

KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

March 2010

Fisher

In 1992 or thereabouts, a mom Black Bear and her cubs discovered that fish cleaning stations near Bridgeport, California fit right into their Eat, Sleep, Repeat lifestyle. But the Department of **Fish & Game** had serious concerns about bears+ people/+ fish and caught up mom and the cubs and took them far, far away. A cub came back, was captured again, and in 1995 moved to the **Folsom City Zoo Sanctuary**. Appropriately, he was named **Fisher**.

Years ago trucks would pull up to the Zoo Sanctuary bringing test models of bear-resistant food lockers and trashcans. More than once Fisher, who at that time was the Bear In Charge of Testing, sent the newest designs back to the drawing board. On one occasion six strong men moved a big food locker with bacon inside to Fisher's exhibit. After a few minutes of wrestling, Fisher, annoyed, picked up the still closed locker and dumped it into his pool with a one-armed heave. DF&G posters warn "A Fed Bear Is A Dead Bear." For smart bears it takes only one experience with inappropriately stored food at a campsite to associate people with food. When a bear acts aggressively toward humans, DF&G may euthanize the animal in the interests of public safety. It's likely that Fisher's work has saved the lives of countless wild bears.

Several weeks ago, Zoo staff observed Fisher limping. Prescribed medications helped, but were not the answer and arrangements were made for a complete medical exam. On Sunday, April 25, Zoo Vet **Mira Sanchez**, staff, and doctors and volunteers from **Loomis Basin Equine Medical Center** examined Fisher in his off-exhibit den. The news was not good, and Fisher was gently euthanized. A necropsy is pending. Some Black Bears live into their 30's. Fisher was just 18 years old, but it seems to those who love him that his short life was important in many ways. The new Zoo café is named **Fisher's Beastro** in his honor. Memorial donations can be made at www.folsomzoofriends.org where you can also find a guest book to share thoughts about this exceptional animal.

Do The Math

Because a big shed for Docent biofact storage was to be constructed in the off-exhibit area where Livestock Guarding Dogs **Cheyenne** and **Annabelle** are spending some time, the dogs moved into the **Zoo Operations Building Office**. Since they are excellent animals this was fine with everyone who works in the office and fine with the dogs as well, since profuse petting is part of the deal.

There are some mathematical considerations. The office with three chairs at computer stations is 106" at its widest part. The dogs are 48" long (96" lying end to end) and are 33" wide (or 66" for two) if they are lying down with legs stretched out which, of course, they are. So two dogs, tightly packed, lying longway across the office leaves 10" for people and their parts. Yes, the dogs shed profusely. The biofact shed is wonderful.

Also Indoors

Scarlet macaw **Bill** has been diagnosed with *aspergillosis* which is a fungal pneumonia so he's been inside the warm Ops Bldg. lobby (adjacent to the office) in a big cage where he's medicated and steamed. Bill and **Bingo** were lonely for each other, so Bingo's inside too. The radio is on – music / commentary day and night for the additional companionship it provides. Interestingly enough, Bingo, between bouts of screaming, often says "good morning" and "good-by" at the appropriate times. Bill's health seems to be improving and, with some reservations, birds and humans are all OK with this arrangement.

Cyxxxxxxxxxx

The inside macaw cages are extra-cleaned often. You remove the bird and roll the cages out to the Ops balcony where they can be hosed down. Recently the Ops office was empty and a keeper popped Bill and Bingo in there for just five minutes. When she returned there was Bingo clinging to the top of a window blind and needing rescue. No problem. Later a staffer sat down to use the computer, and upon opening discovered one of those scary *Error Reports: Warning! Entry cannot be read!* The entry Cyxxxxxxxxxx was proof that macaws, while among the most intelligent of birds, are not skilled with a computer mouse.

Cowboy, Cowgirl, Cowhen

Giant Premarin horse **Gus** was spotted chowing down in his barn with a small black hen sitting on his back. She had been noted earlier apparently looking in the hay holder for a nesting site. His snack completed, Gus moved into the pasture along with his hen still hunkered down, at rest.

Horse Sense

Because of a very generous donation, Zoo Sanctuary staff and Docents spent several hours at the **Rodeo Arena** paddocks with well-known horse trainer **Mark Rashid** learning how to improve skills in safety, communication and timing with Zoo hoofstock. Big horse **Gus**, pony **Sterling**, mini-donkeys **Rosarita** & **Jalapena** were all training stars. Insights gained from this seminar will make work with them safer, as well as expanding their roles as visitor friendly teaching animals.

Fisher's Beastro! Be There or be Square!

Fisher's Beastro! Be There or be Square!

Rats!

With the macaws on hiatus a big rat moved into the comfortable macaw house, to the surprise of a keeper who escorted him out with a broom.

Our only native rat is the Dusky-footed Woodrat who leaves our stuff alone and builds stick nests out in the woods. The two rat species that become nuisances to us are the arboreal Black Rat aka Roof Rat and the Norway or Sewer Rat, which is larger and prefers to live underground and in burrows. These are the guys who can cause damage. Rat problems? Rodenticides are ineffective because rats breed too quickly to be managed by poisoning. Rodenticides are dangerous and can cause secondary poisoning in species that prey upon rats, like hawks, owls, bobcats, raccoons, skunks and pet cats and dogs. Snap traps can attract small birds, reptiles and non-target mammals.

So what to do? If you make your home and garden unfriendly to rats natural predators can do their jobs. Keep a tight lid on garbage cans. Feed pets inside, use “ratproof” bird feeders, store pet food in metal cans, pick up dropped fruit. Tidy up yard and storage areas. Questions! Call WildCare Solutions 415-456-SAVE

Filling Andrea

Great big red-tailed boa **Andrea** is relatively new to the Zoo Sanctuary. You may recall that she was discovered in a dark Napa shed coiled up in a tool box. Because it's Nature's Way, snakes eat every now and then and lie up with a full stomach and wait for digestion to occur. At the Zoo, she is offered food every other week. First it was 7 formerly frozen mice, which increased over time to 15. Keepers worried that she was still hungry. But then there was the note in the **Daily Journal** “fed Andrea 15 mice and she didn't eat them. She's finally filled up!” But no. Apparently she was going *opaque* meaning that she was getting ready to shed her skin. A snake's clear eye coverings turn cloudy, opaque, when shedding is imminent. Keepers checked that reptile room temperatures were consistently at 80 degrees and made sure that she spent a little extra time soaking in her long snake tub. Voila! One day there was the giant snake shed. We're back to thinking about how many mice fill'er up.

Attendance: With the economic downturn visitor demographics have changed noticeably with many more young fathers and their kids at the Zoo Sanctuary during the week. Plus more mom/dad/kid families all week and lots of them.

- Last year March & April 13,601
- This year March & April 20,041

Folsom Zoo Sanctuary Docents introduced our facility and it's exceptional animals to more than 50 yellow-jacketed **Sacramento Zoo Docents. And.** A sunny day combined with the event *Shear Entertainment* provided nearly 1,000 visitors, and lots 'o \$ to the **Zoo Gift Shop & Fisher's Beastro** with llama and sheep shearing demos, expert advice

from knitters, spinners, weavers plus visits with handsome herding dog **Murray** and his person. Kids took home spool knitting kits and little guys created their own fluffy sheep.

Video #1: Coming Soon From A Zoo Near You

A portion of a **California Department of Fish & Game** training video was filmed at the Zoo Sanctuary and coyote **Maggie** was one of the featured animals. Since senior coyote **Iris** was spooked by the new **Wild Canid Exhibit** Maggie has the whole beautiful green grassy area to herself. As you know, many coyotes live among us but they are rarely seen because they are smart – and very shy.

The film crew approached Maggie's exhibit, big uniformed guys with a camera on a long black pole. Maggie watched intently from her hidden spot in the tall grass. Then the pole camera was lifted over the visitor safety fence and touched the enclosure wire. And here came Maggie, whining and laughing and dancing and tail-wagging to see her New Best Friends. Note to new F&G officers: all coyotes aren't Maggie.

Video #2: Inflate Your Savings

The **California Department of Resources, Recycling & Recovery** filmed a Public Service Announcement at the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary. It will be shown throughout California. It tells the story of kids and their trip to the zoo (**Folsom Zoo Sanctuary** is a stand-in for EveryZoo.) The kids are tracked from the parking lot to the entrance. Once again, there was a camera on a long boom which, as in coyote Maggie's case, did not alarm our visitors who seemed quite pleased to be involved. The final shot is in the Zoo Ops kitchen (newly cleaned for this occasion) where “mom” is shown putting the money she saved by keeping the family's van tires inflated into a Zoo Trip jar.

Friendship Can Be Fragile

With cats it's hard to tell: are they dozing or just Organizing An Agenda? In the upper Tiger Exhibit **Misty** was resting quietly on a shelf dozing / Organizing, when **Pouncer** decided to pass through into the lower exhibit. She jumped only to be met with an earsplitting CHUFF! from Misty who bristled up, paws and claws ready for whatever. Pouncer was instantly airborne and shot through the Tiger Tunnel apparently unscathed. While visitors were catching their breaths, Pouncer stalked, ears back, to her big green ball, upon which she lay, every muscle and sinew quivering, stripy front legs grasping the ball with impressive sharp claws as if the ball was what? A water buffalo? An annoying roommate? Big cats, sharp of tooth and claw, avoid serious engagement because they can inflict serious harm.

rratcliff@folsom.ca.us