



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 – Spring 2011**

President’s Message

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President



Only 6 more months until the 2011 National AAZK Conference. Not sure whether to scream from panic or joy. Probably a nervous laugh is more realistic on how we are feeling about this imminent event.

We are happy to report that conference registration is up and running on our website. Along with registering online, delegates can sign up for the workshops and zoo day, or get their chapter challenge and silent auction donation forms. So what else is left? Oh, believe me, there’s much, much more. There are the AV needs, hospitality and entertainment set ups, exhibitor and poster details, meals, transportation, and I know I am missing something... Ask me how we are doing and I’ll say not bad, then 5 minutes later panic sets in about something else that pops up on our “To Do” list.

The experience of preparing for such an amazing event has been good though. Everyone involved has learned things we never thought we would. Contracts, hotel negotiations, advertising, social media, oh my! In the process of putting the conference together, you name it, we’ve dealt with it. Would I ever do it again? Right now, I’d probably say no. Though the skills we’ve acquired putting the conference together are skills I know I can use in the future, it’s a lot of work and somewhat stressful. But despite all that, it is a good experience for a good cause.

Maybe putting a conference together is like having a baby; lots of headaches and cramps and the general feeling of being overwhelmed. But afterwards the reward of the event makes you forget all of the challenges that were dealt with along the way. I guess we’ll find out at the end of August. I bet it is!

We Miss You Adam

By Tammy Batson, San Diego Zoo Lead Keeper



The San Diego Zoo is mourning the loss of Senior Animal Keeper, Adam Ruble, who was tragically killed in an automobile accident on January 16, 2011.

Adam joined the San Diego Zoo in 2005 and it was apparent to everyone who worked with him that he cared about animals and was committed to sharing that joy with those around him. His enthusiasm was contagious and he loved his job, which shined through in his attitude and in the stories he shared. Adam always had a smile to share with his coworkers and zoo guests. In 2008, he laid the groundwork to participate in a Keeper Exchange Program with the Melbourne Zoo, researching and networking with keepers in Melbourne, eventually spending 3 months abroad working at their zoo. This program continues today because of the professionalism shown by Adam and those that have followed.

Adam always looked for ways to make a difference in the animals' lives through conditioning, enrichment, and exhibit design. A willing learner, he would often come up with new ideas: anything from hauling yards of dirt into an exhibit and building shelters to taking down fences and having training doors built so that he could safely access the animals for training purposes. He also worked on building trust relationships with all of his animals.

Adam not only made a difference in the animals, but also in the people he worked with. He accepted everyone for their differences, didn't get caught up in drama or the negative, and would always greet you with "hello", eye contact and his smile.

Adam is greatly missed by all, people and animals alike.

(Addition by Matt Akel, SD AAZK VP): At the suggestion of animal care staff, the Ituri Forest and TRT team at the zoo has chosen to name the hippo calf in honor of our former friend and coworker, Adam. The hippo's name, "Adhama," means "honor" or "glory" in Swahili.

During this time of sorrow, we wish to honor Adam for being a wonderful, selfless person who gave everything for his family, friends, and animals.

7th International Penguin Conference (IPC)

By Linda Henry, SeaWorld San Diego, SD AAZK Board Member

Last August, Lauren DuBois (SeaWorld San Diego) and I had the privilege of attending the 7th IPC to present the keynote paper for the section on Captive and Medicine. Our presentation, "*Creating connections between penguins and the public: the role of zoos and aquaria in facilitating research and communicating results*" discussed the unique role zoos and aquariums play in advancing conservation messages through a variety of programs such as close contact experiences, tours and sponsored organizations. Other papers presented in this section echoed these concepts. It was a tremendous opportunity for so many zoological facilities to be selected to give presentations.

SeaWorld aviculturists have attended many of the last six penguin conferences that have been held every 3-4 years since 1988. In the early days, zoo and aquarium professionals were not well-represented at the IPC because the conference was primarily intended for penguin biologists to meet and share their ongoing research. In recent years, more zoo and aquarium professionals have attended and institutions are helping to sponsor programs (such as the workshop following IPC 5 in Ushuaia, Argentina, that updated the 1998 Conservation Assessment and Management Plan and reviewed the 2004 IUCN Red List for penguins). In turn, many penguin field biologists are recognizing the important role zoos and aquariums fulfill in the overall effort to conserve species.

As a result, the 7th IPC marked the first time the conference was held in the northern hemisphere and at a zoological facility. Heather Urquhart (New England Aquarium), the Chair of the International Steering Committee for the IPC, should be credited for making this happen. As well, the aid provided by many zoos and aquariums during the Treasure Oil Spill in 2000 to rescue African penguins has built many bridges between field biologists and captive specialists. Therefore, the New England Aquarium successfully competed to host the 7th IPC which was attended by more than 180 scientists, government officials, conservation advocates and zoo and aquarium professionals from 22 nations. Over the course of the five day conference, 72 oral presentations spanned five themes (breeding behavior, captive and medical, foraging, conservation and ecology, and global change) and there were more than 50 posters.

The conference also marked the debut of the resurrected **Penguin Conservation Newsletter (PCN)**. Originally edited by Cynthia Cheney (Oregon Zoo) the newsletter ended its publication in 2000. The Penguin Taxon Advisory Group (PTAG) now supports and publishes **PCN** as an electronic newsletter and by link on the PTAG website (www.zoopenguins.org). Jessica Jozwiak (Detroit Zoo) and I now edit the publication which is published biannually in February and August. The goal of the newsletter is to facilitate communication between field biologists and zoological institutions to improve conservation messaging and build support for preserving penguins around the world.

And penguins need preserving. The conference had many sobering messages about the conservation status of penguins. During an afternoon whirlwind meeting entitled *Penguin status in troubled oceans*, researchers presented updates on their study species. Of the 18 species of penguins, 13 are considered endangered or threatened. Four key threats were consistent among all penguin species: global climate change, introduced mammalian predators, pollution (oil) and fisheries mismanagement (overfishing, by-catch). All species, even those considered at low risk,

are believed to be in decline. The most significant statements related to the Galapagos penguin which was given a 35% probability of extinction in the next century and the erect-crested penguin which has experienced a 70% reduction in population over 20 years. Many species are at their lowest recorded populations, among them African penguins which were upgraded to endangered status last February.

As a person who works directly with penguins and the public, these statistics were hard to hear and strengthened my resolve to work harder for penguin conservation. Penguins at SeaWorld, as well as others in North America, are charismatic ambassadors for their species and help to convey affective and effective conservation messages for their species and the broader marine environment. The week that I spent in Boston reinforced my commitment to conservation and my support for all the people working on the behalf of penguins worldwide.

Abstracts from the conference can be accessed by going to www.penguinconference.org and downloading the complete abstract book.

AZCARM – Association of Zoos & Aquariums of Mexico

By Yvette Kemp, San Diego Zoo, SD AAZK President

November 23-27, 2010, marked the 27th conference for AZCARM, but the first conference I have ever attended in Mexico. I can honestly say, it will not be my last! Hosted by the Morelia Zoo, Zoologico Benito Juarez, in the state of Morelia, I was excited about the conference since my friend Josue Rangel Diaz was now working as the zoo's assistant director. Titled "*Trabajando juntos para conservar la biodiversidad*" (Working together to conserve biodiversity) it made me think about how throughout the world, there truly are keepers, biologists, aquarist, aviculturist, and many more who are working with the exact same goal in mind.



Paper presentations included topics such as "*Genetic Variation in Captive Jaguars*," "*Human-Avian Interactions in Zoos*," "*Participation in National Conservation Projects*," and more. There were also workshops (wildlife photography, salt and fresh water aquariums, educational games for Conservation Programs, etc), and poster presentations, zoo day, and trips to local parks and surrounding area. But to me, one of the best parts of attending any conference is talking one-on-one with the people there. That is when you really get a lot of the information you will be able to take back to your institution and share with your colleagues. This conference was no different.

To me, sometimes the hardest part of our profession is realizing that the way I do something is not necessarily the only (or for that matter the best) way to do it. We tend to get caught up in "our way." So speaking with colleagues is an opportunity to share information in both directions. For 4 days we shared tips of the trade.

There were several other exciting things about this conference but I would have to say that the one that was exciting for everyone had to do with accreditation. In the U.S., AZA institutions

have set standards for animal care management and it is the goal of many north American institutions to become a part of AZA. Why? Because an AZA label ensures other institutions and the public that they are involved with an organization “committed to wildlife conservation, education, science, animal care, and education.” They have an accreditation process that covers everything from the living environment, to social groupings, to vet program, safety policies, and much more. There are a few Mexican Zoos that belong to AZA and they have been pushing to bring standardization to zoos in Mexico. Well, their wish was granted. This conference highlighted the beginning of a standardization process for Mexican zoos for all to follow and strive for. Three zoos received their accreditation by AZCARM and they have started the process for accreditation for all zoos in the association. The zoos that are now accredited are Zoologico Benito Juarez of Morelia, Africam Safari from Puebla, and Parque Loro also from Puebla.



The conference was a great experience and an opportunity to reconnect with Mexican keepers and staff I had not seen in a long time, meet new professionals in the field, and learn how zoo and conservation professionals are working down south. Like with most conferences, I was able to meet new people, make new friends and connections, and learn from other animal care professionals.

I look forward to the next AZCARM conference. But until then, you can be sure I'll be visiting my colleagues at their institutions. And I know, they will be doing the same.

Annual Safari Photo Caravan

By Christine Fenwick, Safari Park, SD AAZK Board Member



The annual AAZK photo caravan took place on December 5, 2010. We had 2 full caravans of AAZK members, friends, and family. The weather was great and, as usual, the animals were spectacular. We traveled through the east Africa and Asia exhibits to get up close and personal with the wildlife at the Safari Park.

The highlight of the evening was getting our pictures with the giraffes, as each person held their leaves in anticipation of the giraffe reaching for them with its long tongue and whiskery lips. Next we were given the chance

to feed some apples to the Indian rhinos and the opportunity to feel their amazing horns. There was an interesting road block of gaur, which stopped our adventure for about ten minutes, but gave us the ability to observe these interesting animals up close and personal. Our guides on the adventure were full of interesting facts and information to share, making the experience very fun and enjoyable for everyone.

As the sun set on the savannas of the Safari Park, we all gazed at the brilliant colors in the sky and were reminded of how truly thankful we are for the unique opportunities afforded us by our careers as zoo keepers and our involvement in an amazing organization like AAZK. The annual photo caravan is an affordable opportunity that allows us the ability to share unforgettable experiences with our friends and families.

Bi-Annual Swap Meet Fundraiser

By Laurie Brogan, SD Zoo, SD AAZK Board Member

I began helping with the swap meet fundraisers before I joined the board, which I think is like 6 or 7 years now. Never has any one fundraiser been like the one before! I mean, a lot is the same....get there early (before 6:00 am), unload the truck, get the tables, open box after box after box, set the items out, try to keep the other vendors out, then start selling.

What makes each swap meet different is, YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT IS IN THE BOXES! This past swap meet on November 13th was no exception. We are very lucky to have the zoo's RB warehouse donate items that came from the many different stores in both the zoo and at the WAP. Many of the items are over-stocked items, or have been chipped or broken, or are missing a part. Sometimes you get stuff that you think you will never be able to sell. The rest of the items come from the many generous folks that clean out their garages or closets or attics and basements. With their help and the zoo's donations, SD AAZK is able to raise funds for all that we do. And with the 2011 National AAZK Conference just around the corner, we need ALL the help we can get.

I invite all of you to help with any of the future fundraisers that we have coming up. Please check out our local website at: <http://sdaazk.com>.

If you have any ideas on fundraising ideas....PLEASE contact any board member. And if you are wondering just how much we made, the total came out to \$672.22. Thank you everyone who donated, helped and supports AAZK. Without you, we just wouldn't be able to do it!

The Riviera Supper Club Fundraiser

A Good Time Was Had By All

By Crystal Schalmo and Lindsey King, SD Zoo, SD AAZK Board & Members and AAZK

Fundraising for our conference this past year has been a lot of work but on November 5th we had a good time doing it.

Our "Keep A Keeper" event at The Riviera Supper Club was a rocking good time. In addition to a very successful series of opportunity drawings, we had the privilege of hearing Dr. Pat Morris' band, The 3rd. The turnout was amazing and we even inspired some people to dance the night away.

Staff at the Riviera said that it was the busiest Friday night they have had in a while and the most successful fundraiser there in 2010. The food and drinks were excellent and the Riviera generously donated 10% of all the purchases from our supporters toward the conference. We raised \$1,068 dollars that night and couldn't have done it without everyone's support!

There are pictures on our website if you missed the party. Be sure to keep your eyes open for our next great fundraiser, Dinner With A Keeper on March 25th at the Sheraton Marina Hotel. Together we can make the 2011 AAZK Conference an awesome experience for everyone!

Thanks again to everyone who participated!

Wine Steals – Donating to the Animal Shelter

By Kym Nelson, Safari Park, SD AAZK Board Member

SD AAZK Holiday Celebration

Friends of SD AAZK gathered together December 16th for a holiday social at Wine Steals Urban. The evening was filled with great food, excellent wine and amazing conversations! The Wine Steals' staff were superb as always, making sure our glasses stayed full and the food table remained packed right through the end of the night with meat and cheese trays and a variety of pizzas. In fact there was more food than we could eat!



Approximately 50 people came through the party room between 3pm and 7pm and several stayed the whole 4 hours! In addition to a great opportunity for us to unleash outside of the zoo, SD AAZK helped make the holidays a little bit brighter for the animals at the San Diego County Central Shelter. The donations piled up through

the evening with our friends and supporters digging deep and donating everything from toys and food to beds and baskets! At the end of the night I managed to bring everything home and much to the disappointment of my dog and 2 cats who wanted desperately to play with it all, I delivered it safely to the shelter Saturday morning.

A special thanks goes out to Ken Mills and Jason Dean from Wine Steals for their generous donation of all the scrumptious food and party room for the evening!

Let's Make A Deal Fundraiser

By Kymberlee Nelson, Safari Park, SD AAZK Fundraiser

Anyone who knows me will tell you I am a game show junkie. I love them all, from the long running shows like Wheel of Fortune to the lesser known game show network classics like Lingo. Surprisingly though, I have never been a contestant. Well, I tried once for Wheel of Fortune (which I am sure one day will make me rich) but they choose auditions by a draw of names and while I can solve puzzles with only three letters showing, I am not lucky when it comes to a draw. I had tickets once for Price is Right but I was on a sorority trip to California from Vancouver and let's just say that no one in my group was getting out of bed before the sun came up!

So imagine my delight when I received information that said not only could I have the chance to be a contestant on Let's Make A Deal, but that if I brought a group of 10 or more people the show would make a donation to SD AAZK! Planning began immediately and I was ready for our big game show debut.

Saturday January 15th was the big day and I was, to put it mildly, EXTREMELY EXCITED! We had 14 people in our group from Sea World, the Zoo, the Park and friends from the non-animal world who just wanted to have a great time. The majority of us met at the zoo as if it were a normal work day, so much for a day off. Most of us were up before our usual alarm times. We packed ourselves and our costumes into the vehicles and off we went, heading north to Hollywood.

The drive up took just over two hours and then the fun began. Getting changed into our costumes on the street was quite the challenge for some of us but I must say we looked great! There were several disco dancers and hippies, a pirate, a Viking, a witch, a dirt-bike rider, a 30's girl, a Dalmatian, a fisherman, Clifford the Big Red Dog (who all the producers somehow mistook for Scooby, come on people you work in television!), a nose (complete with a nose ring and a sign that read "pick me, pick me"), and myself a Runaway bride. We looked awesome!

The line was long but the time past with lots of paperwork and a short interview. Lunch and a bathroom break followed and then it was into the studio we went! 250 would be contestants in some of the craziest costumes ever seen filed in and were directed to their seats. It took just over an hour to film the show and the energy of the crowd did not wane at all. By the end everyone was hoarse and our hands were tired. 16 lucky contestants were chosen but you will have to watch the show to see how we did (we will announce the airdate as soon as we know). I can tell you that SD AAZK came out a winner with a donation of \$420 expected to arrive soon!

Thanks to everyone who came out, I know I had a blast and am sure the feeling is unanimous. Keep your eyes peeled for more opportunities like this, now that I have had a taste of the game show world I know I will be back for more!

Birch Aquarium Presents A Day In The Life of An Aquarist

By Matt Akel, San Diego Zoo, SD AAZK Vice-President

On January 18, 2011, our AAZK chapter was fortunate enough to hear a talk about a day in the life of an aquarist. We had a behind the scenes look at a routine day for an aquarist such as cleaning, filtration, feeding, disease diagnosis and treatment, animal collecting, and more.

Fernando Nosratpour is currently the acting Aquarium Curator at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps in La Jolla, California. He graduated from San Diego State University with a bachelor of science in biology. Fernando's start in the aquarium hobby began at the age of 11. His professional career, as an aquarist, began at the old Scripps Aquarium then continued at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. For the past 18 years he has been at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps.

Fernando was the first to successfully breed and raise the white-bonnet anemonefish (*Amphiprion leucokranos*) in 1997. In addition to supervising a staff of nine aquarists, he cares for two living coral reef tanks, 250 and 1200 gallons. Fernando's main interest is in the timing of captive coral spawns and the possibility propagating corals from these spawns.

The Birch Aquarium at Scripps is the public exploration center for Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego. Their mission is to provide ocean science education, interpret SIO research, and promote ocean conservation.

Fernando explained how the aquarium acquires its seawater by pumping it at 70 gallons per minute from the end of a 1,000 ft pier. The water is pumped up to a storage tank then gravity fed to the aquarium then filtered out. In case of emergencies, the aquarium has 130 reserve tanks of water. The raw seawater is filtered and heated for use in tropical tanks while it is chilled for use in local or pacific northwest tanks.

The Birch Aquarium also contains closed systems, which incorporate no natural seawater. These are more involved life support systems due to increased requirements for salinity and temperature control, and much more.

We learned about the daily requirements of an aquarist. In the morning, all animals are assessed for health abnormalities, and then life support and air and water flow systems are checked. Cleaning tanks is a difficult job due to the extensive nature of protecting coral from algae growth. Volunteers help with SCUBA cleaning and undergo strict requirements and tests to be allowed to do so. Fernando explained how food can be used to target feed animals such as black-tip reef sharks and how consumption is monitored for individuals.

The Birch Aquarium does collect specimens by a few methods and in various places. Locally, Port Orchard, WA; Gulf of California; tide pooling; fishing; wholesaler purchases; trades w/public aquariums; USF&W confiscations; fisherman donations; and hobbyist donations. Depending on where the specimens come from, they enter a quarantine phase and may require acclimation to salinity and temperature changes.

As for propagation efforts, Fernando explained that they have raised 10 species of seahorses and sent over 2,000 to zoos and aquariums. They have also raised hundreds of moon jellies, sent “moons” to aquariums all around the country as well as to researchers, and pursued artificial fertilization of the black sea nettle. Additionally, the Birch Aquarium has been successful propagating coral, sharks, anemone fish, and much more.

When a specimen is in need of a disease diagnosis and treatment, an aquarist must follow a certain procedure. They will first observe any abnormalities, consult with their veterinarians, and then follow a treatment protocol. Treatments can be in the form of a bath, medicating food, injection, or a topical method.

Fernando also explained what types of collaboration the Birch Aquarium does with other institutions. They will participate in testing new technology, providing coral samples for research, ocean acidification research, and more. As for fun activities, their staff is involved with VIP tours, conferences, and animal interactions. Building new exhibits is also exciting when staff is involved in planning and executing these projects.

The Birch Aquarium at Scripps has been open for over 18 years and during this time, the aquarists at Birch have made great contributions when it comes to the husbandry of seahorses, jellies and corals.

We would like to thank Fernando for taking the time to share an exciting talk about the day in the life of an aquarist.

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CALENDAR 2011 visit www.sdaazk.org for updates

- **February 24, 2011. "SeaWorld Aviculturist Linda Henry."** Location: Zoo's Rondavel Room . Time: 2:30 social, 3:00 pm presentation. Go to www.sdaazk.com for more information and to see the flyer.
- **March 2-4, 2011: Association of Professional Wildlife Educators.** Hosted by The Frank Buck Zoo in Gainesville, TX. For information go to www.apwe.org
- **Friday, March 25, 2011: "Dinner With A Keeper" Fundraiser.** Time: 6:00 pm – 9:30 pm. Location: Sheraton Marina Hotel. This event will include dinner, special guest speaker Joan Embery, entertainment, drawings, and the opportunity to get to know animal care professionals while participating in a worthwhile cause. **Visit the website for details!**
- **Thursday, April 14 2011: CA Wolf Center with Erin Hunt, general manager.** Time: 2:30 social, 3:00 presentation. Location: San Diego Zoo's Rondavel. Open to all.
- **April 2011: Swap meet.** Date & Time TBD.
- **Saturday, May 21, 2011: Bowling for Beasts.** Details coming soon.
- **Tuesday, June 21, 2011: AAZK Dunk Tank Fundraiser.** Location: Zoo's Camp Timbuktu. Time: 10:00 – 3:30 pm. Details to follow.
- **Monday, June 27, 2011: Golf For Conservation.** Location: Stoneridge Country Club, 17166 Stoneridge Country Club Lane, Poway, CA 92064. Time: 9:00 am registration, 11:00 shotgun start, 4:00 pm cocktails & hors d'oeuvres, 4:30 silent auction. Fee: \$175 pp, corporate sponsoring stars at \$1000-\$7500. Details: Come out and join members of the San Diego corporate community for this 4 person modified scramble with a shotgun start featuring a Hole-In-One, Longest Drive, and Closest to the Pin contests.
- **July 17-24, 2011: National Zoo Keeper Week!** Details of events for the week to follow soon.
- **2011 National AAZK Conference hosted by SD AAZK.** August 24-28, at the Westin Gaslamp Hotel.
- **October 6-9, 2011: Advancing Bear Care Conference** in Banff, Canada. Hikes into bear habitat for interpretation and workshop. Information at: <http://sdaazk.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/BearConference-2011.pdf>