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# The Keeper

The American Association of Zoo Keepers  
San Diego Chapter's  
Quarterly Newsletter—Fall 2007

## Message from the President

By Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK President

Ask any zoo keeper and they'll tell you, there's more to this job than just picking up poop, raking an exhibit, or feeding. Ask for more details and that list will grow into an impressive composite that qualifies this "job" as a profession. But to many of our guests, zoo keeping is what it appears from the outside: poop detail, raking, and caring for exotic wildlife.

I am sure many of you have had guests and friends come up to you and say, "I'd love to have your job! It must be a lot of fun working with such cool animals!" Typically, I respond by listing just a few of the many things that we do as keepers; but somehow, the connection is never really made. There's no malice intended in how many think about our field, it's just a perception. Forty years ago, that opinion of zoo keeping was pretty close to the truth.

The idea of a National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW) was conceived with the idea that national recognition would focus on the actual work that we do and help enlighten both visitors and management about the complex impact that we make on animal care, education, and conservation. Our proclamation detailed the multi-faceted role that we play in the management of both captive and wild populations. That message was sent across the country on both an institutional level and congressional level. It even found its way on the internet, surfacing on a number of zoo-related and private blogs.

Did it work? Was there much of an impact? Do a Google search using the words "National Zoo Keeper Week" in quotation marks. You'll end up with a multi-page list that includes media coverage, press releases, zoo schedules, news videos, and even a story about a small zoo in Bermuda that used our idea and celebrated Zoo Keeper Week on their own.

Locally, the impact was more than I had hoped for. As you read on in this newsletter, you'll find that many departments at the Zoological Society of San Diego (ZSSD) got behind NZKW. For me, the most powerful impact that NZKW made was when five keepers from the Zoo and Park gave mini PowerPoint presentations to the Executive Committee. Each presentation gave the committee a chance to see keepers excelling in their field. When our presentations were over, Doug Myers, the ZSSD CEO and Executive Director, commented that this type of keeper reporting should be a regular part of their meetings (although we may not be invited on a monthly basis). Several of the committee members confessed that they had no idea that ZSSD zoo keepers were doing such amazing work. It was a moment when there truly was a connection between keepers and management.

Ask yourself what you do as a keeper and stray from the short and simple answer. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done and continue to find ways to excel in your field, NZKW 2008 is right around the corner.

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## Peruvian Zoo with Al Toth

In September 2006, ZSSD Horticulturist Al Toth spent two weeks in the city of Iquitos in the Peruvian Amazon. Sponsored by the San Diego Zoo, the purpose of the trip was to help with conservation work with the organization Zoo Peru. Al shared his experience at the June AAZK presentation. According to Al, they focused their work at a government facility, Inrena, the Peruvian equivalent of our Fish and Game Department. The animals at Inrena were confiscated on the market and are now kept in small cages in a "temporary" situation. Unfortunately "temporary" can mean up to two years or more. The first animal to receive help from Zoo Peru, a non-profit organization based out of the United States, was an ocelot. The ocelot was originally housed in a crate that was about 3' x 3'. One of their accomplishments was to build a new holding enclosure that was 18' x 12' x 9'.

An American film crew was present at the zoo and was quickly recruited to help with construction of the new ocelot enclosure. Quality lumber was purchased at a local lumberyard adding much needed money to the local economy. When all the supplies had been acquired, the construction phase began. Without access to electricity, all work had to be completed using hand tools.

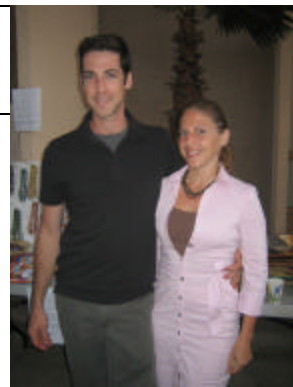
When the construction phase was completed, Al utilized his horticulture skills to beautify the exhibit with local flora. Nothing could have been more enriching for a small cat that had spent the last two years in a tiny 3' x 3' enclosure. The film crew was able to document as the ocelot explored its new home.

Al's efforts made a considerable contribution to not just the animals at Inrena, but to the animal care providers as well. The example set by Al and his crew will have a profound impact on the way that animals are cared for and housed.

For more information about Zoo Peru and the conservation work that they do, visit their website at [www.zooperu.com](http://www.zooperu.com).

## Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project

The greatest source of energy in the communities surrounding the Kibale National Park in Uganda is wood taken in abundance from the park's forest. At first, firewood was obtained in the small fragmented forests surrounding the park. As the local population increased, so did the demand for fuel. Local communities harvested wood from the national park daily, creating a sizeable loss in habitat in that region. An alternate source of sustainable firewood was needed. At the July AAZK talk, Rebecca Goldstone and Michael Stern, directors of the Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project (KCFWP), shared their ways of helping the local population cope with their increasing demand for a sustainable source of firewood.



The Kibale Community Fuel Wood Project teaches locals about how planting their own source of fuel can help protect the park and animals that inhabit the forest there. Providing saplings of *Sesbania sesban*, a fast-growing indigenous tree, the KCFWP encourages a sustainable lifestyle and also demonstrates how energy efficient stoves can help cut down on the amount of firewood consumed. Their workshops and tree plantings are a perfect answer to the ever-increasing need for firewood in the Kibale communities.

Community-based projects like the KCFWP are becoming more and more popular conservation tools in today's third world communities. As the need for natural resources increases, so does the threat to our endangered habitats. Providing solutions for the needs of the local populations is an effective way to protect critically endangered wild lands.



To learn more about the work Michael and Rebecca are doing and how you can help, visit their website at <http://mbstern.googlepages.com/kibalecommunityfuelwoodproject>.

# National Zoo Keeper Week

By Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President



Fostering professionalism  
in animal care  
among Zoo Keepers

Many thanks to everyone at Zoological Society of San Diego who helped make National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW) a huge success! Human Resources, Operations, Merchandising, Transportation, Animal Care Departments, Beth Branning, and Donna Damson (Government Relations) all pitched in to make sure that your first celebration of NZKW was a memorable one! It was not difficult to convince management of the need to recognize our hard work and the important role that we play in animal care. Read on to see exactly how they all pitched in.

- Merchandising purchased 300 caps with “Zoo Keeper” embroidered on the back.
- Merchandising allowed for display time for keeper artifacts and posters. This is a great way to let our guests know **why** we are **experts** in our field.
- Merchandising also displayed keeper recommended books at the gift shop. Keepers connected with a zoo guest by making book recommendations.
- Merchandising provided a 30% discount for all keepers at the gift shops during NZKW.
- Transportation allowed keepers to hop on buses throughout the week, providing keepers a chance to connect with guests.
- Operations provided large banners publicizing NZKW.
- Donna Damson helped make contact with Congresswoman Susan Davis' office.
- Human Resources sponsored a continental breakfast at both the Zoo and the Park.
- Human Resources sponsored a happy hour (they paid for all the food) for both the Park and Zoo.
- Human Resources purchased over 400 tickets to the Padres game and sold them to ZSSD employees at an even greater discount.
- Debbie Andreen set up a special page for zoo keeper blogs.
- Beth Branning set up meetings that allowed us to provide special keeper presentations during the Executive Team meeting. Doug Myers and the rest of the Executive Team heard keepers from the Zoo and Park give mini-presentations on “Rhino Keeping,” “Elephant Behavior Management,” “Operant Conditioning as a Medical Aide,” “Starting an Enrichment Committee,” “and “How AAZK Helps To Transform a Job into a Profession.”

The highlight of the week came about when zoo keepers and animals took to the field for the opening ceremony of the Padres vs Phillies game at Petco Park on Thursday, July 19. It was the first time that keepers had been honored at such a large public event. About 400 ZSSD employees and their guests watched from their stadium seats. The following keepers were present on the field:

*(Continued on page 4)*

## NZKW at the Zoo, continued...

(Continued from page 3)

- Conrad Greyson, AAZK founding member
- Red Thomas, AAZK founding member
- Stacy Conery, WAP Elephants
- Pete Balcaen, retired keeper, Petco usher
- Nicole LaGreco, Zoo APC
- Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President
- JoAnn Thomas, Children's Zoo
- Brandon Scott, Zoo Reptiles
- Matt Akel, SD AAZK Fundraising Chair
- Kelli Walker, Zoo Insectivores
- Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice-President, Editor
- Debbie Gungle, WAP Birds
- Bill Heiber, CRES
- Aimee Goldcamp, SD AAZK BFR Coordinator
- Eileen Neff, SD AAZK Board Member
- Gloria Kendal, WAP Mammals
- Amy Klotz, Zoo Birds
- Lorena Walton, Behavior Management
- Connie Carson, Zoo Mammals
- Laurie Brogan, SD AAZK Secretary
- Nicki Boyd and Legarto the alligator
- Susie Ekard, Annette Russell, and Kim LeMier with Majani the cheetah and Clifford the dog
- Richard Schwatz and Bandar the binturong
- April Forrest and Tipu the tamandua
- Janet Ramsey and Tonka the golden eagle



### National Zoo Keeper Week 2008

The official date for 2008 will be July 20-26. ZSSD Operations will be officially celebrating NZKW from July 24-27. At the last ZSSD Promotions meeting, many non-animal care departments expressed their excitement about providing more keeper and guest activities for 2008.

# NZKW at Petco Park

By Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK Preseident



Dear fellow zoo keepers,

On behalf of the San Diego Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers and the Zoological Society of San Diego, I would like to congratulate you! You have been chosen by your department to represent zoo keepers on the field during the opening ceremony of the Padres/Phillies game on Thursday evening, July 19. The opening ceremony will highlight National Zoo Keeper Week and the role that zoo keepers play in the care and conservation of the endangered species that we exhibit.

Here are more details:

- ZOO PR will have a camera person and videographer present.
- We will have a binturong, tamandua, cheetah, and golden eagle on grounds with us.
- The following will be on the field during the pre-game, opening ceremony:
  - CHS: Conny Carson
  - Behavior Management: Lorena Walton
  - Reptiles: Brandon Scott
  - Zoo Birds: Amy Klotz
  - Zoo Inverts: Kelli Walker
  - Zoo APC: Nicole LaGreco
  - WAP Mammals: Gloria Kendal
  - Vet Services: Rich Massina
  - CRES Keepers: William Hieber
  - WAP Birds: Debbie Gungle
  - WAP Elephants: Stacy Conery
  - Joanne Thomas (CZ): most senior keeper (40 Years)
  - Red Thomas: one of the founders of AAZK
  - Conrad Grayson: one of the founders of AAZK
  - Pete Balcaen (retired CRES zoo keeper and Petco usher)
  - Animal Presenters from CZ and Behavior
  - Your San Diego AAZK Board



**Zoo Keeper Night at Petco Park:** It was the Padres vs. the Phillies, and keepers were highlighted during the opening ceremonies! Over 350 discounted tickets were sold at Human Resources. Many thanks to Human Resources for stepping up to the plate and hitting a big home run by proving these tickets at a reduced rate!



# Letter from Executive Director of



July 16, 2007

Dear Bob,

On behalf of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, I would like to offer my congratulations to the Zoological Society of San Diego, the combined animal care staffs of the San Diego Zoo, San Diego's Wild Animal Park and the Conservation and Research for Endangered Species, as you gather to kickoff and celebrate National Zoo Keeper Week.

It is no secret that the job of caring for exotic animals, while being one of the most coveted jobs in the nation, is one of the most strenuous, stressful and dangerous jobs a person can have. It is also no secret that the job is rewarding in many, many ways.

Every animal keeper carries a unique responsibility in where they literally touch the lives of thousands of people, every day. Your words and actions hold meaning for every visitor that passes through the gates of the zoo and the park, and that message is carried through to your communities.

The profession of animal keeping is powerful. It is a job best accomplished by dedicated professionals who respect the animals under their care and understand and covet the importance of the keeper's role in conservation and the education message of our facilities.

The American Association of Zoo Keeper's is 40 years strong and San Diego has been with us since the beginning. In fact, you are the beginning. To Mr. Gerald "Red" Thompson, Mr. Conrad Grayson, and Mr. Ken Willingham, I offer you the heartfelt gratitude of your fellow AAZK members, in founding what is now a professional group of animal keepers measuring almost 2500 strong, all over the world. Foresight is a gift and these gentlemen, with four other dedicated founders who have passed on, were blessed with a vision that has become a strong, unified voice for animal care and habitat conservation.

To the animal keepers of the Zoological Society of San Diego, we salute you. Thank you to Mr. Myers for recognizing his keeper staff at this very special event. San Diego is the cornerstone of this Association, and the staffs of the Zoo and Wild Animal Park have always been there for the Association. Your support of local conservation groups in Southern California is noteworthy. Your support of this Association, and our partners at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, supported through Bowling for Rhinos has been exemplary. We thank you for your support at every level. AAZK visited San Diego in 1992, and we'd love to see you all again in the future.

In conclusion, it is often stated that if it weren't for zoo keepers, zoos wouldn't and couldn't exist. This is a very true, but very simple statement. You don't keep zoos; you care for a very diverse collection of the most exotic animals on the face of this earth. The worth of a knowledgeable and professional animal keeper is immeasurable to your management. But today and this week, a large measure of your worth is on the minds of people everywhere in San Diego and the United States, during National Zoo Keeper Week.

Please be safe and work to keep your fellow keepers safe, as you carry forward in your careers in the animal care profession.

Respectfully,

Ed Hansen  
Executive Director  
American Association of Zoo Keepers, Inc.



## Kobey's Swap Meet Fundraiser

By Nicki Boyd, SD AAZK Treasurer

Our bi-annual Kobey's Swap Meet Fundraiser was held August 4. As usual, it was a lot of fun. Thanks to Bob Cisneros, Aimee Goldcamp, Laurie Brogan, Brooke Boyd, and Mary Lieras for helping out. We also want to thank the Rancho Bernardo warehouse for giving us many donation items. We sold everything from t-shirts to panda banners. The panda items were popular since we had just announced the baby giant panda birth two days before.

We raised \$737 and designated \$400 to go to the Westgate School in Kenya. The rest will help in supporting different organizations and causes. We also plan on sending \$250 to the AAZK National Conference in Galveston, Texas.

Our next swap meet fundraiser will be in December. If you know of a conservation organization you would like the chapter to support, please let us know, we would love to hear your ideas. Mary Lieras, from the curator's office, proposed the Westgate School and was generous enough to help us sell the merchandise to support her cause.

Look for details regarding the next swap meet date in future newsletters.



**Your purchase supports the schoolchildren of Kenya.**  
 In the northern rangelands of Kenya, the nomadic lifestyle necessitates that children wishing to go to school live at the school while their parents move with their grazing animals—and livelihood. The San Diego Zoo supports the Westgate community with yearly funds.  
 Often times, these children get one meal per day. Your purchase will help support the Westgate School by providing daily meals for the children, as well as books and learning materials. 100% of the profits from your purchases goes to the Westgate schoolchildren's fund.

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The San Diego AAZK Chapter

the environmental ethic we are trying to promote. **Opinions expressed on these pages do not necessarily reflect the view of the San Diego Chapter of AAZK, AAZK, Inc., or the board of either chapter or parent organization.**

Send us your email address so we can notify you when the latest issue of **The Keeper** is on the web site.

## CALENDAR

### LOCAL EVENTS

OCTOBER 2007: TBA

NOVEMBER TBA, 2007: **Wine Steals Fundraiser for SD River Foundation.** More info to come.

Be sure to check the Upcoming Events section of the website

### NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

**IV International Symposium on Breeding Birds in Captivity:** 5 day event in honor of Dr. Jean Delacour. September 12 - 16, 2007. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Theme: "Conservation Through Aviculture." More info at [www.isbbc.org](http://www.isbbc.org) or write to ISBBC 637316 St. Vincent-Sydenham Townline, Meaford, Ontario, Canada, N4L 1W5 (+ 1.416.910.AVES or + 1.604.866.AVES).

**AAZK National Conference:** September 30-October 4, 2007 at Moody Gardens in Galveston, TX. Hosted by Galveston AAZK Chapter. More info at [www.gcaazk.org/](http://www.gcaazk.org/).

**Orangutan SSP Husbandry Workshop:** October 16-18, 2007. Hosted by Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, IL. More info at [caso-daro@brookfieldzoo.org](mailto:caso-daro@brookfieldzoo.org).

**SE Regional Ape Enrichment Workshop:** November 1-3, 2007 at Gorilla Haven in Morganton, Georgia. More info at [kellydm@gorilla-haven.org](mailto:kellydm@gorilla-haven.org)

**International Elephant Research Symposium:** November 2-4, 2007 in Orlando, FL. More info at [www.elephantconservation.org](http://www.elephantconservation.org)

**2008 Gorilla Workshop:** January 23-27, 2008. Hosted by DAK and the Brevard Zoo in Orlando, FL. More info at [www.2008GorillaWorkshop.com](http://www.2008GorillaWorkshop.com)

Go to the SD AAZK web site, [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org), to find out more about upcoming events !