

KEEPING TRACK . FOLSOM CITY ZOO SANCTUARY

February – March 2011

A Changed Life

Last fall, with snow on the way, a female black bear moved into her hibernation den in the Tahoe Basin. The den site could have been a rock overhang, a hollowed out tree, fallen logs or even under a building. Her metabolism slowed so she could live on the food she gobbled up in summer and fall: grasses, berries, acorns, grubs and even carrion. Bear cub **Henry** was born during this time. Of all the bear species, the black bear is the most active during the winter, so mom woke up occasionally to attend to her cub. On a good day they might have gone outside. When Henry moved to the **Zoo Sanctuary** in early September he was estimated to be six-months old. Mom had provided lessons on how to be a wild bear: to “tree himself” when confronted with adult bears, where to find food and water, and generally how to take care of himself. Sadly, one of the lessons his mother passed on was foraging at campgrounds where – thoughtlessly – human food was available.

Thanks to mom, Henry Knows Stuff. On a sunny afternoon recently he was seen thrashing and splashing in three feet of water in his pool. He snorkled under self-generated waves and - floating, moved into sitting position, clutching his back feet with his impressively clawed front feet and sinking underwater bottom first to the bottom. He’d explode out of the pond to scale the 10-foot fence wire then, still climbing, moved sideways like a freight train from one end to the other. There’s a lot of muscle under a bear’s baggy coat.

His new family is teaching Henry lessons too. Cueing him with his meals, he knows to move from one off-exhibit area to another so Zookeepers can clean and bring in food and toys, change hammock positions, etc. Work is underway to show Henry that’s safe even when the adult bears are outside the Bear Exhibit transfer hallway, or in dens nearby.

Ultimately Henry will occupy Exhibit One, a bear friendly place with a big cave, a sunning rock, a substantial pool – and importantly, the only one of three Zoo bear exhibits with a stainless steel woven net cover. Docents watch interaction between adult bears and Henry as he cautiously negotiates the hallway that leads to Exhibit One.

There were setbacks. Bears **Woody** and **Marty** provided a few huffy forays in his direction. Snippy female **Tahoe** snorted and huffed and hit the wire when he came near. But ultimately Henry came up with a strategy. He reared up on his short hind legs, clawed front feet held high, and snorting like a big bear, confronted Tahoe through the wire. As the day wore on, Tahoe watched from napping position on a rock as he practiced walking by. *All this effort by Zoo Staff and the Bears leads to:*

Learn How to Live Safely in Bear Country

Bear Day! Hooray for Henry!

Saturday, April 16

11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Watch Henry in Action in his new Big Boy Exhibit

Learn camping safety at the Good, and Bad , Campgrounds! Compare 600 pound bear Sequoia’s food bowl with Henry’s! Bear Keeper talks!

Match up kid paw prints with a bear’s!

Make treat bags for Zoo bears and learn why you never, ever feed wild bears! Donate to the Friends of the Folsom Zoo Bear Enrichment Fund and take home a fuzzy Teddy Bear!

Hooray For Cedar!

Since mountain lion kitten Cedar is still very young, (and there’s only one Mountain Lion Exhibit) she’s currently alone on public exhibit between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. But only when adult cats **Ventura**, **Flash** and **Rio** agree to lock up in the off-exhibit den areas. As she grows up Zoo Staff will be working with all the cougars to assure that ultimately these big cats will live safely together.

Meanwhile, Cedar practices her skills. While female Flash and young male Rio tend to shun Cedar, almost from the first day in the holding areas senior cat Ventura would lie against the wire gate that separates Cedar’s area from the other pens. Naturally she was interested: she’s hiss at Ventura and sometimes swipe at him with a needle sharp paw. But now Cedar mostly ends up lying against the gate beside Ventura.

It's not as if Cedar isn't busy. There are leaves and balls to chase, and an unfortunate Teddy Bear to chew on. And there are crowds of her Loving Fans in the early afternoon. Docents were quick to note that small kids and Cedar mutually decided that running the fence lines together was Fun for kids and Practice for Cedar. Four big yellow signs went up:

Please Don't

- . let children run along the fence line
- . climb on the safety fence
- . in any way encourage mountain lion kitten Cedar to "play"
She is 'practice hunting' which can lead to unsafe behaviors

Thanks to alert visitors and discreet Docents, this unwise human behavior has stopped.

Watchers!

At the request of Zoo Staff, savvy **Docents** spend hours logging animal behavior: they are the extra "eyes and ears" so that everyone has a better grasp of what's going on with the animals at the Zoo. There's a word for it: Invaluable.

A Docent Observer's Daily Journal Note: "I was in the back observing Cedar. Ventura had left his usual babysitting duty with her and she was asleep on her mattress. In the meantime, approximately 12+ peafowl decided to open a singles bar right outside of her night area. She woke up and spotted them. In true mountain lion mode, she climbed down from the bed and crawled along on her stomach to the wire. She positioned herself so that she could not be seen, but she kept peeking around the corner at them. She sure is a cutie pot!" True.

Attendance for the month of *February* once again beat last year at the same time with 8,488. (Last year 7,853.) All these people seemed unfazed by the major construction remodel of the front Zoo entry area and ditto with the construction/disruption as the elegant new **Aviary** takes shape. They were apparently also unfazed by the rainiest day-after-rainy-day –week- after-week ever.

Speaking of Ventura

On and off, senior (born 2000) mountain lion **Ventura** has health issues. More times than we know, very young wild animals can have serious health issues: mange, intestinal parasites, starvation, injuries, etc. that can have

ramifications in later life. This is the case with Ventura. The big carnivore squeeze cage is familiar *cougar furniture* so Ventura walked right in. Gates were shut front & back and off he went to **Loomis Basin Veterinary Hospital**. There was blood work and all of his parts were carefully examined. Back at the Zoo he's being treated for colitis & nasal mites. And dehydration. He moseys into the squeeze cage. Doors close. A crank is turned "bookending" him. Two IV bags hang from the exhibit roof. A keeper is stationed at the front with a bowlful of little bites of delicious raw meat. Another keeper gently inserts the hollow IV needles under his tawny pelt. Generally Ventura doesn't even flinch. (The Joy of Meaty Snacks.) He's visibly improved.

The Amazing Barking Tortoise

There was a meeting of two Zoo People in the **Classroom** which currently is home to snakes **Lindsay, Cleo, Lucy, Andrea**, handsome prehensile-tailed skink **Solomon** and Russian tortoise **Donatello**. Don lives in a big, shallow tub complete with a special UVB light that supplies his vitamin D3 calcium and a heat lamp to keep him warm and comfy, a faux palm forest, a water bowl, leafy greens and a cardboard box cave stuffed with alfalfa and grass hay. During a pause in the meeting participants heard a small *bark*. Thinking they had miss-heard, the meeting continued. *bark*. There it was again. And again. Now, these are animal savvy people, but *a barking tortoise?* They got up to examine Donatello. He appeared to be napping. Back to work. But in their mind's eye both had visions of the fame accruing to the **Folsom City Zoo Sanctuary** for the discovery of *The First Barking Tortoise*. Fortunately TV stations weren't summoned: the *bark* came from a small staff dog in the Classroom office with the door shut awaiting a ride home.

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Ferret socks.**

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rratcliff@folsom.ca.us