

# KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

February, March, 2009

## Missing Willow

15-year-old mountain lion **Willow** had been limping on his right rear leg. Medication for pain and inflammation was prescribed, but there was little improvement. Willow followed treats into the cougar crate, and strong **City of Folsom firefighters** moved crate and cat into the zoo van, and zookeepers and Willow took a trip to **Loomis Basin Veterinary Hospital**. Sadly, x-rays showed collapsed disc spaces in Willow's neck and lumbar areas, significant arthritis of his spine and knee, and dysplasia of the right hip. Since medical treatment couldn't provide pain relief or good quality of life, he was gently euthanized.

Orphaned when his wild mother was killed, the tiny kitten survived alone for three days before rescue by the **California Department of Fish & Game**. Willow came to the zoo in 1994 and is named after the trees that were growing near the stream where he was found. At first, Willow was sickly and stressed and wouldn't let keepers assist him. But he greeted a toy panda with chirps and throaty growls. Keepers used Panda as a bridge to caring for Willow and soon were able to touch and medicate him. Before long Panda needed a bath so Bear was substituted. But since Bear turned out to be more prey than pal, newly shampooed Panda moved back with his friend.

As he grew, Willow left Panda behind with childlike things and transferred his friendship to mountain lion **Bristlecone** who was four years his senior. He spent the rest of his life with the zoo's cougar clan: Bristlecone's sister **Juniper, Alder** and newbies **Ventura** and **Rio**.

## Lion Country

More than half of California is mountain lion country. Eastern Sacramento county and significant portions of Placer and El Dorado counties are habitats of the mountain lion. **Over the years the Zoo Sanctuary has taught many thousands of children and adults how to live safely with these animals. Things to know:**

**Never approach a mountain lion - don't hike or run alone - go in groups** – keep kids close - **if you meet a mountain lion don't run** - stay calm - back away slowly - give the lion room to escape - look BIG - raise your arms - group together - yell. – throw rocks - convince the lion it doesn't want to mess with you. - fight back if attacked.

## Scouts and the Good Hen

We keep a close eye on the possible fire danger presented by the oak forest that grows on either side of

the zoo creek. Year-round the deer herd munches blackberry vines and poison oak and grass and thistles. Come the warmer months when plants abound, Rent-A-Goats move in to graze / browse away the fire load. Recently a pack of Scouts trimmed back branches and raked and stacked burnable stuff to be removed. In the forest a clever hen was found hunkered down warming two chicks plus what a keeper called a "*plethora*" of eggs, some of which were emitting cheeping noises. Hen, chicks & eggs were gathered up and transported to an off-exhibit cage, where mom, a Trooper, continued brooding. Alas, no more eggs hatched, but the chicks were healthy and moved to a loving home.

## Polytarped and Water Wise

The zoo is using brooms, rakes and donated polytarps for leaf removal. Polytarps are those nifty white tough reusable poly-fiber sheet-like-things into which a water-wise volunteer or zookeeper rakes or sweeps edible oak leaves and acorns and dumps them into the deer exhibit which pleases the deer immensely and recycles waste according to one of nature's plans. It also saves the cost of multiple big plastic bags and reduces non-biodegradable waste. Water-wise zoo people change animal drinkers and swimming pools only when necessary for animal health, and wash down grounds to remove what free-roaming birds leave behind. Dripping faucets and hoses are no-no's and watering occurs two days a week between 10 p.m. and 10 a.m. On really, really hot days misters or pasture sprinklers may be used sparingly to cool down the beasts. Become Water Wise your ownself at [iConserve@folsom.ca.us](mailto:iConserve@folsom.ca.us)

## Warming Up the Beasts

Sunny days. Flowers bloom, grass is green and just about every animal at the zoo sanctuary can be spotted soaking up the rays. Livestock guarding dogs **Annabelle** and **Harrison** and pig boys **Templeton & Wilber** lie flat in the pasture (as flat as pigs can get), wolves, coyotes and mountain lions are motionless, awash with sunlight. Tiger girls **Misty & Pouncer** lie in their big truck-tire and firehose hammocks, heads back, eyes closed, all four feet splayed up in the air for maximum stomach exposure.

## Rooster Reduction. Or Not

With twenty-four roosters captured and transported to the Good Life on the farm in Marysville, zoo staff has a pretty good idea about what the remaining roosters look like. A passing zookeeper did a classic double-take upon spying several Unknown Roosters hanging out with a visitor. The logical question was "are those roosters with you?" They were. His family wanted the birds gone so he was in the process of dropping them off at the zoo.

“No,” the keeper said. “No rooster drop-offs at the zoo. They need to go back home with you.” “Sure,” said the man affably, who walked away with the roosters following right along behind him. At least as far as the front gate. Noting, perhaps, that no Zoopersons were watching, birds and man parted company. If you are low on roosters you know who to call.

### **Alpha Is A State Of Mind**

Wolves are all about being *alpha* - alpha male, alpha female, alpha whatever, and if you aren't, you long to be. As far as zoo staff is concerned, 15-year-old **Granite** is the alpha male. Never mind that young males **Yucca** and **Joshua** could take him down with ease, which is why Granite and alpha female **Redbud** alternate days in the big exhibit with the Rowdy Upstart Boys. This is a win-win for those with alpha awareness. The three males huff-and-puff along the fence line, hackles and tails in the air, fearsome teeth glistening, throaty growls attracting visitors. Knowing how fences work is a valuable concept for wolves (people too).

Recently, the wolves received big Milk Bone treats which the RUBs like and Granite doesn't. Which is why Granite walked the fence line, biscuit clenched between his mighty jaws, with the boys in hot pursuit. Then *Phhht!* Granite spit his bone just inches away from the fence and Joshua and Yucca went ballistic, scratching at the fence, snarling, assaulting each other, while Granite stood tall, the perfect alpha male. An accident? Surely not, since he repeated this behavior multiple times with gusto.

**Attendance:** Cold, gusty, rainy February brought 5,848 well wrapped & brave visitors to the zoo sanctuary for their animal fix. Switch to March and everything's changed: warm, sunny days and 9,360 zoo fans.

### **Continuing Education**

Folsom Zookeepers **Carole Garrett** and **Lynn Dowling** traveled to **UC Davis** and spent the day working with **Primate Center** staff on capture and handling procedures. This is just another example of co-operation between entities working with animals. Humans trade information and expertise and everyone benefits.

### **Tiger Eye**

*Cherry eye* is the common name for an enflamed third eyelid, or nictitating membrane. While it's common in dogs, tiger **Misty**'s red eye proved that tigers aren't immune. Initially, keepers were able to treat the bright red cherry-looking protuberance in the corner of her eye. Misty would willingly come to the wire to lap milk from a syringe while a staffer squirted meds in the eye. Unfortunately, there was no appreciable improvement. So very early on a Friday morning Misty was caught up in the tiger exhibit small holding pen for immobilization. This accomplished, humans moved in: zoo vet **Dr. Mira**

**Sanchez**, ophthalmologist **Dr. David Canton**, vet tech **Yana Kageorgis**, keeper **Amy Van der Molen** and zoo vet tech **Lynn Dowling**.

You've seen spiffy operating theatres in veterinary hospitals: strategic lights, ergonomically designed operating tables, surgical tools laid on rolling tables, bottles of saline solution hanging from poles, etc. This wasn't it. Docs kneeled on the concrete at Misty's side. Vet techs stood carefully straddling the tiger below them as saline bags were hooked to cage wire. But, everything needed was there: like real operating rooms there were surgical gowns and masks, monitors checked respiration, temperature and heart rate, and the surgical expertise and calm expected in the best operating rooms anywhere. Ultimately, the swelled cherry eye membrane was removed and sent away for testing. A laceration – no doubt the result of a sharp-clawed swat by tiger roomie **Pouncer** – was stitched and in less than 45 minutes the procedure was complete. Our thanks to Dr. Canton and Yana for generously donating their services.

### **The Joy of Docents or *Thinking Outside The Box***

With the loss of three positions in the zoo Education Department, the Amazing Docents have stepped up. A **Docent Council** has been created consisting of **Ed Kaufman**, **Sue Spielman**, **Lloyd Strong**, **Brenda King** and **Sandy Johnson** as an At-Large Counselor. Part of the Classroom will become a Docent “Habitat” where the Chair-of-the-Day will manage office duties, return messages, and generally keep the process up-to-date. Newly organized committees include **Tours** (already hitting the ground running with an ingenious computerized scheduling system), **Outreach**, **Special Events**, **Docent Training**, and **Animal Handling / Enrichment**. The latter includes regular bathing of Livestock Guarding Dogs **Harrison** and **Cheyenne** (which saves \$\$\$ and makes the dogs happy), snake walking (which makes snakes happy) and socializing with African Gray Parrot **Mesa** (ditto happy, too).

**do-cent** (do'sent') *n.* L.docens, prp. of *docere*, to teach.  
**1.** a tour guide and lecturer **2.** persons without whom the zoo sanctuary could not, would not, should not, do without.

[rratcliff@folsom.ca.us](mailto:rratcliff@folsom.ca.us)