



*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.*

**San Diego AAZK Board Members**

*Yvette Kemp  
President*

*Matthew Akel  
Vice President*

*Aimee Goldcamp  
Treasurer*

*Laurie Brogan  
Secretary*

*Kymberlee Janke  
Chapter Fundraiser*

*Tina Hunter  
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- Linda Henry – SeaWorld*
- Christine Fenwick – Park*
- Lindsey King – SD Zoo*
- Hali O’Connor – SD Zoo*
- Maureen Duryee –SD Zoo*
- Holly Hummel – SD Zoo*

**BFR Coordinators**

- Kym Janke - Park*
- Aimee Goldcamp – SD Zoo*

**Content: PG**

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# The Keeper

## The American Association of Zoo Keepers San Diego Chapter Quarterly Newsletter – Spring 2012

### President’s Message – What’s In Store For 2012

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President

It’s a new year and our chapter is full of new ideas, projects, and soon, new board members.

Now that 2011 is over and the conference and everything related to it seems so long ago, we are looking at what needs to be done to fulfill our organization’s mission. With that in mind, we are reorganizing ourselves to better be able to accomplish these goals, so be ready to see many changes.

The first change is how we are planning the year. For 2012 we will be scheduling 4 major fundraisers, various outreach projects and lectures, and a few minor projects. The outreach projects involve more contact with the community and other conservation organizations in the area. The intention is to establish better communication between the groups and to give our members an opportunity to learn more about each of these groups. We also hope to provide people with various skills to assist our friends in any way possible.

The four major fundraising projects for the year are: February’s gathering at the Riviera Club for Bornean sun bears, June’s Bowling for Rhinos, the Project Wildlife fundraiser in August, and a golf fundraiser to benefit a San Diego Zoo Global project in November. We believe with these four fundraisers, SD AAZK will be able to provide assistance to local and international conservation issues.

Besides providing funding and helping with conservation projects, SD AAZK plans on being more involved in the community through educational opportunities. We are looking forward to offering presentations at local schools and for youth groups to encourage future animal care professionals. And as always, our goal to provide stimulating presentations for our members will continue as we plan various speakers throughout the year.

Then there’s National Zoo Keeper Week, July 15-21, which is always an excellent time to reach out to the numerous organizations and the

*(continued on page 2)*

## What's In Store For 2012 *continued...*

general public. We'll be sure to have special events for keepers and animal care staff. Keep an eye open for what will be going on during that special week.

We have also decided to increase the number of swap meet fundraisers during the year in order to raise more funding for SD AAZK member professional development. Be sure to read the article regarding SD AAZK benefactor Shirley Busch and grant opportunities.

And last but not least, this is an election year for San Diego AAZK. The present board members have been a part of SD AAZK for a few years and now it is time for them to step down (or move over) to give others the opportunity to lead this amazing group of dedicated people. All positions are available and because of our goals, we are offering new positions that we believe are more in tune with our present needs. Visit our website page at ([http://sdaazk.com/?page\\_id=1761](http://sdaazk.com/?page_id=1761)) to get all the details. You may just want to join us.

With that said, we would like to invite you to be a part of the San Diego AAZK board. For those of us who have been a part of SD AAZK's decision process, it has been a great learning experience that I don't think we can ever forget. Plus getting to know the people in other conservation and animal organizations in the area has been a pleasure and an honor. Everyone's dedication is always amazing.

As for me, I will always have to be involved with SD AAZK one way or another. Perhaps for 2012 it will be in another capacity but no matter what it is, I will continue to believe that a group of people with the same ideals and goals can accomplish so much more than anyone can imagine. The group of people I have been working with these past several years has more than showed me that anything is possible when you put your mind to it.

So I hope to see you throughout 2012, be it as a board member or an SD AAZK participant. I highly recommend becoming a board member though, but that's just me. As Vince Lombardi said, "*Individual commitment to a group effort, that's what makes a team work.*" That's what makes AAZK work!



# Call For Nominations to the Board of San Diego AAZK

By Kym Janke, Sr. Mammal Keeper, SDZ Safari Park

Have you thought about getting involved with San Diego AAZK chapter but just weren't sure how? Well now is your chance! With a very successful 2011 National Conference behind us the San Diego chapter is looking forward to getting back to the things that really make us proud to be members of AAZK: education, community involvement and support and world-wide conservation projects! If you are a member in good standing of AAZK (both National and Local) and want the chance to help guide the San Diego chapter towards its goals then we want you to apply to be a part of our board of directors! You must be willing to participate in one board meeting a month and accept all duties assigned to your position.

Please submit a short bio about yourself to [thekeepersdaazk@cox.net](mailto:thekeepersdaazk@cox.net) and indicate which position(s) you are interested in. The deadline for application is February 8<sup>th</sup> 2012 and voting will take place February 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>. Final results will be reviewed and discussed at the February 13<sup>th</sup> board meeting to be held at 4pm in the zoo's Warner building conference room.

**The San Diego Chapter of AAZK has 11 Board Member positions available for the 2012 board elections. All positions will have voting rights regarding SD AAZK affairs.**

Executive Officers are positions that are required by the National AAZK, Inc.

Subordinate Officers are positions that have been appointed by SD AAZK due to the its business needs.

The following are the San Diego AAZK Board of Directors Positions. We invite you to join now.

## **EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

### **1. President**

The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Chapter and shall, subject to the control of the Chapter Executive Officers, have general supervision, direction and control of the conduct and officers of the Chapter. The President shall preside at all meetings of the membership and at all meetings of the Chapter Executive Officers. The President shall be an ex officio member of all Chapter committees, if any, and shall have the general duties and powers as may be prescribed by the Chapter Executive Officers or these Bylaws.

The President will be responsible for review and official applications for permits, funding and any other written applications as necessary. The President will coordinate with the secretary, treasurer and assistant secretary for the annual chapter re-charter.

### **2. Vice President**

In the absence or disability of the President, the Vice-President shall perform all the duties of the President, and when so acting shall have the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the President. The Vice-President shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Chapter Executive Officers or these Bylaws.

As part of the VP responsibilities for the San Diego AAZK, the VP shall keep, or cause to be kept, a membership list, showing the names of the members and their addresses, and the number and

date of memberships issued; and the date of suspension, termination or resignation of every membership surrendered for cancellation. The SD AAZK VP will coordinate membership drives and propaganda.

### **3. Secretary**

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes at the principal offices or other such place as prescribed by the Chapter Executive, with the time and place of holding meetings, whether regular or special, members present or represented at such meetings, and the proceedings thereof. The Secretary shall have other powers and perform other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Chapter Executive or these Bylaws.

The Secretary will be responsible for the documentation of business transactions with outside parties and will work with the president on official applications for permits, funding, etc. The Secretary will review and maintain accurate by-laws and chapter records.

### **4. Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall deposit all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Chapter with such depositories as may be designated by the Chapter Executive Offices. The Treasurer shall disburse the funds of the Chapter as may be ordered by the Chapter Executive, shall render to the President and Chapter Officers, whenever they request it, an account of all the transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Chapter, and shall have such other powers and perform other duties as from time to time may be prescribed by the Chapter Executive or these Bylaws.

## **SUBORDINATE OFFICERS**

### **5. Liaison**

The prime responsibilities of this position shall be to report and provide information from the AAZK Organization to the local membership (projects, programs, national committees, etc) and to report by written submission on a regular basis to the Association regarding chapter and membership status, function and participation. (A full list of responsibilities can be found in the AAZK Operations Manual Page 203 and can be easily accessed through the member's only section of aazk.org).

The San Diego AAZK liaison officer is also responsible for the coordination and edition of the quarterly publication of SD AAZK's newsletter "*The Keeper*" and SD AAZK's webpage.

### **6. Fundraising Officer**

The Fundraising Officer shall oversee all grant requests that will generate income for the chapter or a charitable organization designated as a beneficiary.

The Fundraising Officer is responsible for the coordination of all donations, whether monetary or in-kind (raffle/auction). The fundraiser will keep a record of all charitable donations made by an outside party to the San Diego Chapter (whether monies are designated as chapter funds or will be donated to an outside source).

### **7. Event Coordinator**

The Event Coordinator will oversee all events for the chapter and, when necessary, coordinate specific Event Committees (whereby the chief organizer of an event may be someone other than

the Event Coordinator). In matters that require the board's approval it is the responsibility of the Event Coordinator to bring the matter to the board.

The Event Coordinator shall be responsible for the organization and execution of the annual Bowling for Rhinos event. This shall include all communications with National, communications with the hosting alley, promotional materials and team registrations and check-in.

The Event Coordinator will work closely with the Fundraising Officer during all events requiring funding, auctions, raffles, and/or donations.

#### **8. Professional Development Officer**

The Professional Development Officer shall develop and oversee all guidelines and requests made for SD AAZK funds to benefit individual members of AAZK in personal professional development opportunities. The Professional Development Officer shall be responsible for the development of any future programs benefiting AAZK members, students, or SDZG employees. This individual will outline the programs, terms and recommendations for benefit which will then be brought to the SD AAZK Board of Directors for a vote.

The Professional Development Officer will be responsible for coordinating guest speakers and presentations for the SD AAZK membership.

#### **9. Public Relations Officer**

The Public Relations Officer will be responsible for all press releases, media appearances and advertizing opportunities for SD AAZK.

The PR Officer shall be responsible for maintaining all media communications from SD AAZK. These media shall include but not be limited to SD AAZK Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, E-Bay.

#### **10. Conservation Partner Officer**

The Conservation Partner Officer shall be responsible for the research and communications with any outside conservation partners. The Conservation Partner Officer will be responsible for making recommendations on outside organizations with whom SD AAZK should partner in projects. The Conservation Officer shall work closely with the Event Coordinator and Public Relations Officer to ensure that both the mission of SD AAZK and the outside organization are correctly portrayed.

#### **11. Volunteer Coordinator**

The Volunteer Coordinator shall maintain a list of active volunteers for SD AAZK. These individuals may be SD AAZK members, AAZK members, or any outside individual willing to donate time at SD AAZK events. Information such as contact, strengths and availability will be maintained. The Volunteer Coordinator will act as a consistent liaison with the SDZG volunteer department.

We hope you join us!

# Remembering Shirley Busch and Her Gift

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President



On October 31, 2011, San Diego AAZK lost a long time member and supporter of keepers, Shirley Busch. Shirley was one of those people who cared deeply for the animals at the zoo and the people who took care of them. She could usually be seen visiting them when she wasn't busy working as a volunteer in the Zoo's library.

Shirley was also a generous person. She had supported the San Diego chapter of AAZK and its conservation projects for many years while being a lifetime member.

Even in her death, Shirley has demonstrated her commitment to AAZK and its members, while reinforcing her belief in animal care professionals. Thanks to her generosity, a new grant will be offered to SD AAZK members for continuing education in animal husbandry and related fields.

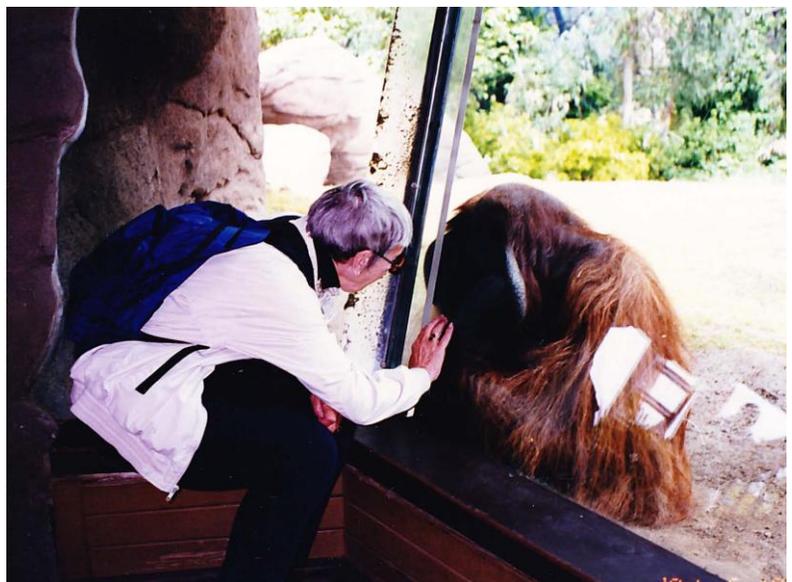
The new *Shirley Busch Professional Development Grant* will be available to SD AAZK members that are interested in attending conferences, educational programs, and/or conservation projects.

The Shirley Busch Development Grant will give applicants the ability to apply for up to \$1,000 in reimbursements to participate in programs that will increase a keeper's knowledge in this ever changing profession. A profession that is dedicated to conservation and the improvement of husbandry management, something Shirley was very aware of and embraced.

Also thanks to Shirley, SD AAZK will be able to continue offering our Continuing Education Scholarship Fund. The SD AAZK Continuing Education Scholarship Fund will give our members the opportunity to request funding for smaller projects.

All of this is possible because of the vision of one person. One person who believed in the people who cared for the animals she loved.

Thank you Shirley!



# December Swap Meet Fundraiser

By Laurie Brogan, Sr Bird Keeper, SD Zoo

Well thanks, as always, to our wonderful Zoo volunteer core! With their help, we had another successful fundraiser. We raised \$1,048.66 dollars! The money goes back to the SD AAZK chapter to be used towards everything from Conservation projects, to continuing education for keepers, to everything else in between.

I would also like to say, Thank You to the Kobey's Swap Meet organization. They have a policy that if you are a non-profit organization, which we are, they do not charge for the spots or for the tables we use. And if any of you have seen one our swap meets....you KNOW we take up a lot of room.

Now there are some changes coming up for the swap meets in 2012. We have decided to schedule 4 swap meets next year, look for them in March, June, September, and December. Why you might ask? Well as a board, we looked back on the way we have run the swap meets, and it seemed a little too hit and miss. We want to be better able to inform the buyers at Kobey's why we are there, who we are, and what we are raising the money for. Having as many swaps meets as we have had in the past, has taught us that folks respond better to our chapter if they know why we are there. Usually people are more willing to purchase items from us when they know they are contributing to a good cause.

Even though it seems we are becoming more organized (and we are), we are still having lots of fun. Plus, we can always use the money we earn from the swap meets for other projects that are presented to us throughout the year.

How are these conservation project presented to us you ask? Well, by YOU!

And you can have even more of a voice, because we are currently looking for new faces and voices to add to our local SD AAZK Chapter Board. All positions are open and all are welcome! You can check us out on our website [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org) or contact any of the board members.

We hope you join us either on the board or at the next swap meet event!



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# Cheetah Conservation Fund

By Kym Janke, Sr. Mammal Keeper, SDZ Safari Park

Having served on the board of San Diego AAZK for the past 4 years I was thrilled when I was asked to share information about another cause that is near and dear to me at the November AAZK talk. This other love is the Cheetah Conservation Fund and between the Safari Park, AAZK and CCF I barely have time for my husband, or so he often complains!

CCF was founded by Dr. Laurie Marker in 1990 with its International Research and Education Centre located in Otjiwarongo, Namibia. Their mission is to be the internationally recognized centre of excellence in the conservation of cheetahs and their ecosystems. Namibia has the largest and healthiest population of cheetahs left in the world, with over 30% of the entire world's cheetah population living in this one country. Cheetah numbers have decreased from approximately 100,000 in 1900 to 10,000 today. In Namibia alone the cheetah population declined from 6000 to less than 3000 in the 1980's.

With 95% of the Namibian cheetah population living on commercial or communal farmland humans pose a major threat. Competition with other large predators has made establishing stable populations in the National Parks difficult and the odds are stacked against cheetah cubs who face up to a 90% chance of not seeing their second birthday. So what is being done to help the fastest land mammal on earth?

CCF focuses on three major areas, conservation, research and education and all of their programs work with the local communities to benefit not only the cheetah but also the people sharing their land with these beautiful animals. Some of the highlights of the many programs run by CCF are:

- **Livestock Guarding Dog Program:** Started in 1994 this program breeds Anatolian shepherd and Kangal Dogs and pairs them with farmers' herds of goats and sheep. The dogs are raised with the herd and will protect them,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of farmers report a 80-100% decrease in livestock loss. Often the barking dog is enough to deter a predator, especially a cheetah.
- **Bush Project:** Deals with the problem of bush encroachment and employs Namibians to harvest the bush and process it into woodchips (as a raw material) and fuel logs (through an extrusion process). The fuel logs are marketed under the name Bushblok and are a clean burning wood fuel.
- **Cheetah Country Beef:** Cheetah Country farmers are certified and monitored as practicing cheetah friendly livestock management. In return for being good stewards to the land and wildlife on their farm, Cheetah Country farmers are paid a premium for the beef they sell.
- **Farmer Education Programs:** Courses are aimed at improving the understanding of farming production principles and systems as well as providing hands-on practical training.
- **Release Program**

So what can you do to help the cheetah win this race for survival? I asked myself this question several years ago and came up with a couple of answers. First with the generous support of my family and the Safari Park along with 3 years of savings, I travelled to Namibia in March of 2009

and spent 5 weeks working hands on at the CCF compound. Days were long, averaging 10 hours, 7 days a week but they were also so rewarding! In addition to helping CCF's 2 keepers with the daily care of the cats, I had the opportunity to participate in several research projects and aided in annual medical exams on all the resident cheetahs. It would take a novel for me to explain all the activities and duties of a CCF volunteer so I will not go into detail here but if you are interested in hearing more about my experience please contact me at [kymjanke@hotmail.com](mailto:kymjanke@hotmail.com). Details can also be found on CCF's website at [www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org).

The other way you can make a difference in cheetah conservation is to become a member of the Southern California chapter of CCF. This chapter was founded in 2010 by myself and 4 others who all share a love of the cheetah and a respect for the work that CCF is doing. Our mission is to educate people on the plight of the cheetah and to raise funds that are sent directly to Namibia to support real world conservation efforts! Please visit [www.ccfsandiego.weebly.com](http://www.ccfsandiego.weebly.com) for more info on our chapter and events.

## Club Riviera Fundraiser for Bornean Sun Bears

By Crystal Schalmo, Sr. Mammal Keeper, San Diego Zoo

On Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup> San Diego AAZK will host a fundraiser at The Riviera Supper Club in La Mesa to benefit Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Center (BSBCC) in Sabah, Malaysia.

The Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Center functions as a rescue, rehabilitation, education, and research center for sun bears. In Sabah, these bears continue to be threatened by forest degradation and habitat loss, illegal hunting for bear parts and to protect crops, and poaching to obtain young cubs for the pet trade. As a result of these threats, many young sun bears are living in unnatural and solitary captive conditions throughout Sabah, with no access to outdoor areas.

The goal of the new BSBCC is to promote sun bear conservation by (1) creating the capacity to confiscate, rehabilitate and release suitable orphaned and ex-captive bears back into the wild; (2) providing an improved long-term living environment for captive bears welfare that cannot be released; and (3) educating the public and raising awareness about this little known species through visitor and education outreach programs; and (4) conduct research on both captives and wild sun bears.

You are invited to join us for a great night of wonderful food and cocktails featuring live music from Dr. Pat's (from the San Diego Zoo's own veterinary staff) band, The Third. We will also have awesome prizes in our opportunity drawings that will be happening throughout the evening! All the proceeds go to BSBCC, so come have a few beers (or cocktails) and food for these incredible bears! All you have to do is mention you are there for our event and The Riviera Supper Club will donate 10% of your tab at the bar to the BSBCC! See you there!

**Where:** The Riviera Supper Club  
7777 University Ave, La Mesa, CA 91941  
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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Photo Contest Results

By Maureen Duryee, San Diego Zoo, Sr. Animal Trainer

SD AAZK hosted our 2nd Annual Photo Contest at the end of 2011. This contest serves two purposes: first, it raises awareness for conservation in a visual manner, allowing our contestants the opportunity to challenge themselves in expressing a feel good story about successes we are experiencing in the never-ending battle in conservation. The second purpose helps to raise funds for the education scholarship we provide our local and national members.

This year we awarded four prizes: (1) Best In Show, (3) First Places, and (1) Honorable Mention.

Best in Show and First Place went to Donna Morrow who captured the plight of bonobos and mountain gorillas. Two other First Place winners were Paige Klee, for her image of a release of an injured pelican back into the wild, and Chelsea Davis, for her image of the Mexican wolves. The final award was an Honorable Mention that was awarded to Colton Hollowman for his portrait of a California condor.

We would like to thank all our contestants for their entries and for their efforts. We would like to give a special thank you to Donna Morrow who donated her winnings from the contest back to SD AAZK's conservation projects.

We encourage everyone to enter next year's contest as we are planning on streamlining our process so as to make it a digital entry. The contest will also run sooner in the year and winners will be chosen by you, our members. Look for more details soon.

If you would to view the winning pictures from this year's contest, visit our website's Photo Contest page at [http://sdaazk.com/?page\\_id=1574](http://sdaazk.com/?page_id=1574).



# San Diego River Park Foundation's Rob Hutsel

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President

On January 12<sup>th</sup> the executive director of the San Diego River Park Foundation, Rob Hutsel, spoke to a group of us about the foundation, the upcoming tree planting projects, and why the San Diego River is one of the greatest rivers of the world.

So let's start with why the San Diego River is one of the greatest rivers. It has been a part of San Diego's history since the settlers arrived, it's the birthplace of California, it is home to golden eagles, it provides the only corridor for wildlife to pass from north to the south (located in Alpine), and it has beautiful waterfalls. The problem is that about two-thirds of San Diego's youth, and many of San Diego's population, have never experienced the river and everything it has to offer. So SDRPF was created to connect people to the river. What started with the passion of 3 people, including Rob's, became a non-profit organization in 2001. It's an organization that is dedicated to connecting people with the river, creating a river park system, conserving the river, and providing a natural and cultural resource. With a staff of 7 people and over 3,500 volunteers they have been able to accomplish many their core programs, one being to make the San Diego River healthy again. A part of making the river healthy is clearing it of trash. Since the organization has begun their cleanup efforts, they have picked up 1.3 million pounds of trash! Twice a year a survey is taken and the results are used to help the cleanup efforts. Twelve tons of trash was removed during their last survey alone. The river is been divided into 28 segments and information regarding its conditions can be seen on their website ([www.sandiegoriver.org](http://www.sandiegoriver.org)).

Once the trash has been removed, the area has to "heal" so that birds and wildlife can come back. And on January 21<sup>st</sup>, then again on February 4<sup>th</sup>, we will help with the healing. As part of the Acres for the Atmosphere project (see the next article) we will be providing habitat for wildlife, repairing areas, and doing a good thing for the community. Along with the AAZK participants who have signed up to help on those dates, we will be joined by some of SDRPF's volunteers called "The Sunshines". This amazing group of volunteers was given that name because of their sunny yellow shirts and because of the fact that they clean and make the area clear like sunshine.

Through their Save the Source program, which is a land acquisition campaign, SDRPF has saved 1,000 acres and currently manages 782 acres. And private property owners along the river have become very involved with this program as well.

There are several core programs that SDRPF promotes: Save the Source (mentioned above), Healthy River, Healthy Community (clean the river), Community Parks Initiative (what can communities do?), and Special projects and land management (taking care of the land).

You can visit their website to get the details of each program and how you can become involved. And that is what Rob recommends, get involved! Being a part of the upcoming planting projects is a great way to start. Check out their website and learn others ways of helping the river and community. He is very excited about their 2 current projects: the donation of \$10 million for a community building that will be built along the river (which they hope construction will break ground next year) and the acquisition of land in the El Capitan area where will be planting trees on February 4<sup>th</sup>! "It's a spiritual process for us," Rob said, "several associations and groups came together to make it happen." So join us on February 4<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the occasion!

## A Perfect Day For Tree Planting

By Hali O'Connor, Sr. Mammal Keeper, SD AAZK Board Member

Overcast skies, light rain, and cool temperatures were forecasted for January 21, 2012...exactly the right conditions for the much anticipated Acres for the Atmosphere tree planting event. Over 60 people signed up...and SHOWED UP prepared to dig some holes, get a little muddy and help young native Cottonwood trees, Arroyo Willow trees and a few Mule Fat shrubs get settled in their new home along The San Diego River in the Mission Valley Preserve.

To recap, The San Diego Chapter of AAZK raised over \$2200 while hosting the 2011 National AAZK conference last August. The Acres for the Atmosphere project goal was to encourage delegates to donate money to help offset the carbon produced by travel to and from the conference. With this money, SD AAZK joined forces with The San Diego River Park Foundation to plant trees in two choice locations along our precious San Diego River. 319 trees to be exact!

Anyone interested in helping with the planting project was encouraged to sign up on the SD AAZK website to partake in this fun and important event. Planting native tree species along the San Diego river that stretches from Julian to the ocean has many benefits. Native trees provide needed habitat and foods for many species, some of which are endangered. The native trees also provide erosion control, especially important in restoring wildfire burned areas. And the trees help to restore a natural balance and keep invasive species in check.

The January 21 planting included such an amazing group of enthusiastic and efficient tree planters that the 144 trees allotted to the Mission Valley Preserve were all lovingly planted in an hour! We even had time to clear away weeds from some of the existing trails to help encourage visitors to stay on a path instead of wandering off and disrupting the native plants and animals calling the preserve their home. The San Diego River Park staff also treated us to a wonderful trek to the river's edge where we learned about some of the native and non-native plant species that live along our river.

The remaining 175 trees will be Live Oaks to be planted along the El Capitan Reservoir in Alpine on February 4, 2012. Anyone interested in helping with this project may sign up on our website at [www.sdaazk.com](http://www.sdaazk.com). Several months ago a group of us went out to this area and collected acorns to produce the trees that will be planted in this area. That way we are sure to plant a species that belongs in the area and is very beneficial to the other species living there.

A big thank you to all those that participated in this wonderful community project! Be sure to check out the pictures from that day on our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/sdaazk>



## Interview With Josh Zelt

By Yvette Kemp, SD AAZK President

It's been close to four months now since San Diego Zoo bird keeper and SD AAZK member, Josh Zelt, and his partner Heath's car was hit by a driver under the influence. It seems so long ago yet so recent. For those of you who didn't read the article UT writer Karen Pearlman published, I recommend you do so at <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2011/nov/17/zoo-keeper-still-hospitalized-crash/>.

The accident was very traumatic for most of us, as accidents involving friends tend to be. But what made it worse was the amount of physical damage Josh and Heath sustained. Both had horrible injuries, with Josh suffering the worst of it due to a broken pelvis, broken arm, ruptured spleen, brain damage, and the list goes on...

In the beginning we were all so worried for Josh. He was unconscious and there was no telling really how much brain damage there would be until he woke up. Well, I am glad to report that against all odds, Josh and Heath are doing remarkably well considering what they went through. Thinking about all the progress that has been made and how every time I see someone they ask how Josh and Heath are doing, I thought I'd ask Josh himself if I could interview him for an update. Josh thought it would be good so we talked. And I would like to bring attention to what I just said... we talked. Yes, Josh has begun to speak and you cannot imagine how incredible it is to be able to tell you that. It just goes to show how far Josh has come.

Right after the accident it was hard to think that Josh may not make it. That's how bad it was. As I mentioned, no one could tell for sure what condition Josh would be in until he gained consciousness. And even when that happened, it was still hard to tell. Josh's body was so broken, the amount of work he was going to have to go through was enormous.

But Josh has been able to do just that! At first there was excitement when he opened his right eye and he was able to track you. Then came the finger movements, hand squeezes, and pointing. Next thing you know he was moving his right arm and leg. Within the last month or so, his progress has increased dramatically and I personally could see it every week when I visit him. One week he'd be signaling yes or no in sign language, then he was writing, and now he is starting to talk! You have to hand it to Josh, he is one determined guy!

One reason can be because of his participation in his physical therapy sessions, which are every day except Sundays. His brother Aaron told me that recently at one of the PT sessions the therapist had really worked Josh and he was sitting in his wheelchair on the other side of the room when he signaled to them. He mouthed that he was ready to keep going. And so they did. When you visit Josh, you can see the picture above his bed that shows Josh actually standing up, with the help of various apparatuses. But he's standing. And it's amazing to see.

I actually was able to watch Josh at one of his recent PT sessions. Again they had him working on the pole. Basically he grabs onto it with his right hand and pulls himself up. The therapists are there to help him as needed but it was funny to watch as each of them discussed how they thought the other one was pulling Josh up. In the end, it was Josh who was pulling himself up! Then there was the one time when the therapists were letting Josh rest so they were talking with everyone in the room. Brian Rice and I were watching from the side and had to let the

therapists know that Josh was pulling himself up without them there. He is determined, that Josh of ours.

Recently Josh has started using his cell phone to keep in touch with friends. When I walked in last week there he was reading texts on his phone, head phones on, and the tv remote in hand. He's looking more and more like the old Josh every day.

So, here is my conversation with Josh for the interview. Remember that Josh is speaking to me now. Be it in a very quiet, low voice, but none the less, speaking. He had had a tracheotomy so he is still healing. Soon though, with practice and exercise, that too shall heal.

Yvette: How are you feeling?

Josh: Good. Hole in the throat hurts a little. Sore on back of head better, smaller.

Y: How is PT going?

J: Going good. Probably have PT today.

Y: Have you had a chance to go outside?

J: Yes. It's comfortable.

Y: I think you look good with the beard. What do you think about it?

J: Don't like it.

Y: Has Xander (their dog) had a chance to come visit?

J: Yes but he didn't like the wheelchair.

Y: What would you like to tell people?

J: Visitors welcome, visitors welcome. Sometimes not here, PT, out and about. Ask when I'll be back.

Y: Anything else?

J: Drive well.

After our interview we read Josh's Red Book and talked about the progress he has made. He commented here and there about different things people wrote. I asked him if he remembered people coming in to see him and read to him when he was unconscious and he said no but seemed happy we had been there. You can read Josh's Red Book comments on the blog Heath has put together at <http://joshandheathexpensefund.wordpress.com/>. Or even better, you can read and contribute to the Red Book when you visit him.

And he really is happy when people come visit him. He is at Villa Las Palmas Healthcare Center in El Cajon, 622 S Anza St ([www.villalaspalmashealthcare.com](http://www.villalaspalmashealthcare.com)).

As Josh mentioned, visitors are welcome.



San Diego AAZK  
P.O. Box 632984  
San Diego, CA 92103

Tel: (619) 231-1515 ext. 4672

Email: [TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net](mailto:TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net)

Web site: [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org)

FaceBook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Diego-American-Association-of-Zoo-Keepers/224590787467?ref=share>



The Keeper is published quarterly by the San Diego Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, Inc. (SD AAZK), a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization with offices at P.O. Box 120551, San Diego, CA 92112; (619) 231-1515, ext. 4672. Address for editorial, advertising and membership inquiries—SD AAZK, P.O. Box 632984, Hillcrest Post Office San Diego, CA 92103. Reproduction or use without written permission of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Copyright © 1996 by SD AAZK. Subscriptions are included with the membership in SD AAZK or by paying \$12 per year, U.S. currency only. *The Keeper* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials. Manuscripts or artwork not accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope may not be returned. *The Keeper* makes every effort to ensure that the products and services advertised in our pages are consistent with the environmental ethic that we promote. Opinions expressed on these pages do not necessarily reflect the view of the SD AAZK, AAZK, Inc., or the board of either chapter or parent organization.

## CALENDAR 2012 visit [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org) for updates

- **Saturday, February 4, 2012: Acres for the Atmosphere Tree Planting Project – El Capitan Reservoir.** For information on participation, visit our website at [www.sdaazk.org](http://www.sdaazk.org)
- **Wednesday, February 8, 2012. SD AAZK Board Member Applications Deadline.** Go to [www.sdaazk.com](http://www.sdaazk.com) for more information. Send bio and statement of interest to [TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net](mailto:TheKeeperSDAAZK@cox.net)
- **Monday, February 13, 2012: SD AAZK New Board Member Meeting.** Time: 4:00 – 6:00 pm. Location: San Diego Zoo's Warner Board Room. New Board Member assignments.
- **Wednesday, February 15, 2012: SD AAZK Presents The Plight of the Sun Bear.** Time: 2:30 social, 3:00 presentation. Location: San Diego Zoo's Rondavel. Open to all.
- **Friday, February 24, 2012: Club Riviera Fundraiser "Beer for Bears".** Time: 5:00 – 11:00 pm. Location: Riviera Supper Club, 7777 University Ave, La Mesa 91941. Live band, opportunity drawings, 10% of bar tab to benefit Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Center in Sabah, Malaysia.
- **Saturday, March 3, 2012: Swap Meet Fundraiser.** Time: 6:00 am – 1:00 pm. Location: Kobey's swap meet on Sports Arena Blvd. Volunteers and donations needed. Call (619)231-1515 ext 4672 to participate.
- **Saturday, April 14, 2012: SD AAZK Volunteer Project at Lions Tigers & Bears.** Location: LTB, Alpine. Details to follow.
- **June 2, 2012: Bowling For Rhinos.** Time: 5:15 check-in, 6:00 – 9:00 pm bowling. Location: Kearny Mesa Bowl, Clairemont Mesa Blvd. \$50/lane for 5 bowlers and shoes. Opportunity drawings, auction, and more. More to come.
- **Saturday, June 9, 2012: Swap Meet Fundraiser.** Time: 6:00 am – 1:00 pm. Location: Kobey's swap meet on Sports Arena Blvd. Volunteers and donations needed. Call (619)231-1515 ext 4672 to participate.
- **July 15-21, 2012: National Zoo Keeper Week!** Details of events for the week to follow soon.
- **August 2012: SD AAZK Fundraiser for Project Wildlife.** Details coming soon.
- **Saturday, September 8, 2012: Swap Meet Fundraiser.** Time: 6:00 am – 1:00 pm. Location: Kobey's swap meet on Sports Arena Blvd. Volunteers and donations needed. Call (619)231-1515 ext 4672 to participate.
- **November 2012: SD AAZK Golf Fundraiser.** Details coming soon. Stoneridge Country Club, 17166 Stoneridge Country Club Lane, Poway, CA 92064.
- **Saturday, December 1, 2012: Swap Meet Fundraiser.** Time: 6:00 am – 1:00 pm. Location: Kobey's swap meet on Sports Arena Blvd. Volunteers and donations needed. Call (619)231-1515 ext 4672 to participate.