



To promote and establish good relationships among professional zoo keepers.

To promote and establish a means to stimulate incentive and greater interest in the zoo keeping profession.

To support deserving conservation projects that include educating the general public about the need for preserving our natural resources and animal life through these worthwhile efforts.

To establish materials beneficial to zoo keeper education.

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The Keeper

The American Association of Zoo Keepers San Diego Chapter Quarterly Newsletter – Winter 2010

President's Message

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President



This has got to be the fastest year in history! Maybe it's because we have been so busy. Or maybe it's because we are speeding towards the upcoming conference. Probably a bit of both.

As usual for this year, we have focused a lot of our energy towards the 2011 conference. Our website (www.sdaazk.org) shows much of the effort that has been put into this great event. We have fun pre and post conference trips planned, an exciting icebreaker at the Park and a Zoo Day that should prove to be memorable. November 1st began the first call for papers and registration for the conference opens January 1st. It's been a lot of hard work but it's all coming together nicely.

What has been even more exciting is how we've been able to work with other conservation facilities in San Diego (and even Los Angeles). We have great people from SeaWorld San Diego and the CA Wolf Center in Julian as active participants for the conference and on the AAZK board. We recently had a great experience with everyone from Lions Tigers & Bears during our visit and Exotic Escapades fundraiser. San Diego River Parks Foundation and Priscilla from Kitty Grass are looking forward to partnering with us not just for the conference but for many events. We've met people from Project Wildlife and other facilities that have shared valuable information.

Working with the different organizations has really shown how similar we all really are. Our goals and projects are all leading us down the same path.

Organizing the conference has been hard work but well worth it. Seeing how the SD AAZK board, other helpful people, and local conservation organizations have joined forces for the same cause has been a great experience. One that will last long after the conference is over.

The Mystique and Wonders of Raptors

By Laurie Brogan, SD AAZK Secretary

Dr Robert Gordon is a practicing physician and an amateur naturalist. His love of birds has led him to working with Project Wildlife. He is a raptor rehabilitator and works with the education teams. He has given many public presentations about raptors and the work that project wildlife does. He is a San Diego Natural History Museum's "Canyoneer," a group which conducts county wide nature walks.

At a talk for San Diego AAZK on September 7th, Dr. Gordon indulged us in an opportunity to explore the dynamic subjects of raptors. Not only what they are, but also how this group of birds has captured our imagination and continues to fascinate people.

Now, I do work with birds, but this man has more education and knowledge than I thought possible. He gave us a brief overview of the evolution of birds from reptiles. Anatomy defines a raptor more than anything: talons, hooked beak, excellent eye site, and powerful flight. The peregrine falcon being the fastest animal in the world at approximately 242 miles per hour, and it can adjust its shape and pull out at 25g forces! Dr. Gordon explained dimorphism between the sexes; how size is reversed in raptors, how females are larger than the males by a 3rd. He discussed the asymmetrical ear opening in owls; they hunt by hearing more than by sight. They have 14 vertebrae which gives them a 280 degree turn of the head, which helps since their eyes cannot move in their sockets. Owls also have special flight feathers, that, unlike other raptors, have evolved for silent flight.

Bird DNA has changed the relationship of birds and how we group them. Dr. Gordon also discussed how birds were seen as a connection to the sky, that they were thought of as a supernatural link between heaven and earth. Throughout history, birds and especially raptors were symbols of life, heaven, and immortality. Birds have been in symbolism and mythology throughout history; this has made them of special interest to all generations. This special connection has helped in ways to protect this species. Raptors have been used in falconry for many years; no one is really sure when the 1st bird was used to help humans hunt. But the golden era of falconry ended with the shot-gun and after that falconry remained a sport of the royalty. This helped to preserve falconry and also produced books on breeding and handling the birds. Today most raptors are protected in some way. Golden eagles became protected in 1967 because the juveniles could be mistaken for the bald eagles.

And this is just a SMALL sampling of what Dr. Gordon talked about regarding the physical differences within the raptor family! I would encourage everyone to go on-line to check out more. If you thought you knew a lot about raptors and birds, you are going to be amazed.

The Project Wildlife connection! PW is the largest rehab organization in California. Its mission: "To improve the quality of life for local wildlife and the community as the primary resource for animal rehabilitation and education." Many raptors that come into PW are pellet gun and car victims. Dr. Gordon strongly recommends that any baby bird or mammal be turned into PW; these wild creatures must be raised like wild animals and not as pets, especially if they are to survive in the wilds where they belong. The birds that they are able to rehab to release are banded. This system helps to track the ages of the birds. What is the survival rate of the birds? Dr. Gordon couldn't really say but guesses a 5 to 10% ratio of return, "they seem to do better

than what we think.” How does PW get funding? They, like us, are a non-profit organization that survives on donations, fundraising, and grants. They have around 300 volunteers plus 10 paid staff members.

Here’s a little tid-bit about Dr. Robert Gordon. About 2 years ago he hiked Mt. Kilimanjaro, he is about to hike the Grand Canyon rim to rim, and then head to Nepal to hike to the Mt. Everest base camp. And oh yes.....as a kid he wanted to work in a Zoo or Museum! He is also the author of “*The Use of Canines in the Detection of Human Cancers.*”

What a wonderful and interesting talk from a wonderful and interesting man.

Photo Caravan at the Safari Park

Reserve your spot now for the Safari Park Photo Caravans. This year’s event will be held Sunday, December 5th at 2:45 pm so get your family together and buy your tickets today! There are 2 trucks which will be touring the Park so we only have 30 spaces available. I am sure they will book quickly, hint hint. We will be entering the park as a group at 2:30 pm so please be at the entrance no later than 2:15 pm.

The cost will be \$25 for non-members, \$15 for supporters (local member but not a National member) and FREE for members! Members will be required to pay a \$15 deposit that will be returned before the trucks depart, so please bring your valid National AAZK membership card with you.

Tickets will be sold on a first come, first serve basis and spaces are non-refundable. Please contact Kym Nelson at k_nelson78@hotmail.com to reserve your space(s) and interoffice your payment to her in Mammals at the Safari Park. She will also give you information regarding any age or space limitations.

This is always a fun filled event and we hope to see you there!

Visit to Lions Tigers and Bears

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President

On August 11th, SD AAZK members were invited to visit a local organization that has become a home and refuge for several exotic cats and other animals. The place is Lions Tigers & Bears (LTB), a facility that has been dedicated to caring for animals that have been abused or abandoned and can no longer return to the wild since its founder and organizer Bobbi Brink opened it in 2003. Incredibly LTB is a 93 acre facility located in Alpine that not many know of its existence. One of the reasons may be because it is not open to the general public. To visit LTB you must call and make a reservation or become a member and come in on member days.

We were lucky to be here this day. One of our SD AAZK board members, Hali, had volunteered her time to help with the animals and mentioned that we should visit. The folks at LTB then invited all SD AAZK members to learn more about what they do.

And they truly do a lot. At the moment they have 50 animals, including 13 big cats. There is Natasha, the tiger who arrived declawed and pregnant several years ago. She is considered to be one of the happiest cats and can be seen in one of the back pens lounging on a rock. Then there is Conrad the mountain lion who arrived when he was 6 months old from the Redlands area. When he arrived he was a bit intimidated by the lions and tigers around him but has since become very fond of his tiger neighbor Taboo. You can sometimes see them rubbing up against the fence and purring at each other. And there is Congo, an African leopard and one of the most playful cats at LTB. She likes playing with balls and stalking people. She was abandoned by her private owner.

In the main exhibit that day were 3 very impressive looking lions, Bakari, Suri and Jillian; littermates who arrived from an over-crowded Louisiana facility when they were 4 weeks old. The females have been spayed but the male hasn't to allow his mane to grow in. There is no aggression seen among them and they enjoy the spacious main exhibit when it is their turn.

There is one very large spacious exhibit with a waterfall and pool that is rotated among all the cats. There are special hallways connecting all the rooms so that the animals can be shifted and moved around as needed. This is also how they are able to move the cats in the main exercise exhibit when it is their turn. And what happens when one of the cats decides it isn't ready to move? The LTB staff is able to keep sections of the hallway open so the cat can move when it is ready. LTB uses non-contact with their animals because these are still wild animals. Well, they don't use non-contact with all of the animals at LTB. There are the pot-bellied pigs, llamas, and several other animals that have come to call LTB home too.

The latest resident is Liberty, a young black bear that arrived on the 4th of July and is in quarantine. Her story, people were feeding her at a national park and she had to be removed. Bobbi is hoping to build a bear enclosure by February 2011. But as is the case for most rescue facilities, funding is needed to make it a reality. San Diego AAZK held an event called Exotic Escapades on October 16th in a joint effort to help raise money for LTB and the 2011 National AAZK Conference.

SD AAZK members were very impressed with the work Lions Tigers & Bears has been able to accomplish. Bobbi and Mark Brinks and the entire staff are remarkable and we were excited to be able to work with them during Exotic Escapades. We know we will partner with them again in the future. Thank you Lions Tigers & Bears!

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Exotic Escapades

By Hali O'Connor and Lindsey King, SD AAZK Board Members

When was the last time you spent a relaxing afternoon in the country, sipping wine, enjoying music, dancing and getting close and personal with a few big cats? Well that is exactly what the guests at *Exotic Escapades* enjoyed on October 16th. Held at Lions Tigers & Bears (LTB) in Alpine, this fundraiser provided a unique opportunity for guests to support San Diego's AAZK's mission of promoting professional development and advancements in animal care. LTB also received a portion of the event proceeds to contribute to their mission of providing a forever home to its rescued residents.

VIP guests enjoyed a champagne reception followed by the exciting opportunity to feed a few of the sanctuary's cats! Everyone had their special moments captured by SD AAZK board member and photographer Maureen O'Duryee. It's not every day that you get the chance feed a lion, tiger AND a leopard! If that's not enough of a treat, VIP guests also got to visit LTB's newest resident, Liberty the Black Bear!

As the rest of the guests arrived they were treated to wine tasting from Doug and Carol Dube of Dube Vineyards in Jamul and well as a delicious sampling of Sicilian cuisine from BMH Italian in La Mesa. The soothing music by Lorenzo Kemp filled the warm fall air as guests explored the grounds and perused the silent auction tables.

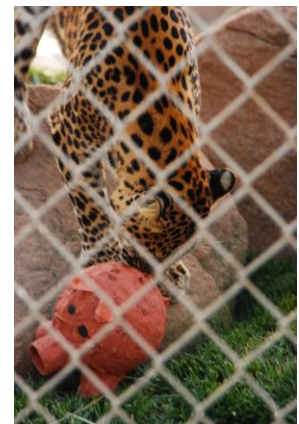
The cats may have been the highlight of the day, but LTB is home to llamas, horses, goats, chickens, a pig and many more critters that enjoyed sweet talk and scratches from the day's visitors. Just when it seemed like we couldn't add any more animals to the scene, San Diego Zoo educators unloaded a great horned owl, an Amazon parrot, a hedgehog, American alligator and an armadillo for even more up close encounters!

The afternoon was capped off with an exhilarating flamenco performance from Ole Flamenco before the crowd was gathered for the finale live auction. Some of the prized items included a 2 night stay at the Lake Cuyamaca Condos, a 4-pack of Disney Park Hopper tickets, and Safari Park photo caravan for 4.

Many thanks to everyone who made this event possible- especially the amazing San Diego Zoo and Lions Tigers & Bears volunteers!



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2010 National AAZK Conference in Philadelphia- “A Return to Our Roots for the Growth of Our Future”

By Kymberlee Nelson, SD AAZK Fundraiser

I arrived in Philadelphia Saturday night just in time to meet San Diego AAZK's vice-president, Matt Akel and several other zookeepers from the USA and Canada for a late night dinner. Little did I know that this meal would set the tone for the entire week, late nights and early mornings! Lindsey King arrived Sunday completing our team of 3 San Diegans promoting 2011!

Sunday morning brought registration, orientation, and meetings with the National board, the Philly Chapter and future hosts, Syracuse (2012) and North Carolina (2013). This was a very informative meeting where the Conference chairs from Philly were able to share some important and potentially time saving tips with us. We also learned about some of the changes that will be occurring at future conferences with National helping out with the AV costs and programs. Matt, Lindsey and I left the meeting to begin set up of our booth where we all did our best to promote the 2011 conference as the one to be seen at! The San Diego Zoo had provided us with all kinds of giveaways: pins, magnets, zoo news, just to name a few, and we had a never ending supply of SD AAZK conference magnets. Luckily the exhibitors hall was locked at the end of each day so once the table was set up it could stay that way (with one exception on Wednesday when we had to temporarily store everything while we were at the zoo).

The Icebreaker was held Sunday night at the Mutter Museum. This was one of the most interesting museums I have ever been to, it was filled with artifacts depicting medical oddities from around the world! The only downside was that food and drink were not allowed outside of the party room, but Philly did a great job keeping everyone entertained, with their bellies and glasses full.

Monday began with a recap of BFR and highlighted the impact on global conservation that our fundraising efforts have. After a refreshing break, filled with generating excitement for 2011, we began our first paper session that focused on various aspects of carnivore and primate husbandry. Next came a workshop on the Ungulate TAG and how we can get involved as individual keepers. They gave one very good tip for someone thinking about taking on a studbook, look at ISIS and see how many animals are in the population and this will allow you to gauge how involved the studbook will be.

The hospitality suite opened Monday night and was a standard throughout the whole week as the destination at the end of the day. The Philly chapter did an excellent job of making sure there was an endless supply of beer and wine and that nothing got out of control. The best part for me was that the suite was conveniently located on the same floor as my room!

Tuesday's papers focused on birds, unfortunately a lot of the information was lost on me so I must admit that I chose this day to spend the majority of time at the San Diego table. I did hear a lot of excitement from AAZK members on our upcoming conference and we ran a raffle for a free registration and sold quite a few t-shirts. Tuesday night Matt, Lindsey and I joined a group of about 15 keepers to head off on a walking ghost tour of historic Philadelphia. We unfortunately did not encounter any ghosts, but it was very interesting on a historical note. The one thing that struck me the most about Philly was the age of the city, it really makes you realize how young of a city San Diego is!

Wednesday was Zoo Day and we spent the day at the Philadelphia Zoo. The AAZK chapter had arranged tons of behind the scenes tours and the zoo provided us with lunch vouchers. Surprisingly their food is pretty much the same as ours, guess if you are walking around a zoo you always want hamburgers and chicken strips! The zoo was beautiful, the landscaping was fantastic and although the exhibits were not the size of a Safari Park exhibit, they were all well maintained and the animals all had a lot of enrichment. I was looking forward to a ride in their balloon but just like the average day at the Safari Park it was unfortunately too windy for the balloon to be flying. We were fed one more time at a banquet which ran alongside the silent auction. Matt, Lindsey and I again took Wednesday night as an opportunity to get some sight seeing in and joined a couple other keepers in a tour of the historic State Penitentiary. I have never been inside a modern prison but it seems to me that if I had been forced to stay in that place very long I would have cleaned up my act quickly!

Thursday brought the conference to a close, after the morning paper sessions the Awards Luncheon took place. It was amazing to see the number of awards that were not presented, not because they could not decide on a winner but because there had been no nominations! I would encourage everyone to take a look at National's website and look over the awards, maybe you will be inspired to nominate someone from San Diego! The banquet was the last item on the agenda and it was a very nice way to end the week, food, dancing and of course more beer!

I hope that every one of our members will attend and help out at the 2011 conference because one of the most evident lessons I took from Philly was that hosting a conference definitely means lots of hard work and tons of teamwork!



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CALENDAR 2010

LOCAL EVENTS

Friday, November 5, 2010. “Keep A Keeper Fundraiser.” Location: 7777 University Avenue, La Mesa, CA . **Time:** 4:30 pm – 11:00 pm. Door prizes, opportunity raffles, proceeds to AAZK. Dr. Pat Morris and his band The 3rd play at 9:00 pm! Go to www.sdaazk.com for more information.

Wednesday, November 10, 2010: SD AAZK Board Meeting. Location: San Diego Zoo Warner Conference Room. **Time:** 4:00 – 6:00 pm. Open to all.

Saturday, November 13, 2010: Swap Meet at Kobey’s on Sports Arena. We are looking for volunteers and donated items. Email for details.

Sunday, December 5, 2010. Safari Park SD AAZK Members Annual Photo Caravan 2010. SD AAZK Members free, SD AAZK supporters \$15. Non-members \$25. Limited spaces. Email k_nelson78@hotmail.com to reserve now.

Spring 2011: “Dinner With A Keeper” Fundraiser. TBA.

June 2011: SD AZK Golf For Conservation. TBA.

2011 ENTERTAINMENT BOOKS AVAILABLE NOW. Email us to order yours!

NATIONAL EVENTS

August 24–28, 2011 National AAZK Conference—San Diego, CA, hosted by SD AAZK at the Westin Gaslamp Hotel. Go to our website at www.sdaazk.com and click on “2011 Conference”