



# The Keeper

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

## Message from the President

By Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK President

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Complaining is an easy process to engage in; almost too easy. I know, because I have taken that route on many occasions.

It goes something like this: there is something not right in our world and it is frustrating, aggravating, disappointing, unnerving, unfair, and sometimes just plain stupid. It is a problem waiting for a reaction or a response. If the response is to just complain, and two or more are there to listen, complaining becomes self-reinforcing.

It feels good to complain, especially when others around you are in agreement. And it becomes contagious. In fact, if we complain enough, we can perpetuate our complaining by complaining that our complaints are never tended to. That elevates complaining to an art form. But enough complaining.

The antithesis of complaining is problem-solving. If there is an art to complaining, there certainly is an art to problem-solving. However, the art forms are very different.

I think of complaining as a type of finger-painting; chaotic, a little flashy, definitely all over the canvas. Problem-solving sets out to put the colors in the right places with an eye on the big picture. Whether it is connect the dots, paint by numbers, or complex brush strokes, problem-solving takes the issue and shapes it into a positive response.

Canvas aside, my point is this; problem-solving is a hallmark of good leadership. Are you a leader or follower? Although we cannot all simultaneously be leaders, there are moments when opportunities arise that invite us to either be leaders or followers.

Problems are encountered daily in our workplace (emphasis on daily): our diets need adjusting, our diets are being tweaked, nine hours of work in an eight hour day, short-staffed, under-appreciated, unnoticed, it comes from above or it comes from below.

And with each problem that we encounter, we are faced with the same challenge.

Will you be a leader?

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## **SD AAZK Swap Meet Fundraiser**

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

Several times a year, SD AAZK board members do their best to raise money for the different conservation projects our chapter supports. On December 3, we headed out to Kobey's swap meet to sell goods that had been collected from and/or donated from by the Zoo, members, and local businesses during the last six months.

Armed with coffee, donuts, and determination, SD AAZK board members set out their goods and haggled with the eager crowd. There were toys, t-shirts, cups, furniture, and wreaths that sold like hot cakes.

Eight hours later, and with nothing left but our pride, we had raised \$1,029.00!

Of this amount, \$500.00 were designated to assist national AAZK. The rest was placed in our Keeper Fund.

Our swap meet fundraiser takes place twice every year; in December and in the summer. If you would like to help or donate items, call our hotline at (619)231-1515 ext. 4672. As always, the money raised is for great causes that you can always be proud of. We would love for you to join us!

## **Receiving Funding from SD AAZK**

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

For years SD AAZK has done its best to help its members attend conferences and events by contributing money we raise in our Keeper Fund. If you were a member in good standing, that was enough to qualify.

As of 2007, we have more requirements due to the number of requests we have received.

To qualify for funding, follow these steps.

- be a current SD AAZK member in good standing;
- be able to prove that you are a current national AAZK member;
- write a formal letter stating what the requested funds are for; and
- assist with SD AAZK functions and fundraisers.

You should also be prepared to write an article for our quarterly newsletter *The Keeper*, and give a presentation to fellow SD AAZK members.

We are proud to be able to assist our members with their continuing education. To be able to better serve everyone, help is needed in raising funds. With your help, we can do that...and much more!

# Member's Holiday Potluck

By Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President

"Great minds think alike." That being the case, there were plenty of great minds present at last December's SD AAZK holiday potluck party at the Children's Zoo Clark Theater.

Usually with potlucks, one will find a smorgasbord of tasty delights: entrees, side dishes, and desserts. In this particular case, everyone showed up with desserts! While some might call this a potluck disaster, those present would have called it a dessert lover's paradise!

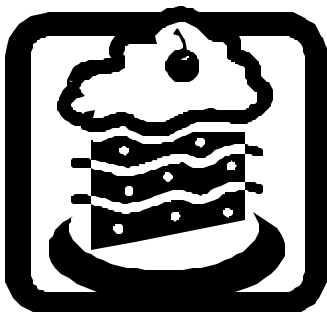
Dessert was not the main agenda for the evening, but it was the focus for many of us. There were fudge brownies, home made cookies, chocolate cake, and even a powdered sugar, chocolate, and cereal combination called "puppy chow" (I won't go into the recipe details...but it was very addicting!).

While this might sound like a culinary review, it surely was more than just desserts! AAZK members and their guests were entertained by a North American porcupine and other Children's Zoo animals, and Dr. Zoolittle and his zany bugs! Zoolittle wowed the audience (ok, some guests were a little squeamish) with his magnificent collection of arthropods. The Madagascar hissing cockroaches (*Gromphadorhina portentosa*) seemed to be everyone's favorite as Zoolittle introduced everyone to the wonderful world of insects and spiders.

But it wasn't just an evening of "show and tell." Those familiar with Dr. Zoolittle's show have experienced the "crunch and swallow" segment. This is the part where brave volunteers from the audience make their way front and center while Dr. Zoolittle hands out tasty little bits of baked mealworms. On our particular evening, it was no different. Although there were a few members who exclaimed that eating dessert first had ruined their appetite, Zoolittle still managed to find a few courageous souls who were willing to munch on a little protein source to help balance out all those dessert items.

It began with dessert and ended in a baked arthropod delight. San Diego AAZK would like to thank the Children's Zoo for offering the use of the Clark Theater and for the wonderful animal presentations. SD AAZK also wishes to thank Dr. Zoolittle for spending time with us, helping to make this truly a unique holiday party!

And for those of you who brought dessert, I like the way you think.



# ABMA Conference

By Nicki Boyd, SD AAZK Treasurer

What a concept! It has everything a normal conference offers, plus you travel to exotic destinations during the talks and enjoying exotic ports of call on what would normally be a zoo trip.

The Carnival Cruise set sail from Miami on January 14th. Pre-conference trips enjoyed the fine animal facilities in Miami for free. Nothing like an ice breaker in the aft of a beautiful boat floating through the Caribbean.

Our first day consisted of papers, SSP panel discussions, and committee meetings from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. The keynote speaker was Dr. Anne Savage, from Disney's Animal Kingdom, sharing information about the cotton topped tamarins in Columbia.

Tuesday we disembarked at the Costa Maya Delphinus Program and Beach Club. Eighty free dolphin swims were raffled off and I was lucky enough to win one. Other winners were fellow trainer Maureen Duree from Hunte Amphitheater and WAP lead keeper Elene Neff. We had a blast watching the training, participating, and swimming with the dolphins after a training session.

Port calls only lasted from about 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., then it was back to the boat.

On Wednesday, conference sessions lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm, with more spectacular training talks, medication training on megavertebrates in Mexico, and shark training for blood draws (my favorite).

Thursday we were able to visit the Blue Iguana Recovery Program in Grand Cayman Island. A special behind-the-scenes tour was arranged for the 225 delegates attending conference.

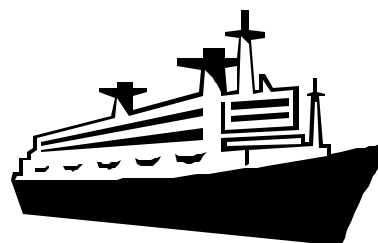
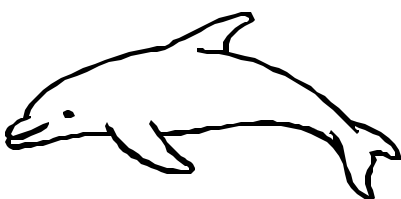
That night we had the poster sessions and silent auction that raised funds to send keepers to future conferences.

Friday we were off to the Dolphin Discovery Center in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. Here I was able to swim and snorkel with stingrays and then hike up the Dunn's River Falls. What an amazing day! Back on board we attended workshops that evening.

On our last day, there were more training talks from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. with panel discussions, workshops on aggression, and reading body language. The conference ended that night with the awards banquet.

While the conference was similar to other conferences, the addition of travel to amazing ports, excellent food and customer service, and the luxuries available on the boat made this one of the best conferences I have attended. As with all conferences, networking was at it's finest and lifelong friendships were made.

I highly encourage anyone involved in or interested in training to attend next year's ABMA conference in Phoenix Arizona. There is something for everyone in each talk to inspire you to take back to your area and bring your animal management to a higher level.



# Enrichment with Beth Rich

By Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK Preseident

Thanks to the well organized Enrichment Committee, animal enrichment is becoming a widespread, management-backed activity throughout the Zoo. Although enrichment is designed to benefit our animals, it can be a powerful tool to help teach our guests about animal behavior, thus increasing their visitor experience. Interpretation does this by linking the public with the enrichment activity and subsequent animal behaviors.

During AAZK's January workshop, Beth Rich, Wild Animal Park Keeper, outlined a simple method by which keepers can help turn their enrichment activities into a powerful guest experience. The enrichment activity can transform the keeper from educator to interpreter by providing those in attendance with a live commentary of information and animal facts that pertain to the behaviors as they occur.

The benefits are numerous.

- Increases visitor time.

- Creates repeat visitors.

- Creates long term supporters.

- Enriches the visitor experience.

- Increases the likelihood that the visitor will contribute to conservation efforts once they leave the Zoo's gates.

The formula for a successful interpretive session is a very simple equation.

- Know your resource.

- Learn as much as you can about your animals.

- What if someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to? Let them know that the question is a good one and that you'll find out the answer for them.

Know your audience—questions to ask yourself.

- What is the target audience?

- Are they there because they want to be? or

- Are they paying for the experience or is it free?

- Do they have to register?

What are some appropriate techniques? You want your audience to walk away knowing about a specific subject matter.

- Themes—answer the question "So what?"

- Learning styles

  - auditory

  - visual

  - verbal

  - kinesthetic

  - props—people always remember their "hands on" experiences

You can enrich your visitors' experience tenfold during your enrichment activities by being the direct connection between your visitors and your animals. Your interpretive session is the bridge that ties the bond between your guests and your animals. Below is a list of interpretive resources. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Beth Rich at [Zoobeth26@cox.net](mailto:Zoobeth26@cox.net).

**National Association of Interpretation** <http://www.interpretation.com/>

Beck, L., Cable, T.T., and Cable, T. *Interpretation for the 21st Century: Fifteen Guiding Principles for Interpreting Nature and Culture* Second Edition. Larry Sagamore Publishing, Incorporated, 204 pp.

Ham, S.H. *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*. Fulcrum Publishing, 456 pp.

## Bowling For Rhinos Kick Off on March 23

By Yvette Kemp SD AAZK Vice President

Since 1990, the San Diego Chapter of AAZK has hosted their annual fundraiser Bowling for Rhinos. During this event, animal care professionals and the local community come together to help save rhinoceroses, their habitats, and the animals that live in them.

In 2006 the event raised over \$10,000.00, making it one of SD AAZK's top 3 grossing years ever! Thanks to the efforts of nearly 150 bowlers, money was sent to The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya, Africa, Ujung Kulon National Park, and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park, both parks in Indonesia.

This year's Bowling for Rhinos will occur on May 19 at Kearney Mesa Bowl. Because of how successful past events have been, this year the entire bowling alley will belong to BFR! All the bowling lanes and one night will be dedicated to rhino conservation.

As usual, there will be a silent auction, raffle, and bake sale. Hopefully, with your help and participation, 2007 will be our best year ever!

To get everyone excited about this year's BFR, we will be holding a BFR pep rally on March 23 at the Bluefoot Bar and Lounge located at 3404 30th Street in San Diego, 92104, from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. It will feature giveaways, a raffle, and a team sign-up table at this no-host bar event.

BFR team sign-up sheets are now available on our website at [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org) as well as in areas throughout the Zoo and WAP. Once you get your team together, be sure to send in your team fee to save your space. Then collect your sponsor money. There will be a minimum contribution required from **each** bowler, but there will be great prizes for those who raise the top three amounts.



If you would like to assist during BFR, be sure to let us know. There are different ways that you can participate. You can donate items for the silent auction and/or raffle, bake items for the bake sale, help with team registration, or even assist with raffle tickets sales the night of the event. Anything you can do to help will be greatly appreciated by the SD AAZK board members, as well as by the conservation parks where the money will be donated.

BFR is an awesome event that we hope you will attend.

Be sure to join us for the pep rally at the Bluefoot Bar and Lounge on March 23 to learn more! See you then.



## Trucks, Trailers, and Tie-Downs with ACM Curby Simerson

By Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President

Our last AAZK workshop was canceled last week due to inclement weather. Heavy rains the night before and continued showers throughout the morning left us feeling a little nervous about having a workshop out in the Zoo parking lot.

By mid morning, it was decided that we should cancel the workshop and postpone it until another day. This was the first time in the ten years that I have been on the board that we have had to cancel a meeting! Our apologies to all; we'll let you know when the workshop gets rescheduled.



# Keeper Corner

By Matthew Akel, SD AAZK Chapter Liaison and Fundraiser

Featuring Joshua Zelt, SD Zoo Polar Team Member and SD AAZK Member

*As a new section to our newsletter, the Keeper Corner is designed to highlight volunteer activities of SD AAZK members. Many AAZK members spend much of their “free time” working with conservation groups and projects. As a thank you from SD AAZK, we would like to highlight who they are, the work that they do, and donate some of our chapter funds to help their cause. If you or anyone you know is involved in conservation projects, email us at [TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net](mailto:TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net). We would like to share the important work that they are doing!*

“Lions Tigers and Bears is a federal and state licensed rescue facility dedicated to providing a safe haven for unwanted and abused exotic cats. We are a **NO KILL** facility that allows cats in our care the opportunity to live out their lives with dignity in a caring and safe environment. Our goal is to provide a safe haven to rescued cats and to educate the public about the growing population of abandoned and unwanted exotic animals and where they come from.”

As a dedicated San Diego Zoo employee for the last 7 years, Josh Zelt’s passion for animals extends outside of work. As a volunteer for Lion, Tigers, and Bears (LTB) in Alpine, CA, Josh works his hardest to help improve the lives of these unwanted animals.

Josh grew up in San Diego and has held numerous positions at the San Diego Zoo. These include being a park aide, relief lead, relief driver, and his current role as a B&G attendant in the Mesa area. While he is currently attending Cuyamaca College, future aspirations include being a keeper. “To me there is nothing better than taking care of animals,” said Zelt. At home, Josh cares for three cats, three poison dart frogs, two alligator lizards, and an African grey.

Josh travels to LTB every Friday morning. “Lions, Tigers, and Bears takes in and cares for not only exotic cats but domestic animals as well,” he said. “They also educate the public about these animals. The domestic animals we have taken in are 2 llamas, many pygmy and regular sized goats, sheep, a miniature horse, horses, pot bellied pig, chickens, peafowl, turkeys, rabbits, and domestic cats. As for the exotic cats, we have 4 tigers, 1 leopard, 2 bobcats, and 1 serval.” He is clearly proud of what LTB. is striving to do. Helping out unwanted animals is a challenge when volunteers attempt to gain their trust.

Just like many volunteer organizations, LTB. faces similar difficulties. With a lack of volunteers and funding, accomplishing their goal of providing their cats a large exercise yard complete with caves, a pool, waterfall and more, poses a major challenge. To volunteer or donate to help them fulfill their goal, you can talk to Josh Zelt by calling him at 619-929-1184, visit [www.lionstigersandbears.org](http://www.lionstigersandbears.org), or call the LTB. office at 619-659-8078. There are few requirements to volunteer. People are needed to assist with office work as well as outdoor activities. Be sure to fill out the application and waiver forms.

While spending your personal time volunteering may not be an attractive thought to many, take a minute to realize how much your daily passion for animals could benefit the lives of these critters in need. Having worked with Josh for the last several years, I can attest to his selfless desire to care for all creatures. Keep up the good work Josh!

## **Future L.T.B. Goal**



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## Our Contact Information

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The San Diego AAZK Chapter

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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

**MARCH 23, 2007: BFR Kickoff.** Bluefoot Bar and Lounge, 3404 30th St. (619) 756-7891. From 3:00 p.m. until we are done! Raffle, give-aways, BFR team sign ups. Don't miss it!

**APRIL 12, 2007: Visit to Los Angeles Zoo.** Share experiences and stories with fellow zoo professionals. Ask a SD AAZK board member for details.

**APRIL 16, 2007: Michael Puzzo, UC Davis Wildlife Health Center Field Biologist.** 2:30 social; 3:00 presentation. Zoo Rondavel.

**MAY 19, 2007: Bowling for Rhinos.** Kearney Mesa Bowl. Team sign up sheet on our website [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org) (click the Bowling For Rhinos link on

our home page). More info to come.

### NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

**Old World Monkey Workshop:** March 19–22, 2007. St. Louis Zoo, St. Louis, MO. More info at [cmccann@wcs.org](mailto:cmccann@wcs.org) or [indu22@earthlink.net](mailto:indu22@earthlink.net).

**2007 AZA Western Regional Meeting:** Hosted by Denver Zoo. More info at [bstrelitz@aza.org](mailto:bstrelitz@aza.org).

**Amphibian Biology & Management:** April 14–19, 2007. Toledo, OH. More info at [www.aza.org/prodev/Amphibians/](http://www.aza.org/prodev/Amphibians/)

**8th International Conference on Environmental Enrichment:** August 5–10, 2007. Hosted by Schonbrunn Zoo, Vienna, Austria. More info at [www.zoovienna.at/icee2007](http://www.zoovienna.at/icee2007)

**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).

**Past SD AAZK presentations on DVD:** If you missed an AAZK presentation, you can find a copy at the ZSSD library. For more info, contact the ZSSD Library.

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