

Valentines Day 2006



Valentines celebrations at the Folsom Zoo Sanctuary had visitors making valentine cards for their favorite animals.



Training People

Scientists associate the ability to use tools with cognitive behavior. And us humans with our exceptional thumbs like the idea that we're smarter and infinitely cooler than all the other animals. So it's nice when the animals at the zoo sanctuary reach us a lesson. You may recall that an Eagle Scout built two lock-up boxes for raccoons Scout and Autumn. The boxes are attached inside the exhibit with



carabineers and have little drop doors that can be operated by a cable pulley that a keeper controls from outside the exhibit. There are lots of advantages to this system. The animals willingly lock up so work inside the exhibit can be done. The animals can be examined up close for any problems, and can be separated for medication tucked into something good to eat. They can even be transported to the vet in these cages. Recently, a keeper locked up the raccoons and was happily cleaning when - oops - there was Scout reaching her clever little black paw outside the cage wire and pulling on the cable that raised the door. The keeper anchored the cable to another carabineer that was attached to the cage wire. But the physics were faulty and Scout could still pull down on the cable that pulled the up door. Plan Three. The keeper pulled the cable way over to the side and carabineered it to the cage wire. Which makes Scout very peevish. She reaches and pushes and pulls, and before long no doubt will have devised a way to get that cable!

More People Training

While education parrots Mesa and Pogo spend good weather days outside, they also spend a lot of time hanging out in the zoo classroom. Humans also spend time in the classroom, eating lunch or participating in classes or meetings. Goffin Cockatoo Pogo has learned that he can get the attention of everyone by screaming: ear splitting, break the windows three blocks away screaming!



This is not Pogo's fault. Humans have taught him that we react to screams which works for him. So humans are engaged in a Parrot Behavior Management Protocol, which essentially is an effort to let Pogo know that silent behavior is commendable (and worthy of a little treat) and that screaming wins no points at all.

Who's the Boss?

Wolf culture is very strict, and has lots of rules and customs. In any wolf pack there's an alpha male and an alpha female. The wolf who ends up as alpha may not be the strongest physically, but he or she is the wolf who maintains focus on either taking over or maintaining the alpha position. This isn't a democratic system.

For several years alpha male Granite has made sure that male black wolf River understands that he isn't boss and better not even think of trying! When pups Joshua and Yucca arrived from Southern California in 2004 the pack switched into puppy mode. The alpha pair, Granite and Redbud, seemed happy to let River take over the training as "puppy uncle."



Now the pups are 2 years old both are joining Granite to dominate River. To humans, this looks like bullying or fighting, but it's really dominance behavior which is hard-wired to assure the survival of the pack. Currently Joshua and Yucca play baby games with the alpha pair, which seems to take the pressure off. Zoo staff are aware that this is wolf business, and human intervention can cause trouble. But keepers watch carefully for behavior that can be unsafe.



Stronger Than He Looks
You won't always see ringtail Chaos when you visit the zoo. This is because this weasel-sized guy with the long black

and white striped tail remains hidden until it's completely dark and goes back to sleep before dawn. A ringtail's natural prey is little stuff like mice and insects and manzanita and toyon berries. So it was with some surprise that a keeper discovered a big knucklebone on the high shelf in the Miner's Shack where Chaos sleeps the day away. The shelf is nearly eight feet high and Chaos would have to hop up on the Miner's bed, and then up to another shelf before making his final leap hauling a bone that probably weighs nearly as much as the ringtail himself!

Big Soft Paws

Predators are armed with deadly force, and they're very careful with claws and teeth. When you play with your kitten you most likely won't get scratched until you go a little too far. Plus, the kitten is practicing skills



that it will need as an adult predator. Nearly every day you can see tigers Misty and Pouncer playing: there's lots of stealthy hiding (the tiger is in plain sight but it's good manners for you and the other tiger to pretend you don't see

her) there's the swift attack, the lightning slash of paws - with the sharp claws retracted, 99% of the time anyway. This is the reasons that people have a hard job distinguishing between play, dominance behavior, and aggression. When mountain lion Ventura gets inappropriately pushy with one of the other cats he may end up on the receiving end of a swat with a claw in it. This is not cause for alarm, but keepers pay a little more attention to the social interaction.

How to Put Medicated Drops In An Eagle's Eye

(Not recommended for beginners!)

Golden Eagle Cirrus has been nearly blind for most of her long life. (She's probably 40 years old). Recently she was noticed blinking and shaking her head which indicated that something was amiss. Dr Linton at the Animal Eye Center diagnosed glaucoma. So Cirrus has been in the off-exhibit



holding pen for treatment. Oral medication is hidden in formerly frozen quail or rats. Eye drops are given three times daily.



It should be said that Cirrus has spent more than a little time off exhibit being treated for aspergillosis, a lung disease that is not uncommon in wild birds. So she's accustomed to being gently asked to move into a crate or, the case of eye drops, to hop up on a sturdy branch.

Those experienced in giving eye drops to small children might expect that treating a golden eagle armed with sharp beak, dagger-like talons

and a six-foot wingspan would be a similar ordeal. Not so. The keeper approaches quietly from the back, speaking softly. She lightly touches the golden feathers on the eagle's neck. When Cirrus turns her head slightly, the keeper squeezes several drops just above the eye, Cirrus, trooper that she is, doesn't flinch. Not like kids at all!!

The Animals are Registered!

The Folsom Zoo Sanctuary has several on-line and in-store registries. You know. Gift ideas for brides. Gift ideas for zoo animals. The usual.

<http://www.homedepot.com> Go to Gift Center. Then, On-line registry. Then Folsom Zoo Sanctuary (in the spot for "last name")

<http://www.target.com> Go to Gift Registries. Then Club Wedd. Then "Friends of" (in the spot for "first name") "Folsom Zoo Sanctuary" (in the spot for "last name")

<http://www.sanctuarysupplies.com> Go to Wish Lists. Then Folsom City Zoo Sanctuary.