



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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Content: PG

President’s Message	1
SeaWorld Encounter	2
Dinner With A Keeper	5
CA Wolf Center	6
Bowling for Beasts	7
Let’s Make A Deal	7
Events	8

The Keeper

The American Association of Zoo Keepers
San Diego Chapter
Quarterly Newsletter – Summer 2011

President’s Message

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President



Only 3 more months until the 2011 National AAZK Conference in San Diego!

We are very excited and nervous as the time gets closer. But things are falling into place... pre and post conference trips are organized, workshops and registration pages are up and running, zoo day and the park icebreaker details are being worked out, and the hotel set-up is being planned. Now it’s mainly the every day details we need to concentrate on. And there are plenty of those. There are various committee members working on the conference, each with their duties and check off list, everyone meeting their deadlines.

But it hasn’t all just been about the conference, even though that has taken up a large portion of our time. We are still working on the other activities and events SD AAZK is involved in.

We’ve had several presentations with guest speakers from local facilities that are participating in the conference. There are also the upcoming events like Bowling for Beasts and National Zoo Keeper Week that we have every year. And in June we have the fun Dunk Tank fundraiser at the zoo. So there are several ways everyone is involved with SD AAZK and, indirectly, with the conference.

But we are always looking for people who would like to become directly involved with helping with the National Conference. We invite you to attend our board meetings, twice a month and listed on our events page on our website www.sdaazk.org.

If working on the conference isn’t how you’d like to become involved, helping with the various events is a great way to join us.

So come join us, no matter how you do it, it is always a fun experience!

SeaWorld, Penguins, and Linda Henry

By Laurie Brogan, San Diego Zoo Sr. Bird Keeper

In many ways, I count myself lucky. I have been in the animal care business for over 20 years, worked at small and big facilities, and have worked with many different species of birds and even some mammals like grizzly bears, snow leopards, and even North American Beavers.

The best thing that ever happened to me way back in 1986 was to start my zoo keeping profession at SeaWorld in San Diego. There I met my 1st boss and boy was she tough! But did I ever learn! Well on February 24th 2011, it was my pleasure to once again hear her speak. Who was you ask? No one other than Linda Henry, Supervisor of Birds, at the Penguin Encounter.

First let me give you a little back history on this very interesting woman. She graduated from Humboldt State University with a B.A. in Zoology. She started at SeaWorld as a volunteer in 1983 then was hired by SeaWorld the following year and spent the next 4 years hand-raising penguins, documenting hand-rearing techniques and crunching growth rate data for Frank Todd, past Curator of Birds. She also spent many years working with SeaWorld's extensive waterfowl collection, lesser and Caribbean Flamingos, and parrot species. Currently she is a co-editor of the Penguin Conservation Newsletter, trains members of the Oiled Wildlife Care Network of California, and co-consults on photoperiod and lighting for high latitude penguin exhibits. And she is also on the board for the San Diego Chapter of the American Association of Zookeepers.

So you can imagine the many, many different subjects that Linda can speak on and cover. This day, she spoke about the "*Life Cycles of the Different Penguin Species in the Penguin Encounter at SeaWorld.*" The penguins have followed the same breeding time-tables as their wild counterparts every year since the Penguin Encounter opened in 1983. The penguin keepers also follow the same annual rituals' as they get the birds and the exhibit ready for breeding.

First, here is a brief 101 on Penguins. There are 18 species of penguins and 60% are listed anywhere from vulnerable to endangered. Penguins have 70-100 feathers per square inch covering their body. One of the many challenges of penguins is getting their light-cycle correct. If it is even slightly off, the penguins will not molt nor will it breed successfully.

Linda has been fore-most in this field, collecting data and implementing the light-cycle within the penguin encounter. SeaWorld works with internal and external researchers who come to the encounter to study and collect data on the penguins, especially the emperors. After all, it is easier to monitor emperors in the encounter than in Antarctica!

Breeding season begins in September, for all but the emperor penguins. The keepers begin to clean and process the rocks that the penguins will use to build their nest. These days, I hate to say it, but the keepers now have it easier than when I was there. Now the rocks are kept in the exhibit, so they are cleaned and put out from there. When I was there way back when, the rocks were kept outside, we had to clean them and haul them all back up those stairs, back into the encounter. Once the birds' had their rocks, they quickly begin to make their nest sites. But it is not as easy as it sounds, some birds will do all the work themselves, others just steal them! But eventually everyone settles down to the task at hand.

The keepers, in the meantime, are working none stop. They are feeding out around 500-1000 lbs of fish a day. This time of year the birds have a large appetite, only to increase when the babies come. There is also work that needs to be done in the encounter even with the birds breeding. There is blowing snow every day, this covers the hard substrate and protects penguins feet. Keepers also have to melt down the snowy build-up in half the encounter or else the snow would fill the encounter. Then there is cleaning the main viewing windows so the public can see the birds. This, too, is not as easy as it sounds as the birds like to knock you off the small ledge that you have to balance on! I'm sorry to keep harping on this but... when I was working there, we had to contend with the giant petrels as well. They not only could knock you off the ledge, but they would steal all of your tools and not give them back. It did make for some funny videos for the guests. I even remember coming out of the water with a hole bitten into in my wet suit once!

Fish is thawed out overnight and sorted out by size. It is not only the penguins that eat fish, but also all of the alcids that live next door. Once sorted, some fish will be used to administer the daily vitamins that all of the birds get. Keepers manually haul bucket after bucket after bucket of fish up into the penguin encounter. There is a small room behind the large rock-work that acts as a work space and is well out of the public view. Not all of the fish is fed out right away, there are many hand-feeding sessions as well as black tubs that are hidden with fish for the birds to eat from. As with all keepers, feeding time is a great time to be able to get a good up-close and personal view of your charges. Keepers are checking the general health of all the birds, their activity level, molt patterns, water conditioning, looking for swollen feet, and making sure their bands are still on. Every bird has its' own colored band located on their flipper. The color corresponds to a number which allows a keeper to quickly identify the penguin. At first they do all kind of look alike, but as you work with the birds, keepers can visually recognize one from another.

Once the breeding season starts, the work load for keepers increases. Behind the scenes, they have what they call the "War-board." This board has a layout of the interior of the encounter marking each and every nesting penguin. It also lists their ID numbers, the number of eggs they have, if they have a real egg or if it was replaced with a dummy egg, if a pair is fostering another pairs egg, hatch dates, deaths, if a chick was pulled, and more. Every year's information is saved and the information is recorded and tracked. This is a living history of the breeding that has gone on in the encounter ever since it opened!

If a penguin egg is pulled, it will go into the artificial incubator to be hand-raised by the keepers. Most birds do get to raise their own chicks, but sometimes, eggs have to be pulled. This decision may be based on a curator decision, the pair has a poor history of chick raising, or one of the pair was sick and taken to hospital or died. Once the breeding season is over, the rocks are all and piled back up, only to wait until next year when it will start all over again.

There is one species of penguin that lives at SeaWorld that does not get to raise their own chicks and that is the Emperor Penguin. The emperors are too rare and there are too few of them to let them parent-raise at this time. Plus, their instinct to brood and incubate is so strong that they will try and steal an egg from another pair. Fighting in the wild has lead to broken eggs and has killed chicks. This year was one of the first in about 15 years that there was a fertile emperor egg! It hatched and was successfully raised by the keepers. Every day, they make a special fish gruel that is fed to the chick. As the chick grows, the formula for the gruel will change to meet the chicks growing needs. This is the species of penguin that comes from the Antarctic, so it really really loves the cold. It doesn't take long before the chick must be moved to a "refrigerated"

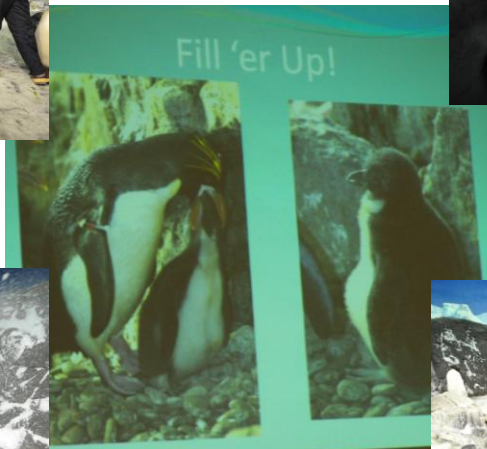
room were the thermostat can be carefully controlled to suit the growing chick. Eventually the chick will be taken for “outings.” The keepers do create a fenced off area in the encounter, but once those adults hear and see that chick, all they want to do is get near it. Again, these birds have a very strong brooding instinct which just kicks into high gear. If a keeper wasn’t with the chick they would all just mob it and risk injuring or killing it. For some time the chick will spend time in the encounter, then go back to its’ private room overnight. Gradually the chick will spend more and more time in a corralled area getting use to its surroundings. Then it will start to spend the night in the back area of the encounter, until it is old enough and large enough to fledge into the group.

Wow! Until I started to write this article, I had forgotten how much these keepers do! And this is just a tiny tip of the iceberg, so my apologies for missing and leaving out more of the details.

As I have continued my bird keeping career, I have many guests at the Zoo ask me “what is your favorite bird species?” I can honestly say, my answer has always been the same, “between the Zoo and Park, the bird collection is one of the largest collections in North America, but I have to say, the species that I miss working with the most are the PENGUINS!”

Oh and I did learn a little “something no one knows about Linda fact.” When she was younger, her parents wanted to move out of the San Diego city so moved to Cuyamaca. The home she lived in had no phone and no electricity! Can you imagine, I don’t think too many kids would do that now-a-days.

I cannot thank Linda Henry enough for her wonderful talk and that I was able to work with her and learn so much from her all those years ago. And I almost forgot! Not only did I work with Linda at SeaWorld, but so did my current boss, Joop Kuhn. Boy, when they say life comes full-circle, they are not kidding!



The Keeper - Summer 2011

Dinner With A Keeper Fundraiser

By Yvette Kemp, San Diego Zoo Hospital Keeper, SD AAZK Board Member

On March 25th SD AAZK held a dinner fundraiser featuring special guest speaker and local conservation advocate, Joan Embery, at the Sheraton Marina Hotel. Animal care professionals from the Zoo, Safari Park, SeaWorld, and CA Wolf Center participated in an event where guests were able to learn what animal professionals do and what projects they have been involved in for many years.

The Sheraton provided an intimate setting for guests and professionals to learn more about each other and how these jobs have changed throughout the years. Joan shared pictures as she related stories of her career and the changes that have happened in the animal care profession. We all remember seeing her on various TV segments such as The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, what we did not see and what Joan shared with us were the moments leading up to her now famous career and how she was able to break into a profession that was predominantly men.

Today, a large portion of the animal care workforce is women and the job itself has completely changed. It is no longer a rough and tumble “cowboy” type of job, but one that deals with husbandry management, nutrition, training, enrichment and conservation. Animals in captivity are viewed and treated completely different than they were even 10 years ago! Animals in zoos are no longer things to entertain us, but rather representatives of species that need our help through conservation programs.

Joan has become known as an advocate and spokesperson for wildlife. She founded The Embery Institute in her effort to bring awareness to local and international wildlife issues, championing the need for their preservation and habitat. It is because of Joan’s experience as a keeper and as animal advocate that we not only thought of her as the perfect person to share information about how the “keeper” career has changed throughout the years, but it also why we are honored to have her as one of our keynote speakers during the National AAZK conference we are hosting in August.

Besides Joan’s great presentation that evening, there was music, animals from the Zoo’s Children Zoo, a silent auction, and guests getting to know the people from each facility. It was an eye opening experience as to what is involved in animal careers.

San Diego AAZK would like to thank Joan for her dedication to wildlife and the support she has given AAZK throughout the years. She is not only an advocate for the animals, but for the people who are involved in their care. Her generosity and her determination is always an inspiration.

Thank you to everyone who made the evening possible: The Sheraton Hotel’s Director of Catering Stacey Levasseur, who was very helpful in planning the event; Lorenzo and Bello who volunteered their musical talent (again); Daniel Lovci who not only volunteered to be the evening photographer but also volunteers at the CA Wolf Center; the Zoo volunteers who helped set up and basically made sure the evening smoothly; and all the representatives from SeaWorld, CWC, Safari Park and the Zoo who shared their time and stories with the guests. And thank you to our guests, who by joining us that evening showed their support to SD AAZK and the various projects we are involved in. Thank you to everyone and we hope to see you again soon at another SD AAZK event! Look for pictures from the evening on our website soon.

CA Wolf Center Presentation

By Tina Hunter, Safari Park, SD AAZK Board Member

We were fortunate to have two of The California Wolf Center (CWC) employees give a presentation for SD AAZK members recently. Erin Hunt, mainly organizes educational programs, but also does whatever is needed and Chelsea Davis is an animal caretaker and conservation associate for the facility.

Nestled in the hills just outside of Julian, California, the CWC was founded in 1977 and started with pack of Alaskan wolves. It has since expanded to 6 packs of both Alaskan and Mexican wolves. The CWC is a non-profit education center that is committed to increasing awareness and understanding of all wildlife through education, conservation and research of one of nature's keystone species, the grey wolf.

Because of their focus on introduction, the people at CWC are as hands-off as possible. The animals are handled only one time a year (or as needed) for routine exams. The facility does transfer and acquire animals for breeding and in 1997, the CWC became the major player in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for the Mexican grey wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) and has since been instrumental to the recovery and reintroduction of this species back into the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Zone of New Mexico.

Because the release sites are far from...well, anywhere, the wolves' crates are transported on the back of mules. They are completely awake and placed in crates backwards. Researchers have found that this makes it easier upon release with "the business end facing away from them".

There are three different types of releases that are used for wildlife into these areas. A hard release, which is when the crate is opened and the animal is let free, and a modified soft release. The modified soft release is when the wolves are put in a thin, mesh pen where they can chew through and eventually leave on their own, but this method has been used less often with wolves. The release technique used most commonly with wolves is the soft release, where a pen is built and the animals can get used to smells, sounds, weather, etc, before they are let go. After the wolves have left the relative safety of the enclosure, the Department of Fish and Game (or other local wildlife authorities) are responsible for monitoring the animals to assure that the wolves stay off ranches.



Back at the CWC, many people are responsible for routine maintenance of the very spread-out location with daily feedings, cleaning, fence fixing and numerous other repairs. Fairly regular educational tours (at the center or through their outreach program) and fundraisers throughout year also require many volunteers, of which the regular employees are very appreciative.

For more information about the California Wolf Center or any of their programs, please visit their website at www.californiawolfcenter.org.

Bowling for Beasts! Join Us May 21st

Usually called “Bowling for Rhinos,” San Diego American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) has decided to change the name of our annual bowling event. Fifty percent of proceeds (or more) will always go to the Bowling for Rhinos fund, but by calling it “Bowling for Beasts” we can also contribute to other organizations we support like Red Panda Project, Wolf Conservation, Grevy’s Zebra Project, and more.

Bowling for Rhinos (BFR) has donated over \$3.7 million to rhinoceros conservation since 1990. San Diego has donated \$155,213 to this amazing conservation cause, making us one of the top supporting AAZK chapters. Over the 21 years that San Diego AAZK has been a part of BFR, we’ve averaged \$7,391 per year, so let’s not make this year any different!

BFR funds support Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) in Kenya; Ujung Kulon National Park in Java, Indonesia; and Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park (BBSNP) and Way Kambas in Sumatra. These sanctuaries not only save rhinos but also their entire ecosystems.

This year’s fundraiser also supports advancements in animal care through the 2011 AAZK National Conference that will be hosted by the San Diego AAZK chapter, August 24-28.

Bowling for Beasts is Saturday, May 21, 2011 6 to 9 p.m. with check-in at 5:15 p.m. at Kearny Mesa Bowl, 7585 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard San Diego, CA 92111. Cost is \$50 entry per team of 5 bowlers (*includes shoe rental*) Minimum \$30 donation raised per bowler. *Tax receipts are available.*

Contact Kym Janke at kymjanke@hotmail.com for more details or forms.

Let’s Make A Deal Fundraiser Update

You may remember that SD AAZK members and friends were able to participate in the tv game show “Let’s Make A Deal” on Saturday, January 15th.

If you’d like to view that episode, it will air on May 5th. Because of participating on the show that day, SD AAZK raised \$440! Kymberlee Janke is our SD AAZK game show junkie and I am sure there will a call out for another game show opportunity at some point.

Thanks to everyone who came out, we had a blast! Keep your eyes peeled for more opportunities like this.

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CALENDAR 2011 visit www.sdaazk.org for updates

- **Wednesday, May 11, 2011: SD AAZK Board Meeting.** Location: Zoo's Warner Board Room. Time: 4:00 – 6:00 pm. Open to all.
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- **Saturday, May 21, 2011: Bowling for Beasts.** Kearney Mesa Bowl, 7585 Clairemont Mesa Blvd., SD 92111. Help us raise money for rhino habitat conservation and education by putting together a 5 person bowling team together and getting your friends to sponsor you! Drawings, games, prizes and much more! Open to all ages. **You must reserve a spot** to participate! Registration begins at 5:15 pm, bowling from 6:00 – 9:00 pm. **Visit our website for detailed information and forms.**
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- **Tuesday, June 21, 2011: AAZK Dunk Tank Fundraiser.** Location: Zoo's Camp Timbuktu. Time: 10:00 – 3:30 pm. Details to follow.
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- **Monday, June 27, 2011: Golf Fore 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 starts 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. **Email Aimee Goldcamp for details and information at aimeegoldcamp@yahoo.com.**
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- **July 17-24, 2011: National Zoo Keeper Week!** Details of events for the week to follow soon.
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- **Tuesday, July 26, 2011: PetCo Park Honors NZKW:** 7:00 pm game, SD Padres vs PHX Diamondbacks. Animal care professionals from various facilities will be out on the field with some of their animal friends, throwing the first pitch and singing the national anthem! Come support your favorite animal care professional!
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- **2011 National AAZK Conference hosted by SD AAZK.** August 24-28, at the Westin Gaslamp Hotel.
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- **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>