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The American Association of Zoo Keepers
San Diego Chapter's
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Message from the President

By Robert Cisneros, SD AAZK President

YEAR OF THE POLAR BEAR

2008 has been designated as the Year of the Polar Bear. The polar bear has been chosen to help create awareness about the issues of global warming and its effect on both flora and fauna. Polar Bears International (PBI) is spearheading efforts to help promote awareness across the country. AAZK is partnering with PBI to help promote a special year dedicated to this white mega-vertebrate. As a benefit for this partnership, PBI is offering free membership to all AAZK members. This offer will only be available for the next two years. To get your free membership, send an e-mail to Tiffany Mayo at tiffanyvarga@hotmail.com.

San Diego AAZK will be participating in Year of the Polar Bear activities. Stay tuned for more information.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT NEEDED

It's election time for SD AAZK and we are looking for a few good members who are interested in helping our profession. If you are a highly motivated keeper with a desire to help shape your profession, I strongly urge you to consider running for a position on the SD AAZK Board of Directors. If you are looking to advance your career, a position on the Board will help increase your visibility and help create networking opportunities. As a board member, you will have opportunities to gain experience in professional development, fundraising, conservation, event-planning, and leadership.

CONSERVATION

National AAZK has formed a new committee to help serve its membership. The purpose of this committee will be to help promote wildlife and habitat conservation by connecting keepers to conservation. Our goal is to help keepers become involved in field conservation projects of interest. The conservation committee will also be providing information, resources, and assistance to keepers and institutions regarding ways to improve environmental stewardship. If you are interested in helping this new committee, e-mail me at updates.sdaazk@gmail.com.

San Diego AAZK strives to promote professionalism in zoo keeping. It may be a job for some, but for many of us, zoo keeping is a profession. The difference between a job and profession is where your commitment lies. I encourage you to play a proactive role in your profession by getting involved with the SD AAZK Board of Directors.

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San Diego River Foundation

By Nicki Boyd, SD AAZK Treasurer

The San Diego AAZK Chapter had a fund raiser recently for a local conservation organization, the San Diego River Park Foundation (SDRPF). We raised \$1437 and decided to add AAZK Chapter money to give them an even \$1500. The following information comes from SDRPF's website (www.sandiegoriver.org).

The San Diego River Park Foundation is community-based grassroots non-profit organization which was founded in 2001. As a 501 (c)3 public benefit corporation, SDRPF relies upon donations and support from the community for its general operations as well as grants, both public and private.

SDRPF is not a foundation built upon an endowment or other source of funding. We are a foundation in name because we are built upon a foundation of people that have come together toward the goal of creating the San Diego River Park.

The vision of the San Diego River Park is a greenbelt from the mountains to the ocean along the 52 mile long San Diego River. This greenbelt is really a trail system and a clean and healthy river system which connects a diversity of parks, open spaces, public places and community facilities spread out along the length of the River.

The SDRPF is working to achieve this goal by partnering with government agencies such as the San Diego River Conservancy, business and civic leaders and a wide range of public organizations. By promoting stewardship of the River and promoting a better understanding of the River's natural systems, the San Diego River Park Foundation is endeavoring to enhance the quality of life in San Diego.

SDRPF works with community groups and other organizations dedicated to the San Diego River and the River Park and its wildlife, recreation, water, cultural and community values to better engage the public in this project. We support projects which help to establish the river-long park such as restoring and enhancing the river, establishing public plazas and community gardens, and telling the story of the river through interpretive programs, kiosks and educational signage, and more. We also work to acquire and manage critical properties which play an important role in creating the River Park.

We are dedicated to making this project a truly treasured regional asset that is valued by all members of our community. We welcome and encourage everyone who is interested to join us in this effort.

SDRPF has many clean ups and events to help preserve the San Diego River. Visit their website for more information on how you too can help at www.sandiegoriver.org.

Bob
Nov 10, 2007
Wow! On behalf of everyone with our organization, thank you to everyone at SDAAZK! We appreciate the support & our friendship & look forward to partnering in the future. You guys are awesome! Thanks again
Rob Huttsel

8th International Conference on Environmental Enrichment

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK Vice President

Every other year, animal care professionals meet to discuss and share information on environmental enrichment at the International Conference on Environmental Enrichment (ICEE). This past August, the conference was hosted by the Tiergarten Zoo in Vienna, Austria.

With over 200 delegates in attendance, Vienna demonstrated their wonderful hosting abilities by organizing cocktails at the mayor's palace, visits to the Schoenbrunn Zoo and the Schoenbrunn Palace, and a welcoming and closing banquet where they converted the zoo's hay barn into an exciting party area.



The conference lasted five days and included presentations, videos, and posters that discussed incorporating enrichment into master planning, how enrichment affects visitor stay time, animal welfare, and even moments of enrichment gone wrong. There were also lively round table discussions that kept participants attentive and involved.

If you would like to learn more about ICEE or read the proceedings from this or past conferences, visit The Shape of Enrichments website at www.enrichment.org. Shape is the official publication site for ICEE conferences. Shape also offers a \$1,000 travel grant to attend the conference. You can learn more details about that on their website as well.

The 9th ICEE conference will be hosted by Paignton Zoo Environmental Park May 31-June 5, 2009. The theme will be “seeking to **I**nvent new ways to **C**reate opportunities for natural behaviors, **E**nrich the lives of our animals, and **E**valuate the results.”

If you are interested in attending or learning more about the 9th ICEE, go to www.reec.info/ICEE9%20info.htm. You can also get general information by emailing ICEE9@paignton.org.uk.

I would like to thank San Diego's AAZK chapter and the Zoological Society of San Diego for their assistance in sending me to this conference. Conferences are an excellent opportunity to learn more about your profession by sharing and gathering information from people in the same field. The enrichment conference has always been one of my favorite conferences.

Thanks to the sponsorship of AAZK and the Zoo's Development Department, I was able to travel to Vienna, Austria to learn more about enrichment methods used elsewhere as well as share local information.

Wine Steals Fundraiser in Point Loma

By Mathew Akel, SD AAZK Chapter Fundraiser

On November 4, 2007, SD AAZK held its first fundraiser for the San Diego River Park Foundation (SDRPF).

As the only non-governmental organization dedicated to the entire length of the river, SDRPF plays the role of an umbrella organization for many other groups. It's mission statement is as follows.

"The Foundation works to support important projects which will help to establish a river-long park while restoring and enhancing the river and its watershed, addressing flooding issues, providing greatly needed community facilities and opportunities to learn about our region's rich history, encouraging stewardship of the riparian environment, and improving the lives of those that live, work and play in the area."

In order to spice things up, we decided to hold the event at the new Wine Steals in Point Loma located next to the scenic Sail Ho Golf Course. Thanks to the support of numerous restaurants, free sushi, an Italian meat platter, and Mexican food were available to gorge on. While feasting on this buffet, guests were able to bid on a large variety of silent auction items. Some of these included great hotel stays, a myriad of animal prints, gift baskets, hand made jewelry, photography, a helicopter ride over the San Diego River, and much more! At the countdown of the auction, unnamed bidders scrambled without regard for personal safety to protect their potential winnings hoping they made a great deal!

Guests who simply arrived in support of the event were entered into a free raffle for an assortment of items. The grand prize was a wine and food tasting evening at Wine Steals valued at \$125. Lisa Bryant, Mammal Lead for the Zoo's Sun Bear Forest area, won a year of free membership to both the local and national AAZK, another one of the many items raffled that night! With almost every guest going home with a prize, it was hard not to have a great time!

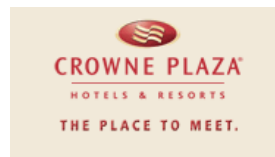
As if that wasn't enough, we also held a 50/50 raffle which raised \$264. The night's winner was April Wheldon from the Zoo's Veterinary Services Department, who promptly spent her \$132 cash winnings on auction items. The other half of the 50/50 raffle went to supporting the SDRPF, helping to bring the grand total of money raised that evening to **\$1,500**.

All in all, the fundraiser was a success with a great turnout of supporters, terrific food, wine, and prizes. Thanks to all who showed up!

I would like to sincerely thank the following businesses for their continued support.

Ono Sushi Chipotle Hillcrest BMH Italian La Mesa Sheraton San Diego Hotel & Marina

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Mission Valley Ramada Inn & Suites (Gaslamp) Hilton Harbor Island





Fire Update from the WAP

Kym Nelson, WAP Mammal Keeper

Keepers, staff, and I are sure the animals themselves must be relieved that San Diego County recent fires are now behind us.

Approximately 600 acres at the Wild Animal Park (WAP) were burned during these fires, but most will agree that this number could have been much higher were it not for the efforts of WAP staff and fire officials. The majority of the damage was done to the perimeter of the park with the north run, Condor Ridge, and the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species (CRES) being affected most severely.

Sunday, October 21 started out like any other day, but turned out to be anything but ordinary. Strong Santa Ana winds were soon evident at the park, prompting early preparations for securing all animal areas. Yards and gates were double checked, the cats were pulled off exhibit and secured in their houses; we were ready for a wind storm. Word of the fires came in the afternoon and, as it became evident that they were heading in the direction of the WAP, quick action was taken. Managers and senior staff worked through the night preparing for the worst, but had to be evacuated at approximately 5:00 a.m.

The California condors, as well as various endangered bird species, were moved to Harter Veterinary Clinic. Some animals were shifted to safer pens and brush was quickly cleared to create additional firebreaks. The next morning, any WAP staff able to get to the park, did so to help with the situation. Shovels of dirt and sand, garden hoses, and anything else that was available were used to put out the many small fires around the park. Garage staff circled the park with the water truck, stopping to help put out any fires they could.

The fires burned all the brush, trees, and cactus it encountered but luckily irrigated grass is not as flammable. The animals in the field exhibits moved to the far sides of their enclosures as the fires approached not knowing that they were in the safest area of the park! The cats, locked down in their houses, also did not seem to know of the impending danger that threatened them.

Smoke and ash engulfed the park, blackening all it touched.

The fire burned right through the CRES area, with small fires burning in the cheetah, dhole, and hyena pens, as well as all around them. Most of the animals were huddled down in their dens away from the smoke and flames. Staff worked tirelessly until 2:30 Monday afternoon when we were once again evacuated.

On behalf of the animal care staff, I think I can safely say that Monday night was one of the longest we had ever experienced! Luckily we were told that the firebreaks did their jobs, the winds turned direction, and firefighters came to our aid in stopping the fires from sweeping through the conifer forest and into the heart of the park.

The fire burned right up to the Bird Breeding Center and damaged one aviary that had been evacuated. We lost one of the condor breeding facilities at the other end of the park as well. Trees were down all over the park, damaging various fences and exhibits. Unbelievably we suffered only 2 animal losses—a kiang and a clapper rail. While we are saddened by these losses, all will agree that the outcome could have been a lot worse!

All of the park staff, no matter which department, rallied together in the days after the fire and we were able to quickly restore some order and the WAP reopened Friday, October 26!





Become a San Diego AAZK Board Member

Would you like to become more involved in helping local and international conservation organizations and keeper education?

The San Diego Chapter of AAZK is seeking candidates for the 2008 Board Member election that will be taking place this spring.

- To become a board member, you must:
- be a local and national AAZK member,
 - submit a letter of interest to TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net by February of 2008, and
 - be able to meet at least once a month for board meetings.

It's a lot of fun and well as rewarding!

Feel free to ask any SD AAZK board member for more details. We'd love to hear from you!

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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

DECEMBER 13, 2007: International Transport of Greater One Horned Rhino to and From India by Andy Blue, WAP Animal Care Manager. Zoo Rondavel. Time: 2:30 pm social, 3:00 pm presentation. Open to all.

JANUARY TBA, 2008: Hooftrim Workshop.

JANUARY TBA, 2008: Kobey's Swap Meet Fundraiser. Call (619) 231-1515 ext. 4672 to assist and/or donate items.

MARCH TBA, 2008: Wine Steals Fundraiser

MAY 17, 2008: Bowling for Rhinos. More info to come.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

2008 Gorilla Workshop: January 23–27, 2008. Hosted by DAK and the Brevard Zoo in Orlando, FL. More info at www.2008GorillaWorkshop.com

2008 AZA Regional Meeting: March 3–8, 2008. Hosted by Birmingham Zoo. For more info contact Cheryl Wallen at cwallen@aza.org.

2008 1st International Wildlife Reintroduction Conference: April 15–16, 2008. Hosted by the Alexander Center for Applied Population Biology, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, IL. Info posted at <http://www.reintroduction.org>.

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