger dentistry, keepers made do with the snake hook. A snake hook is more or less a three-foot long stainless steel rod that has a hook-thingy on one end with which one hooks up a snake. In this case, the hook was slipped under Pouncer's lip and on top of the tire chunk. Surprisingly, a great deal of strength was required to finally pop the chunk off and, surprisingly, Pouncer let the keepers do it. None the worse for wear, Pouncer retired for a nap and her dental technicians went back to work.

Attendance for December 2008 was 8,263, somewhat less than '07. However, ticket sales totals were higher. Anomalies abound. December's volunteer hours were 434.5 which at eight bucks an hour is \$3,476 worth of good work which includes zookeeping, leaf removal,

donated food fetching, LGD Cheyenne's monthly medicated bath, and so much more. Thanks, volunteers!

Twelve Animals

Chinese New Year 4706, **The Year of the Ox**, begins on the zoo calendar on January 29, 2009. Each lunar month is represented by an animal. Surprisingly, the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary has every one of the animals except the ox. Tiger is next on the calendar, followed by rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, pig and rat. Questions? Rats? The zoo has a nice collection of wild rats, who are not encouraged but *are* respected. Dragon? So far, there is no acceptable authority that prehensile-tailed skink **Solomon** is anything but a very small dragon. When paleontologists finally discover dragon remains DNA tests will conclusively prove that skinks (and Solomon) are, in fact, descendents of the mighty animals once thought to be imaginary.

Monkey Boys, Continued

With cold temperatures, **Wallace & Darwin** spend time in their hammock under a heat lamp, snacking and grooming. Or pinching each other. The usual. There's work, too. Darwin recently managed to unscrew a big PVC drain plug which he spent many happy hours throwing around the exhibit with his wicked right arm. And somewhere Wallace managed to come across a metal hog ring to suck on and rub across his teeth when anyone was looking. "Won't that wear out his teeth?" a concerned visitor asked. We assured her that Wallace would trade the hog ring for some monkey treats. Or not, as it turned out.

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