

KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

January, 2009

Close Encounters

The excellent staff office in the new **Zoo Operations Building** measures 9' x 17'. There are counters on three sides for three computers and rolling office chairs. A small alcove contains an additional computer for the **Daily Journal**, animal records, etc. Over and under-counter filing units pretty much complete the furnishings. Two banks of windows with adjustable shades and a nifty solar tube provide natural light. The room is shared throughout the day by staff. Since everyone is considerate and tidy, office accommodations work pretty well.

However. Add several hundred pounds of needy Livestock Guarding dogs, their giant pillows and a water bowl to the mix, and office conditions become – *um* – congested.

Handsome **Harrison** was spending a few days with sympathetic human friends in the warm, clean staff office following surgery for a tumor on his right rear leg. A patch of fur had been shaved away exposing a clean five-inch incision. As you would expect, Harrison would be lonely without the lovely LGD **Cheyenne**. Add three staffers working on the computers and all the other zoopeople who stopped in to sympathize with Harrison and there was quite a crowd. Because the dogs are well loved, they have become accustomed to leaning against human friends, or better yet, laying their giant heads on laps, the better to pet. Plus, both Harrison & Cheyenne have splendid winter coats, which in the warm office caused gentle, but steamy, panting. And drooling.

Toward mid-day Cheyenne moved out to the sunny pasture and Harrison departed to a room in the pasture barn with a peanut butter filled toy to lick. Dog beds were moved out and dog breath dissipated through an open door.

But, with rainy days, the dogs returned to the office. One office chair was removed. Newspapers sop up drool spots near the water bowl, and irresistible dog-petting resumed.

Companionship

Psittacines (members of the parrot family) live in big flocks and have lots of close friends. This is why parrots living in human families expect – and need – attention 24/7. With building going on at the zoo sanctuary, macaws **Bill** and **Bingo** and African gray parrot **Mesa** have moved inside. Currently, they reside in the **Zoo Classroom** where people are in and out during the day. Plus, they receive extra stuff in their cages and the background noise of videos. A fav is **David**

Attenborough's Birds. (“Gets them screaming every time,” says Education Coordinator **Vicki Valentine**.)

Recently zoo staff and Mesa, on a perch, were engaged in a meeting seated around a table in the Classroom. A cell phone rang and Mesa responded, “OK” which is a word she hears agreeable Zoostaff say frequently. Mesa has been spending quality time with Docent **Carol Quayle** and recently spent four hours at a meeting of the Docents (bless ‘em). Mesa sat on her perch, snacked on bird treats, and had little to say. The Docents snacked on brownies and didn’t share.

Loved and Lost

A lot of love and affection is directed to animal residents, both by zoo staff and the public. The passing of an animal is a sad occasion.

Mokie

White ferret **Mokie** and his friend **Missy** were born in 2005 and moved to the zoo sanctuary two years later. Lanky and personable, Mokie was a well-known outreach animal. Recently, he was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer and has been receiving medication and TLC. During morning zoo rounds, it was discovered that Mokie had died in his sleep.

Mr. White

Years ago there was the first Mr. White as well as a Mrs. White who, when sitting on eggs, camouflaged her brilliant white feathers by dusting in the park train’s coal pile. For the past 16 years one of their offspring has been a star member of the zoo / park free-roaming fowl club. Named after his dad, **Mr. White** has an enthusiastic fan club of zoo visitors. Keepers have been keeping an eye on him for some time because he seemed weak and thin and was showing signs of old age. Several staff had been providing Mr. White with extra meals. In early February he was caught up for a beak trim with the hope that this would help him be better nourished. Sadly, he passed away several days later.

Skunks

There they were, two wild skunks meandering through the zoo near the bear exhibits. The unmistakable scent of skunk preceded the sighting. The Folsom / Sacramento area is home to both the striped skunk and the smaller spotted skunk.

The aura of skunk may waft down your chimney or through an open window in February and March because males, intent on breeding, frequently spray when fighting over females. This is a signal that skunks might be nearby and that it would be prudent to take measures to

prevent a pregnant female skunk from nesting under your house or other structures.

Potential den sites can be limited by cutting back overgrown shrubbery and by stacking firewood tightly. Make sure that you (and your neighbors) pick up fallen fruit, have tight-fitting garbage can lids, and make pet food unavailable.

Department of Fish & Game regulations prohibit relocation of 'problem' skunks so save yourself – and a skunk – a lot of problems. For information, go to <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74118.html>

Attendance for January was 8,139 which doubled last year's figures even though the zoo ticket booth was on limited staffing. Two sunny weekends and a **Sacramento Bee** article about the zoo brought crowds.

Rooster Roundup #1

Surveys show that the **Folsom City Zoo Sanctuary** is one of the most popular destinations in the area. Another poll provided insight into the question "Do you enjoy our roaming fowl walking through the zoo?" A whopping 98% unequivocally said yes, with 4% liking the chickens "somewhat." Nobody "didn't enjoy the chickens." Yes, it's true that a significant number of people purchase special food and come several times a week to feed the chickens and peafowl.

Does the zoo provide plenty of nutritious food for the free-roaming fowl? Yes. Do these very same birds roost at night and leave behind that which someone (parks & zoo folks) have to clean up? Yes.

With sensitivity to both views zoo staff and volunteers have embarked on several **Rooster Round Up** days. In the morning before the zoo opens the RRU team armed with nets, stalks roosters. Usually the first rooster is pretty easy to net. But he wisely squawks, alerting not only other roosters but all the barking, yowling, howling animals in the zoo. By comparison, Bedlam was hushed. So far 23 roosters have been captured and moved to a welcoming ranch in Marysville where the boys will live out their lives, preening, ganging up on each other, and hopefully having a good time. Other RRUs are planned.

Rooster Roundup #2

Every since people learned that ancestors of the wild jungle fowl would provide eggs and meat, chickens have been genetically altered. Some are exotic, like the small Silkie chickens whose feathers are long and feel like silk (and whose flesh and bones are dark blue) and the small Frizzle whose short feathers bend backward. Neither breed can fly. They, and an Aracona (which lays green/blue eggs), were dumped in City Park. So were at least six guinea fowl, which are also flightless. Being

flightless means a bird can fall prey to other chickens, dogs, and raccoons. The Frizzle, Silkie and the Aracona have been rescued. Only one guinea fowl survived. Piles of feathers have been found throughout the park, which is what wild raccoons leave behind when they happen upon a chicken inexperienced in the art of living wild.

Phineas On The Glove

Ever since Great Horned owl Phineas arrived from **Turtle Bay Exploration Center** he's seemed shy. Perception is in the eye of the beholder. **Sacramento Bee** Photographer **Autumn Cruz** captured a perfect shot of Phineas, ears laid back looking huffy, for a recent article about the zoo. Now Phineas has shown that he's willing to step onto a falconer's glove and let staffers scratch the feathers on the back of his neck.

The Snake In The Bush?

Mornings, the pied peahen aka The Best Mother In The World seems to organize the day's activities for her brood of good-looking children outside the zoo fence near the kitchen. One morning a passerby noticed that two of the sort-of teenage hen chicks were skittering around as if something Very Scary was in the nearby bushes. A snake? No. One of their brothers had apparently just discovered that he could raise up his stumpy brown tail feathers while doing the first rudimentary steps of his mating dance. Scary.

Misty's Ball

Occasionally worried visitors report that tiger **Misty's** toe nails are wedged into her great big indestructible pricy Boomer Ball. Yes, her impressive extended claws grasp the ball. The rest of Misty is spread out apparently attempting to cover every square inch of the ball with tiger parts. And there she lies. For a long time. She'll occasionally lick the ball. And if she needs to move (do tiger's feet get pins-and-needles?) she makes every effort not re-arrange claws or body parts and sort of rolls where she wants to be.

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