

KEEPING TRACK. FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

June – July, 2012

If It's Summer...

...it must be camp time. **ABC Zoo!** Has four wonderful sessions each for kids ages 4 to 7 at the **Folsom Public Library**. There is a lot to learn from **Mrs. B** about animals and nature, and good hard-working Zoo animals to meet. For example, African Gray parrot **Mesa** dances to the music as Mrs. B plays the guitar.

Painting The Horse

Each group of the older **Zoo Campers** have learned a lot: how to make vanilla yogurt pinecones wrapped in paper and frozen as nutritious treats for macaques **Darwin** and **Wallace**. Or kids sit in a circle to watch lovely white ferret **Cinnamon** playing with her toys and tunneling through her long silver clothes-dryer tube. On a hot afternoon, Campers trooped to the parking lot where they gathered around Teacher's car. It was parked in the shade, windows open: the interior temperature? So hot the thermometer was off the scale. The lesson: don't leave dogs or cats in the car even if the windows are rolled down and you're parked in a shady place.

Campers also turned their skills to horse painting. Using Cucumber Scented for Sensitive Skin Shampoo mixed with non-toxic finger paint, each Camper gently left a hand-print on the side of big, patient blond horse **Gus**. Since Gus appreciates both the attention and the cool wash-down rinse with a hose, everyone had a good time.

Aggressive Squirrel

There's a lot more to a squirrel than *cuteness*, which became apparent recently when squirrel **Nessee** forcefully attached herself to a Zookeeper's sock and wouldn't let go. Since a human is bigger than a squirrel the problem was negotiated and solved. Nessee is an Eastern Gray squirrel (from Tennessee) and while she may be tough, gray squirrels don't hold a candle to red squirrels, who tend to be solitary in their ways and fierce in running off gray squirrels in their neighborhoods.

Teddy Bear Problems

While wild ferrets can be extremely aggressive, their domestic counterparts like Zoo ferrets **Cinnamon** and **August** – when treated with respect – really seem to like contact with humans. Humans enjoy ferret contact too. After handsome August arrived he was separated from Cinnamon for a series of vaccinations, etc. Eventually both ferrets moved into a very fine three level condominium with all the mod cons: fleece sleeping bags,

multitudes of toys, colorful little ceramic food bowls for water, ferret chow, delicious mealworms & crickets, and a little taste of conditioner for glossy fur. Each day the environment changes as keepers clean and move stuff to create “new places.” August loves his chunk of wheat grass: Cinnamon, often in *staple mode*, punctures holes in new grocery bags or cardboard boxes before retiring for a nap, but not before attempting to wrestle the big brown fleece teddy bear into her sleeping bag.

Docents Observant

Whenever new animals are introduced, **Docents** sign up for two-hour shifts throughout the day for animal observations to assure that all is well. In late spring they watched big drake **Fergus** and his fluffy-headed companion, duck **Phyllis**. As one Docent commented, “we now all know a lot more about the breeding habits of ducks.” Keepers collect eggs so the duck/chicken population doesn't increase.

Docents Still Observant

An illegal pet, opossum **Orchid** came to the Zoo Sanctuary in June and recently completed quarantine. She moved to the **Miner's Shack** with skunks **Pete** and **Gizmo**. Once again the Good Docents volunteered observation time. They started early on what turned out to be a very hot day and before long it occurred to everyone that there's not much to see when nocturnal animals are involved. Both skunks were, as usual, curled up in the Miner's kitchen cupboards. To visitors peeking in the window the skunks look like big black & white fur hats. Orchid, a day-sleeper herself, slept the day out in her open crate. Observant Docents persevered into the afternoon hours without much to observe.

Opossums

Opossums are the world's oldest surviving mammal family having graced the Earth for 70 million years. These non-aggressive, non-destructive mammals are North America's only marsupial. While opossums provide two litters yearly, the survival rate is poor. Young are carried in mom's pouch or *marsupium* until they're 1-2 months old, then cling to her back for several months more. Opossums eat just about anything, from dog & cat food to roof rats which they hunt down. When frightened they really do “play possum” appearing, and smelling, like they're deceased. When Orchid arrived it was hard not to notice that her long, strong hairless tail was very-*um*-stout which

is how we learned that opossums may store extra fat in their tails. Orchid has a wholesome diet now.

The Skunk In The Pasture

There it was, the black and white tail of a skunk in the Zoo Pasture. Since it's unlikely that, like Eeyore, the skunk misplaced his tail, everyone came to the conclusion that Livestock Guarding dogs **Marcus** and **Annabelle** caught and probably ate the skunk. This meant that resident donkeys and pigs might have been exposed, so they were re-vaccinated for rabies as were Marcus and Annabelle who have also been quarantined for thirty days. (FYI humans at the Zoo who work with animals have a titer for rabies.)

In June almost 11,000 visitors (!) came to visit the Zoo which is 1,437 more than last year.

Andrea's Escape(s)

Obviously, if your snake escapes, not once but twice, you don't pass the on information. But if, after sober reflection, everyone realizes that the snake is smarter than all the also smart humans, her story should be told.

During **Summer Camp** Zoo reptiles were moved from the **Classroom** to the **Zoo Ops** building. Eight-foot long, fifty-plus pound red-tailed boa **Andrea** seemed OK with the move to the temporary smaller built-for-big-snakes enclosure where she once lived. As usual she spent most of her time coiled up in her blue denim snake hammock or under the heat lamp on her rock cliff. Later it was clear that in addition to napping and digesting her once-every two weeks rat, she was *Thinking*. So one morning when staff came to work she was not in her exhibit. Strangely, the sliding Plexiglas door was still pinned shut. Snakes excel at hiding but ultimately she was found behind prehensile-tailed skink **Solomon's** enclosure that was temporarily sited in the shower stall.

With some effort Andrea was lovingly gathered up and returned to her temporary enclosure. Humans pondered and more safety additions were made. Two days later when Zoo staff came to work Andrea was missing. Someone spotted the tail-end of Andrea behind the nearby washing machine. Her firm grip on machine parts required taking the washer apart to extract the snake.

How did she do it? The enclosures are specifically engineered for snakes and should be invincible. Sliding Plexiglas doors are pinned to prevent them from being shoved open. What Andrea did was to push on the bottom of the outer sliding door until it bowed and nudged her flat

narrow head through the small opening and with massive strength slipped her body through. Snakes have one more trick: they have hundreds of vertebra with many ribs attached. These flexible bones plus strong muscles let the snake adjust body size which is why Andrea was able to change her 19 inch body enough to slip through a surprisingly small space. Current security measures seem to be snake proof. Meanwhile Andrea is *Thinking*.

FYI: The Zoo Sanctuary - and all zoological facilities -are under the purview of the federal **Department of Fish & Wildlife** and are required to have capture and escape policies and procedures in place for both wild and domestic animals in their care. During a visit to the Zoo you'll see keepers access the animal areas through a small two-gate security area. The outer door is closed before opening the entry gate into the animal's space. Keepers reverse this procedure on exit. Zoo Ops and Classroom areas where animals are kept are also escape-secure.

Fireworks!

You may have been one of the hundreds of people to visit the excellent **Friends of the Folsom Zoo 4th of July Fireworks Stand**. The **Friends** worked long and hard for the opportunity and the **Docents** stepped up – as they always do – working lots of sales hours that brought lots of \$\$\$ for the animals. Everyone is very grateful.

Top of Folsom

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