

KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

June / July 2011

Birds Rule: Most Beautiful Nest

High above the **Zoo Operations** building deck is a big black public announcement speaker. To most of us it would look like – yes – a PA speaker. It has a Higher Purpose. Over a surprisingly short period of time an ambitious sparrow couple built an exceptional nest, a hand-span across and deep. They brought in hundreds of dry seven-inch long needles from a handy adjacent pine tree and wove together a work of art as big as a cooking pot and stabilized with long, strong dark hair from the tails of **Zoo Sanctuary** horses. This exceptional structure was completely and carefully lined with hundreds of soft colorful feathers: chicken, peafowl, rooster and parrot.

And while the wonderful nest was structurally sound and breathtakingly beautiful, it possibly shorted out the PA system. Humans checked to assure that there were no longer eggs or chicks in the nest and brought it down. The bird couple could be seen in the tree and heard chirping, possibly discussing Plan 2. Four days later a new nest was nearing completion. The Beautiful Nest is available for viewing at the **Zoo Classroom**.

Since the very tall ladder has temporarily been displaced, and since it appears that there may be eggs, the birds have prevailed.

Birds Rule: Best Near Take Down

A Docent has worked long and patiently to encourage barn owl **Grayson** to (in falconer's parlance) "come to the glove." For weeks he was balky but out of the blue human and bird came to an understanding and Grayson moved willingly to the glove. A long leather falconer's leash was attached with a falconer's knot to one of the leather *jesses* or bracelets on Grayson's leg and off they went for a walk through the Zoo. All seemed well. In the past Grayson has been social with people, and visitors have always been appropriate with the owl.

Whap! The Docent was blindsided by an enormous smack on the right side of her head. Glasses went flying. Followed by three more powerful hits to the side. Owl Grayson was knocked off the glove and dangling. The attacker? A determined peahen with one little chick. Her focus was on predator Grayson. The Docent was collateral damage. Assisted by Zoo visitors the glasses were collected, the owl was restored to the glove, and the Docent survived with a tale to tell.

Birds Rule: Sharing With Friends

Good-looking white Goffin's cockatoo **Pogo** spent a lot of time this winter in the **Zoo Ops** building while outdoor cages were renovated. Members of the parrot family can do well living outside in this climate, but they have to be acclimated and by the time construction was complete the outdoor temperatures were too cool for reintroduction. So he and African Gray parrot **Mesa** weren't reintroduced to the outdoor areas until warmer temperatures were dependable. Inside, there were lots of opportunities for socializing with admiring humans. Pogo is an excellent host, hustling to choose the best chunk of fruit from his bowl and holding it outside the cage for the person to take. If declined, Pogo would drop the goodie and go back for more. The humans who love him shouldn't feel too special. Pogo was spotted cutting sections of celery in his outside exhibit and chucking it through the fence to an enthusiastic peacock.

Birds Rule: Music Lesson

Inside the **Ops Building** or outside at exhibits, birds receive lots of love and attention from the public, Zookeepers and Docents. Along with lots of TLC, Docents share their whistling talents with macaws **Bill** and **Bingo** and **Pogo** and **Mesa**. Recently Mesa was seen hanging upside down completely focused on a Docent-held cell phone playing *Born Free*. While she doesn't sing it yet, surely it's stored away in her exceptional brain.

Birds Rule: Public Bathing

There are several wide gates that allow trucks access into the Zoo. One is located in a sunny area and covered with gravel. Recently two small puffs of dust were rising into the warm morning air. A closer look showed two round cleared areas of fine dust and two little female gray sparrows dust bathing.

Back-in-the-day there was a good sized dusty patch of dirt in the center of the Zoo which is now hidden under the Macaw Exhibit. This was a favorite dusting spot for free-roaming peafowl and chickens. Why, we wondered, do birds do this? So we called chicken experts at **UC Davis** for the answer. Various theories were explored. The most common reasons were that hunkering down and kicking feet and beating wings raises the warm, dry, fine dust which sifts down to the skin possibly discouraging mites and cleansing the feathers. It turned out to be a long and comprehensive discussion replete with theories. But the closing comment may have been the most likely: "It

feels good.” In summer **Ticket Booth** staff receives lots of concerned visitor comments about a free-roaming bird “collapsed and dying in the sun”. Not.

Henry!

At 16 months of age, Black Bear cub **Henry** thrives. Does he show off for visitors? He frequently plays in the hammock that hangs right up against the front exhibit fence and collects crowds. Coincidence?

Locking **Henry** in his den is challenging. He apparently likes hanging out in the big exhibit with his Human Fan Club lined up at the fence. However, “locking up” so staff can clean the exhibit, or in case he needs medical care, is important. This is why meals are served in the den. And why there are in-and-out training sessions. In the past he often would just come to the den door and plop down in the hall. Conflicted. He’ll snort and huff and moan. But it seems that as weeks pass and Zoo Staff persists, they have shortened the lock-up time considerably. (What’s an hour in your life waiting for your bear to lock up?)

Cedar!

If mountain lion kitten **Cedar** had been raised with her wild mother and possibly another kitten it’s possible that she would have been better socialized to living with other big cats. Raised by a doting human family Cedar can be – um – willful so a lot of thought and time and effort is being spent to assure that she and her new mountain lion family are safe. So far, senior male **Ventura** has been his wise, kind and patient self. When young male **Rio** and Cedar met under careful supervision, it was a different matter and the greeting process was called off. Recently, however, Rio, Cedar and Ventura were in the off-exhibit holding pens together for nearly thirty minutes. There were a few vocal, swatting confrontations, but Rio seemed more patient and less alarmed. He didn’t run away from her but instead was just majorly annoyed when she pounced on him.

Attendance for July was great: 10,565: one thousand more visitors compared to last year at the same time.

Willful Bobcat?

In 1995 a foothill rancher asked his wrangler to knock down an old shed on the property. No problem. He gave the structure a shove with the pickup truck and down it went. Sadly, a mother bobcat and her kittens were sheltering under the shed. The stunned driver discovered one survivor, a tiny spotted baby. He and his family nursed the little guy back to health. Named **Ono**, after one of three Gold Rush towns - Ono, Red Dog and You Bet - the young bobcat thrived. Played nicely with the kids and family dogs. All was well until Ono was six-months old.

By then it was apparent that raising a bobcat required a strong motherly paw. So Ono moved to the **Folsom Zoo Sanctuary** in 1996. Since Zookeepers are thoughtful and appropriate when working inside the exhibit, humans and cats have lived in peace. But recently there was a cautionary note in the **Daily Keeper Journal**: Ono left some formerly frozen quail in his den but let the keeper know with growls and hisses that they were not surplus.

Famous Zoo (No Surprise)

* Folsom Zoo Sanctuary Black Bears were the background when **KCRA** spent several hours filming **California Department of Fish & Game’s Marc Kenyon** about safety in bear country.

* Yahoo! The Zoo Sanctuary was voted **Best of the Best Family Activity** in a poll by the **Folsom Telegraph**. Animals, Docents and Staff are honored.

* **Good Day Sacramento’s Angel Johnson** played zookeeper for several minutes at the Bear Exhibit to promo the opening of **Zookeeper** (the movie!) at **Blue Oak 16 Theatres** in Rocklin. At the theatre for the opening were the **Friends of the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary**, **Zoo Staff**, and **Docents** minding lovely and talented 8-foot boa **Andrea**. (There were real live blue Smurfs too, but not any of ours.)

The Friends of the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary and Rogers Jewelry Superstore

3rd Annual

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**Updates: Wild About The Zoo at Facebook
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