



*San Diego Chapter board members
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The Keeper

The American Association of Zoo Keepers
San Diego Chapter
Quarterly Newsletter—Summer 2008

Message from the President

by Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK President

Over 3 Million Dollars Bowled

This year, Bowling For Rhinos (BFR) reaches a landmark era as it surpasses the \$3 million mark in combined funds raised on a national level. Like many other chapters all across the country, SD AAZK works hard to make this one of our greatest fundraising events each year. Your Board of Directors at SD AAZK makes this possible through hard work and planning. However, there are two members of the Board whose dedication to this event has taken San Diego BFR to a new level—BFR Coordinator Aimee Goldcamp and SD AAZK Fundraising Chair Matt Akel.

Aimee is responsible for securing the bowling alley and orchestrating the whole BFR madness! Her most recent accomplishment was convincing the bowling alley to give us the whole alley for the night. In the past, we had to share lanes with other bowlers. Thanks to Aimee, BFR bowlers now have the whole bowling alley to themselves, making BFR an exclusive event!

When Matt Akel oversees a fundraising event, people bring money...and spend! Year after year, Matt has pounded the pavement bringing in donations from restaurants, hotels, and local businesses, establishing solid relationships with these companies. These relationships enable Matt to return each year with bigger and better auction items!

I don't want to take away from what the rest of the Board of Directors and volunteers have done for BFR, but I felt that it was time for these two to receive individual credit for such stellar performances!

Executive Updates

Since last August, SD AAZK has organized keeper updates for Doug Myers and the ZSSD Executive Committee. During these updates, Zoo and Park keepers who have either presented at conferences or have published their work present 5 minute summaries of their efforts to the Executive Committee. The goal of these updates is two-fold: provide an insider's glimpse into some of the outstanding work that is shared among our peers during conferences, and introduce the committee to some of the keepers responsible for this work. It's a win-win situation; the keepers get recognition from the Executive Committee, and the Executive Committee learns more about the hard work that keepers do to help make the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park "World Famous."

Do You Volunteer?

Do you volunteer for a conservation organization? SD AAZK is interested in how you volunteer your free time.

Email us at TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net to learn how you can qualify for a donation to your conservation organization.

Kobey's Swap Meet Fundraiser

by Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

The morning started a little chilly, but by 10:00 a.m. the day had warmed up and we were well into our third hour of selling goods to the public.

Twice a year SD AAZK raises money for different conservation projects and keeper funding by selling donated items at Kobey's Swap Meet on Sports Arena Boulevard. March 1 was the day we had chosen to make up for our December swap meet which was rained out.

Thanks to the Zoological Society's Rancho Bernardo Warehouse's donations, plus all the other goods that were donated to us, we raised \$580. Between Nicki and Brook Boyd, Aimee Goldcamp, Laurie Brogan, Bob Cisneros, and me, we were able to sell most of our items.

We had previously decided that the majority of the money raised during this fundraiser would go to the Red Panda Project and the rest to our keeper fund for future conferences.

The Red Panda Project "saves red pandas and preserves their habitat through the empowerment of local communities..." It is a great organization that we have worked with before and agreed we should contribute to them again. For more information about the Red Panda Project, visit their website at www.redpandanetwork.org.

To learn more about what your local AAZK chapter does and how you can help, visit our website at www.sdaazk.org or join us at our monthly SD AAZK meetings on the third Tuesday of every month at Wine Steals in Hillcrest (May's board meeting has been changed to May 13 to get ready for Bowling for Rhinos).



SD AAZK Board Elections

by Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

Thanks to all SD AAZK members who voted during our recent board member elections! The six candidates running for office were elected and their exact positions on the board will be determined by the board at our next meeting.

There was one change in the board's composition—Kym Nelson, a mammal keeper from the Wild Animal Park, will replace Eileen Neff who is no longer able to be on the board. We welcome Kym and are excited about what she has to bring to our AAZK chapter.

Thanks again to everyone for participating in this election. And thank you to our web keeper Barry Fass-Holmes who made voting on line a possibility!



Bob Cisneros



Yvette Kemp



Laurie Brogan



Nicki Boyd



Matt Akel



Kym Nelson



Barry F-H

The Witch Fires 2007: Preparing for Disaster

by Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President

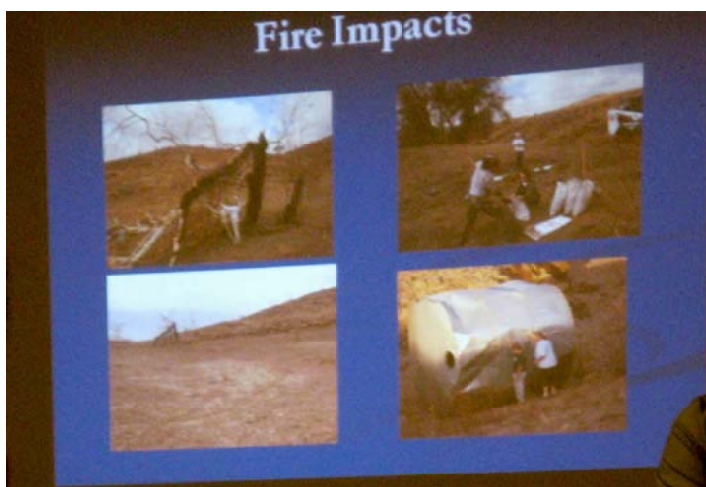
Pushed by strong Santa Ana winds, the Witch Fire burned through parts of San Diego County late last October, destroying hundreds of homes in its path. Aided by the Harris Fire, over 200,000 occupants were forced to flee their homes; many more were threatened. At January's SD AAZK meeting, three conservation organizations gave their unique perspective regarding this great fire; with two organizations elaborating on how this "short notice" disaster affected their facilities and how their emergency response planning paid off when evacuation became imminent.

At the California Wolf Center, located in the Cuyamaca Mountains, fire preparedness has been incorporated into their daily routine. Historically, the Julian area has been host to many brush fires, both large and small. Executive Director Patrick Valentino explained how previous fires taught valuable lessons regarding facilities management and staff training. In 2002, the California Wolf Center lost four valuable Mexican wolves as a devastating fire moved quickly through the eastern part of the compound. According to Valentino, protecting the compound meant a proactive approach; fire breaks were established and dead brush was removed. In 2003, another mega-fire struck but the Wolf Center was prepared and lessons learned from the previous fire paid off ten-fold. "We established an early warning system of communication for our volunteers," said Valentino. "When a fire erupts within a 30 mile radius of the center, we start alerting our volunteers." The center further improved its odds against an impending fire by purchasing a water truck with a fire nozzle attachment. When the Witch Creek fire struck last October, the calls went out and volunteers came up in shifts and vigilantly monitored the fires progress. By the end of the crisis, all of the wolves were safe and accounted for and all that the Wolf Center had worked for had paid off.

Joan Embery was fast asleep when she was alerted to evacuate. Under normal circumstances, moving all of her animals would have been stressful enough. Having to do so with minimal staff (Joan and her husband, Duane) in the middle of the night would seem like an impossible feat. Joan attributed her success to two things: having all of her animals crate- or trailer-trained and a complete inventory of every animal in her compound. "Anyone who owns horses should have their horses trailer-trained; it is surprising how many in San Diego aren't," said Embery.

The last speaker of the night was Rob Hutsel from the San Diego River Park Foundation (SDRPF). Hutsel covered the effects of the Witch Creek Fire on the San Diego watershed. The Witch Creek Fire burned 85% of the Eagle Peak, damaged water systems and other infrastructures, and created the need for erosion control and debris removal. From monitoring endangered species post-fire, to exploring critical areas along the watershed, Hutsel elaborated on SDRPF's fire recovery goals. These goals included continued education about San Diego's watershed, monitoring selected species, invasive weed management, and erosion control and monitoring.

With total losses estimated at over \$1.1 billion, the Witch Creek Fire was one of California's costliest fires. Over 198,000 acres were destroyed by the fourth largest fire in California's history. Fire safety management is an ongoing process that, according to all of three of our guest speakers, is a continual work in progress.



SD AAZK Hoof Trim Workshop

by Bob Cisneros, SD AAZK President

The fundamentals of hoof care were presented in a talk and workshop at SD AAZK's February meeting. Using both video and lecture, Animal Care Manager Curby Simerson gave an overview of hoof care, hoof morphology, and physiology. Following the video and lecture, Simerson and recent graduates from the Ramona hoof trim course—Ann Alfama, Gary Berg, and Bob Cisneros—guided attendees while they worked on real hooves. The hooves, preserved from deceased animals, had been provided by the Zoo's Pathology Department.

Hoof care involves structure, balance, and alignment. With a diversity of hooves spread out on the table, keepers were able to compare hooves, noting the adaptive changes in hoof structure based on the animals' native terrain.

Keepers were assisted in determining where the lowest point of the hoof was, where to trim first, how to trim according to the hoof-pastern angle, and when to stop trimming. Participants were able to experience this first hand while they chipped, scraped, cut, rasped, and shaped their way to perfection.

The hoof care workshop was just one of the many ways that AAZK helps keepers develop their skills and increase their knowledge of animal care. We hope that the participants benefited from this hands-on experience and look forward to providing more opportunities like this in the future.



Red or White?

by Matthew Akel, SD AAZK Chapter Liaison/Fundraising Chair

On Sunday, April 6, SD AAZK held its spring fundraiser at Wine Steals in Hillcrest. This event was aimed at raising money to help sponsor keepers for future conferences. Held in an intimate private room in Wine Steals, guests were entertained by a myriad of artwork, food, wine, and shop talk.

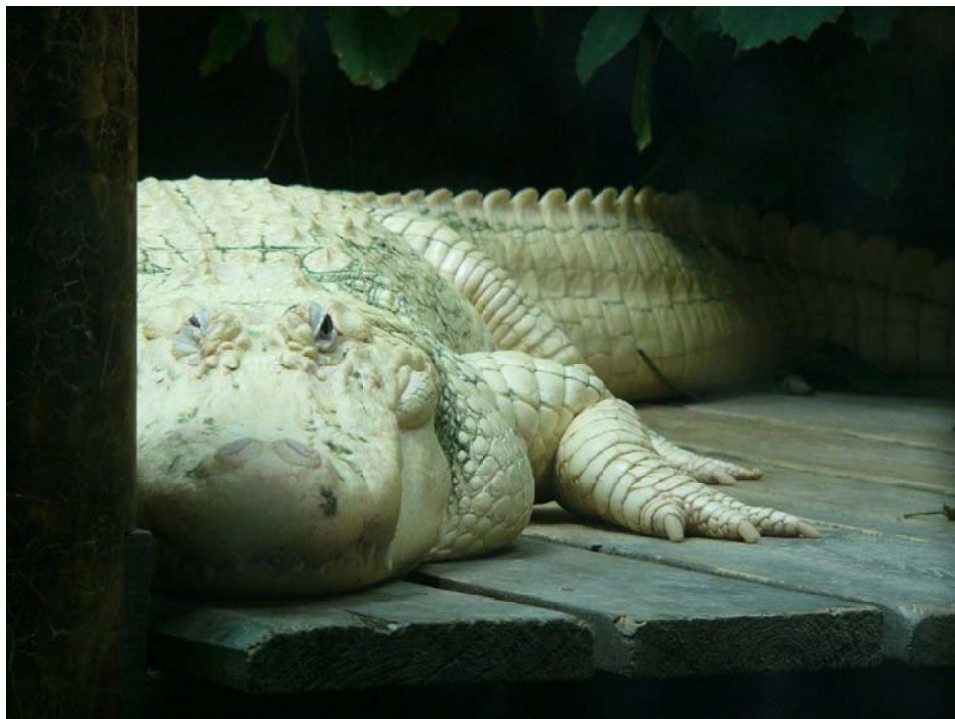
In order to change up our event, our board members decided to hold an art contest. At stake: \$100 to the winner, \$100 to a conservation organization of his/her choice. Among the array of exceptional paintings and photography on display, SD AAZK members were able to submit one vote for their favorite artwork.

Josh Zelt, a San Diego Zoo bird keeper and SD AAZK member, was chosen as the winner. His terrific photograph of an albino alligator was taken at the Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans (see photograph below). His \$100 conservation donation went to Polar Bears International (www.polarbearsinternational.org). As an extra perk for guests, all of the wonderful artwork submitted was auctioned off during the evening!

In addition to the art contest and auction, a separate silent auction consisting of two night stays at several hotels took place. During the last minute of bidding for these, a battle of cosmic proportions erupted. Fortunately, no ambulance had to be called to treat any wounds inflicted between bidders. Without the consistent contributions of the Sheraton San Diego Hotel and Marina, the Crowne Plaza, and the Doubletree Club Hotel, none of this would be possible.

While wine was flowing, visitors were treated to a smorgasbord of complimentary food donated by local restaurants, thanks to the hard work of Kym Nelson. Kym is the newest member joining our board and will be a valuable asset to our team. Due to the constant support of Chipotle (Hillcrest), Ono Sushi (Hillcrest), Baja Betty's (Hillcrest), and B.M.H. Italian (La Mesa), everyone left with full bellies and extra burritos stuffed in their jackets for their next day's lunch.

In the end, our chapter raised over \$700. While that may not seem like a massive amount, ever penny counts towards supporting the professional development of keepers. Thanks to everyone who showed up that evening and to the artists and photographers who donated their work. I invite everyone to join us at an upcoming fundraiser, raise your beverage of choice, and "cheer" to the fact that you are supporting a worthy conservation project or helping a fellow keeper attend a conference.



The 2nd Southern California Keeper Exchange

by Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

On Monday, April 21, SD AAZK hosted the 2nd Southern California Keeper Exchange (SCKE) at the Zoo. Titled “The Bear Essentials: Introducing Bear Awareness Week and Year of the Polar Bear,” this SCKE symposium brought attention to the polar bear’s plight. The informal conference lasted from 10:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and included a variety of tours, presentations, and exchange of ideas.

Delegates from the Los Angeles Zoo, Living Desert, Chula Vista Nature Center, SeaWorld San Diego, Aquarium of the Pacific, Wild Animal Park, and San Diego Zoo attended and participated in a full day of activities.

After catching up with old acquaintances, we started the day with a bus tour through the Zoo led by educator and guide Stephanie. The bus tour was followed by a great lunch supplied and sponsored by SeaWorld San Diego. Then it was off to specific area tours. The choices: carnivores, primates, birds, Children’s Zoo, and the hospital. With everyone going to their area of interest, SD AAZK board members led the groups around the Zoo for more in-depth views of the Zoo and its workings. At 2:30, delegates met at the Otto Center again to commence the array of presentations that were offered. Keynote speakers from SeaWorld and the Zoo began the presentations.

First up was Kelly Cook, one of the Zoo’s polar bear keepers, presenting “Giving Back: Zoo Ambassadors Helping Their Wild Counterparts.” This talk covered study questions regarding estrous cycles and hearing in polar bears and how global warming and oil extraction in their habitat affects them. The Zoo’s polar bears have been involved in scent and hearing studies that have contributed data in determining how sensitive these bears are in these areas and how these factors affect breeding. Information gathered has also helped to determine what acoustics are needed in the design of polar bear exhibits.

Mike Price from SeaWorld San Diego, one of the Wild Arctic keepers, presented “Concurrent Systems at SeaWorld: Creating a Safe Environment in which to Train and Enrich Polar Bears.” Mike’s presentation demonstrated the systems used to work safely with their polar bears, while achieving their goal of variety through training, enrichment, and exhibit design. Their method of a one-key safety system hit home once we viewed the video on what could happen if steps were not followed. I am sure keeper Eric was grateful it was someone in a polar bear costume that came up behind him in the polar bedrooms!

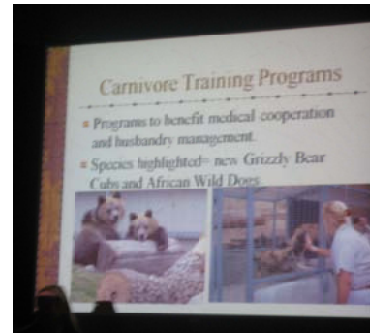
Kathy Myers, Education Specialist, continued the polar bear theme by plugging Polar Bear International’s “Project Polar Bear” and encouraging symposium participants to become advisors for the project. This program challenges teens to team up with zoos and develop community projects that will reduce the atmosphere’s carbon dioxide load. Some of the prizes include a VIP tour of the Zoo’s Polar Bear Plunge, Wild Arctic Encounter at SeaWorld San Diego, and a trip to Churchill, Manitoba Canada! To learn more, visit www.polarbearsinternational.org.

There were more awesome presentations: “Naughty Mosquitoes and a Flamboyance of Flamingos” by vet tech Steve Culver; “Carnivore Training Program” by newly appointed Animal Care Manager Nicki Boyd; “Here a Nest, There a Nest, Everywhere a Nest-Nest” by senior bird keeper Laurie Brogan; “Bonobo Infant Reintroductions” by mammal lead Matt Akel; “The Chula Vista Nature Center” by Charles Gailban; and “White Bellied Tree Pangolin: From Intubation to Independence” by Children’s Zoo lead Bob Cisneros. Thanks to all the presenters for sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm in their work.

All in all, the symposium was entertaining and educational; it also presented an excellent opportunity to share information and ideas with colleagues. We look forward to SCKE #3 (which will most likely be hosted by SeaWorld San Diego)!

On behalf of SD AAZK, thanks everyone who attended SCKE. To those of you who shared your work with the rest of us, kudos on your accomplishments. You should be very proud of what you do!

The 2nd Southern California Keeper Exchange



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CALENDAR

LOCAL EVENTS

MAY 17, 2008: Bowling For Rhinos—Kearney Mesa Bowl in Clairemont. 5:00 p.m. check in; 6:00–9:00 p.m. bowling, raffle, silent auction, bake sale. All money raised goes to rhino conservation. Participate. Call our hotline (619 231-1515, ext. 4672) or visit www.sdaazk.org for more info.

JULY 24–27, 2008: National Zoo Keeper Week

JULY 28, 2008: National Zoo Keeper Week Padres baseball game—HR is buying tickets for discounted resale. Call our hotline for more info.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Measuring Zoo Animal Welfare: May 29–30, 2008—Brookfield, IL. Symposium info is at www.BrookfieldZoo.org/Awsymposium.

35th Annual American Association of Zoo Keepers National Conference: September 24–28, 2008—Salt Lake City, UT. For more info visit www.utahaazk.org/national.htm.

4th IUCN World Conservation Congress: October 5–14, 2008—Barcelona, Spain. For more info go to http://cms.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm.

Otter Keeper Workshop: October 9–12, 2008—hosted by the Oakland Zoo in Oakland, CA. Focus of the workshop will be North American river otters and Asian small-clawed otters. For more info email David Hamilton at dhampilton@monroecounty.gov.

9th International Conference on Environmental Enrichment: May 31–June 5, 2009—Torquay, Devon, UK. For more info visit www.enrichment.org/ICEE9.html.

Go to SD AAZK's web site, www.sdaazk.org, to find out more about upcoming events!