

# KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

May – June, 2011

## Cranky? There's A Cure

It seems that for lots of people just walking through the gates of **Folsom City Zoo** provides some sanctuary from a troubled Outside World. In recent weeks a peahen has been the center of gentle human concern. She laid five lovely cream-colored eggs in the grass growing close to the other side of the fence that runs along the twisty downhill walk that we call **Lombard Street**. Everyone passing could see the eggs less than three feet away. They stopped and looked and fretted about the eventual outcome. Zoo people were quizzed. "When will they hatch?" "What will happen to the chicks?" Ultimately, Nature took over, momhen got broody and hunkered down to the hatching process. Figure 21days. She turned the eggs four or five times daily and otherwise – sat.

Then. An excited tiny blond girl tracked down a Zoo Staffer and told the story. Two chicks! And three eggs left! Small respectful crowds gathered, then walked quietly on. By the next day the peahen had moved the two chicks away from the nest site to the safe wild areas between the pasture fence and the visitor walkways for survival lessons that have been passed on to downy chicks for eons. The little family has become a major photo opportunity. The three remaining untended eggs most likely weren't fertile and became a meal for someone wild.

## Location. Location. Location

Visitors were alerted by the barking of gray wolf-dog hybrid **Kya**. Less than a foot away on the other side of the exhibit wire was a little black hen that had managed for at least four days (and four eggs) to establish a hidden nest. Unfortunately **Kya** had happened by just as the hen jumped up to return to her nest, to be confronted with a giant enthusiastic barking wolf who could almost, but not quite yank the hen against the wire with an outthrust leg. Finally, with a crowd of onlookers cheering her on, the hen managed to jump up and hunker down. Perseverance paid off and she settled unobtrusively under sheltering geranium plants.

The Zoo has a well-thought-out Egg Policy. If a hen has not settled in to brood, eggs will be gathered and served to the animals as treats. Fortunately, this Policy has been enforced for many years; otherwise **Folsom** would be knee-deep in chickens and peafowl. To collect the eggs, the Staffer gingerly gathered up the hen, who angrily

latched firmly on onto to a finger with her sharp yellow beak. As the observing humans were agreeing that this was probably for the best – *plop!* the hen laid an egg which landed exactly between the Zoo human's shoes. The hen was gently freed. The continuing discussion was interrupted when one of the teenage visitors gasped "*you cannibal!*" as the hen, prudently gathering nourishment, was snacking on the broken egg.

## More Egg Issues

Free-roaming Zoo fowl aren't the only ones with egg problems. For several months glossy snake **Lindsay** has declined food. Careful daily records are kept for all the animals, and staff has been in frequent contact with veterinarian **Mira Sanchez**. X-rays showed the presence of eggs. To encourage the passage of the eggs, she's being soaked daily in warm water and has a big tub of loose dirt in her exhibit to burrow in. In the wild, she would bury her eggs and move on to other business.

## Snake Eggs

Most herps (reptiles) are *oviparous* - they lay eggs. All vipers (including rattlesnakes), boas and garter snakes are *viviparous*: the young are born live. (Zoo prehensile skink Solomon didn't hatch from an egg: he was born both live and handsome.)

## Tree Climber

Besides being live born (and – yes – handsome) **Solomon** really looks like a tiny dragon and is an impressive and very popular outreach animal. Solomon Island skinks have strong sharp claws because they spend a lot of time in trees. Sadly, like so many animal species his wild relatives are losing ground (and trees) to human endeavors. When **Docents** gather him up for **Outreach** appearances they take along a small wooden "climbing tree." Patient Solomon will hang out for hours being admired. He's trained his humans to spritz his little pink tongue frequently with water during public appearances.

## Judgment Call

Sad but true. In addition to teaching survival skills, mother mountain lions and bears must be wary of grown males of the same species, who have been known to hunt and kill little ones. Even with years of experience, Zookeepers at the **Sanctuary** always do a lot

of planning when animals are to be introduced to each other.

After hours of observation by **Zoo Staff** and trained **Docents**, 8 month old mountain lion kitten **Cedar** and adult **Ventura** are hanging out together. Baby enthusiasm is expected. Cedar is rambunctious on occasion – like running full tilt toward Ventura and taking a little swat at his face with a paw. Pushy. Mature Ventura turns away (and possibly sighs to himself.) Young male **Rio** is likely to be the next on the meet-and-greet list.

**June Attendance:** Clearly, FCZS is the place to be this summer: 9,440 happy visitors. The Zoo is busy all day, and frequently there's a line at the Front Gate. Life is Good.

### **Missing Penny**

Long-hair tortoiseshell **Penny** was one of the ten feral cats who moved to the Zoo in 2006. Originally they lived on the property of **Robert F. Bauder** who loved cats and supported a big feral colony. In failing health, Mr. Bauder contacted a cat rescue person who spent many months rounding up a substantial number of these very wild animals. Mr. Bauder's estate funded the unique **Feral Cat Exhibit** at the **Folsom Zoo**, that includes a rustic Cat House connected to the enclosed Cat Garden by a Cat Tunnel. Nearly a year ago, Penny was injured, possibly in a slip-and-fall from the cat climbing area and she spent many months recuperating on a ranch. Penny returned home recently, which seemed to please male **Wendell** quite a lot. Sadly, she passed away at the end of June. We join Wendell and the six remaining cats in missing Penny.

**At the request of Robert F. Bauder's family a sign on the Cat House reads "Contrary to popular opinion domestic cats are not wild animals able to fend for themselves. Please spay and neuter your cats."**

### **Miner's Shack Upgrade**

Originally the **Miner's Shack** was built as a home for imprinted ringtail **Chaos** and to teach some local history. These shy, secretive little animals with, yes, long black and white ringed tails can be found in the western United States and Mexico. In the 1850's gold seekers built shacks along the American River. Since miners worked hard all day and weren't prone to housekeeping, the shacks often were infested with mice. So a day-sleeping small wild animal nicknamed a Miner's Cat, technically

a *cacomistle*, was welcomed in to hunt rodents all night while the miner slept.

Shack additions include the wooden miner's bed and a faux sink with cupboards underneath that really are hiding places for the current Miner's Shack day-sleeping skunks **Pete** and **Gizmo**. Visitors can peek through the viewing window into the inside of the cupboards to see, hopefully, sleeping skunks. Early on there was one small problem: Pete spent the night digging under the counter and had to be dug out.

### **Moving Henry**

Technically, there are important steps that must be observed when one sets about to clean one of the Bear Exhibits. Step #1: First remove the bear. Sometimes this isn't so easy. Keepers have spent weeks encouraging black bear cub **Henry** to move on request from the outside exhibit to his den area. Yes, Henry is fed his delicious meals in the den. And yes, he gets little treats to assist his attitude as he moves down the exhibit hallway to the den. And as he grows up, yes, frequently Henry dawdles on his way to lock-up or finds something else to do altogether. Bear keepers are engaged in a battle of wills. When asked, Good bear Henry may indeed move into the hallway. But he has a tendency to sit down somewhat short of the den area and move no more. Fortunately, **Folsom Zoo Sanctuary** keepers are patient. And have a sense of humor. And love Henry. But some days he strains the Boundaries of Fortitude

### **Summer Days at Fisher's Beastro**

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