



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

American Association of Zoo Keepers San Diego Chapter Quarterly Newsletter – Summer 2015

President's Message

By Ann Knutson, AAZK San Diego President

If you are like me, you see many different conservation stories every day in emails, on the news, and through the various social media outlets. Many of these stories focus on negative themes such as illegal activities, decreasing population sizes and habitat loss, leaving the reader with a feeling of sadness or despair. It can be quite hard to find positive conservation related news, but if you look hard enough you can find these stories of hope and change. The plight of the rhino and the battle fought by conservationists to curb the illegal market for rhino horn has been a hot topic in our media of late. Amidst all of the doom and gloom I have seen many positive stories regarding rhino conservation over the past year. As a conservation minded individual I hope that you too can find inspiration in the positives and so I will take a minute now to share a few of the notable stories that stand out in my mind.

Although poaching numbers are reaching record numbers in South Africa, there is also a lot of work being done to translocate rhinos to help the populations grow. The KwaZulu-Natal province reported that their rhino population had grown to 500 from 411 in 10 years. Another population increase was reported from the Government of Nepal. The report stated that they have had a 21% increase in the population of their One-horned Rhino and that for the third year in a row they have gone without a single poaching incident. My favorite story from last year was the new fundraising record set by AAZK chapters across the country. Last year the AAZK was able to raise over \$500,000 and a whole lot of awareness through its national conservation campaign, Bowling for Rhinos.

As this year's Bowling for Rhinos event approaches here in San Diego I am reminded about how much each of us can do to save the species. Huge strides have been made in the fight to save Rhinos but every step counts. I look forward to the coming year when hopefully those positive stories can outweigh the negatives. We still have a long way to go, but knowing we are making a difference is so inspiring. I hope you will join me in finding and contributing to the positives whether it benefit rhinos or any other species you are passionate about. Let's make this year the best yet!

Eating Pizza and Helping Elephants

By Robbie Clark, AAZK San Diego Public Relations and Social Media Officer

As an animal care professional who works with elephants I am always trying to find ways to support elephants and their conservation. Aside from being part of AAZK I am also a member of the Elephant Managers Association in which another organization blossomed, called Asian Elephant Support. Asian Elephant Support (AES) is a U.S. Non-profit foundation dedicated to the care and conservation of Asian elephants in their range countries, and to the people whose lives are intertwined with this magnificent and endangered species. This organization supports dozens of programs throughout Asia which directly impact wild and captive elephants.

I have had the honor of knowing the founders and current board members of AES on a personal level and have always been impressed with their dedication and determination to make a difference. While most supporters do not have the financial means to fund whole programs, they are still able to contribute collectively to the cause. Five years ago AES began an annual fundraiser in partnership with California Pizza Kitchen (CPK) where, on designated days, dinners can bring an AES flyer with them to the restaurant and 20% of their total purchase is donated to AES to support various conservation projects. Although this event started out quite small it has grown to be a well-attended and anticipated event. This fundraiser is made possible by individuals all across the U.S. who have dedicated their time to organize and promote the event at various CPK locations. Essentially by word of mouth this event has grown to include dozens of locations in over 20 states.

Here in San Diego we recently hosted our AES/CPK fundraiser in mid April and included locations in Fashion Valley and La Jolla. While we are still waiting for our local totals to be revealed we had great support from a large number of people who all contributed to conservation by eating pizza. It was as simple as that.

Asian Elephant Support hopes to grow this fundraiser even more next year and we are looking to include more locations in the San Diego area and even further north towards Los Angeles. Even though we are a year away from the next event, please keep AES in mind throughout the year as you eat pizza. You can visit their website at www.asianelephantsupport.org or contact myself if you are interested in participating and/or organizing a venue yourself. Thank you to all that supported this great cause this year, I am already looking forward to 2016!



ASIAN ELEPHANT
S U P P O R T

California Wolf Center – Who we are and what we do.

By Erin Hunt, Director of Operations, California Wolf Center

The California Wolf Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to wolf recovery in the wild. We envision a landscape where wolves thrive in healthy ecosystems and wolves and people successfully coexist. We partner with communities affected by wolf recovery to implement proactive solutions that enable wolves and people to successfully share the landscape.

Our conservation center, founded in 1977 to educate the public about wildlife, is located near Julian, CA and is home to several packs of gray wolves, including highly endangered Mexican gray wolves! This unique wolf experienced a brush with extinction when their population was down to only 11 individuals in the 1970s, but is now being reintroduced into the southwestern United States. We play a critical role in the recovery of the Mexican gray wolf through the Mexican Wolf Species Survival Plan.

Through the years, we have grown into a state-wide organization with a chapter in Northern California where we are working to pave the way for the return of wolves to California. In 2011, California celebrated a landmark step by the wild wolf known to many as Journey. He was the first documented wild wolf in California in nearly 90 years. This historic event signaled the beginning of what could be one of the most inspiring conservation stories in California; the return of wild wolves after disappearing at the hands of humans.



Beyond our conservation efforts, we strive to provide complete and balanced information about gray wolves to the public so people can make informed decisions about the issues that affect us all. By learning factual information about wolves, people come to understand that this highly social and intelligent animal also plays a key role in a healthy ecosystem, and we learn to coexist with an animal we once feared. This new understanding deepens our appreciation of and sense of stewardship towards wolves. Our survival depends on theirs, and their survival depends on our decisions and actions.

You can learn more about the California Wolf Center at www.californiawolfcenter.org.



California Wolf Center

Conservation, Education, Research

Upcoming Volunteer Day at the California Wolf Center

By Grace Porreca, AAZK San Diego Conservation Partner Officer

Be sure to keep an eye on the upcoming events section of the AAZK SD website for information on a volunteer day at the California Wolf Center. We are excited to once again support such a great conservation organization and be able to contribute to various projects around the center. There will be something for everyone to help with and while some projects will involve heavy labor, others will be lighter duty.

Individuals that plan to join us should dress according to the weather and remember that sunscreen is always ideal. Please note that open toed shoes or sandals are not permitted, you must wear suitable work shoes or boots. Long pants are required (no shorts), shirts can either be long or short sleeved. Don't forget to pack some water and a snack is recommended.



It should be a fun and rewarding day, so
Don't Miss Out.

For more information, or to let us know you would like to be notified when a date is set please contact Grace at graceporreca@yahoo.com

Evolving AAZK San Diego

By Kym Janke, AAZK San Diego Secretary

People both within and outside the zoological community ask why I volunteer my time and commit to promoting the conservation efforts of the American Association of Zoo Keepers? I already work at the "World Famous" San Diego Zoo and volunteer directly with Cheetah Conservation Fund, so have plenty of opportunities to participate in conservation and education efforts. My answer: AAZK is different; it is organized, run and supported by people just like me. We are a team of dedicated individuals who are committed to taking our passion one step further and extending our reach to a much larger audience with participation and support in a variety of conservation, community and educational events. We are able to support a wide variety of projects spanning a diverse list of taxa and we have a lot of fun doing it. What was that I just said? We have fun? Yes I volunteer, yes it can mean appointments, meetings and computer hours, but yes it is fun. The people involved in AAZK are amazing individuals. Not only have I been able to meet and network with other animal care professionals in the San Diego area but I have made friends all across North America through attendance at National Conferences.

This year AAZK San Diego has decided to take a step back from the intense focus on fundraising and conservation projects and instead focus on building comradery and relationships between zoo keepers, aquarists, education specialists and anyone else who has a passion for conservation. In March over 40 people came out for the 30th Street Brewery Stroll and connected over a beer or two at some of San Diego's incredible craft breweries. In May, we kicked back at Coronado Brewing Company and enjoyed some food truck tacos along with our canine family members. We tried to keep the work talk to a minimum and just unwind after a hard day at work! These social outings do not make us any less committed to conservation but they help give balance to our involvement with the organization.

This shift in culture is a direct result of our members voicing their ideas and communicating with us. We want everyone to be involved with AAZK, we think it is a great organization and we don't want it to feel like work. We already work 8+ hours each day and don't need a second job. We also realize that as fulfilling a career in animal care, education or conservation is, we will never get rich doing it. So as important as fundraising is we cannot afford to hold a benefit each and every month, we don't want the only occasion that folks hear about AAZK to be in conjunction with a plea for a donation.

We are evolving and we want your feedback! Please take a minute to fill out this brief questionnaire about what you love about our chapter? What don't you love? How can we better serve our fabulous community of animal care professionals, animal lovers and friends here in San Diego!?!? www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQNG8CX



STOP KILLING RHINOS

By Yvette Kemp, AAZK San Diego Treasurer

We all know that the five rhino species are endangered to varying degrees.

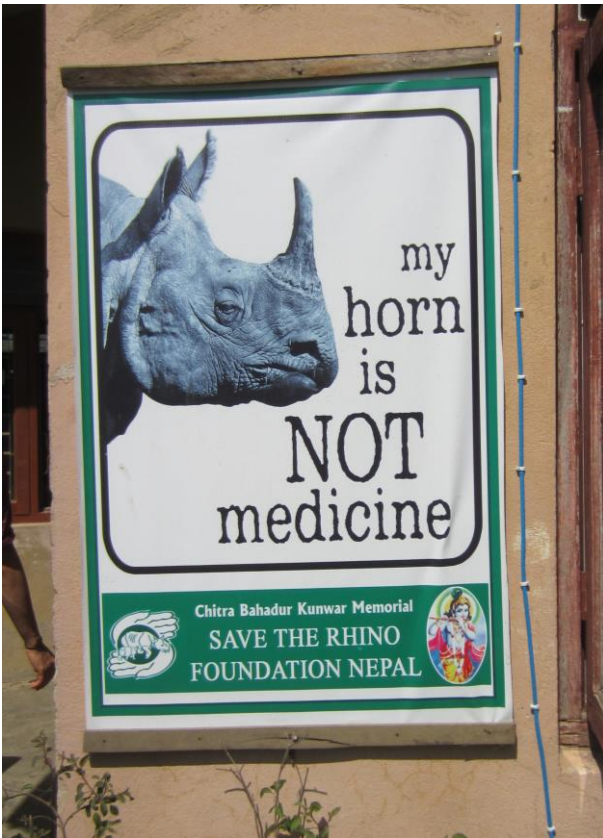
But did you know that their numbers have declined incredibly and that in some countries, rhino poaching numbers actually increased in 2014? In South Africa 1,215 rhinos were killed last year, that's an increase of 20% from 2013. So what can we do? Do we just give up? Do we "let nature run its course?" Personally, I have a hard time with that line since it isn't nature running its course but rather humans chasing it.

Recently on our AAZK San Diego Facebook page, there was a bit of a discussion regarding the effectiveness of posting pictures that say "Stop Killing Rhinos." Can photos of people holding signs or pouring buckets of water over their heads for a cause really make a difference? Of course it can. Are we preaching to the choir? Perhaps. I do believe that a large percentage of the people who believe in a particular cause may be looking at those photos, watching those videos, looking up those ads. But you know what, so are all those people who are interested in checking out what is trending or who are in one way or another connected with those of us who believe in that cause. With social media and communication the way it is today, any message can be shared in a matter of minutes or seconds.



In the end, anything helps really. People are becoming more aware and awareness is the first step to action. A recent joint study by WildAid, the African Wildlife Foundation, and Save the Elephants showed that consumer awareness of ivory and rhino horn trade in China has grown rapidly. (WildAid, March 2015, <http://www.wildaid.org/news/consumer-awareness-ivory-and-rhino-horn-trade%E2%80%99s-impact-grows-rapidly-china>). What led to this increase in awareness? The campaign's public service messages starring NBA superstar Yao Ming or action hero Jackie Chan urging people to not buy products made with rhino horn. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yccID-2jlfM>). In fact 90% of Chinese residents who had viewed these messages said they would not buy rhino horn! This has led to action! The Chinese government is increasing its commitments to curtail the market with an immediate ban on African ivory carving imports.

So what can you do?



Keep posting those signs, keep sharing those facts, bring awareness to the cause. Bring awareness to the FACT that rhinos are being slaughtered for their horns to make sword handles or to make traditional medicines that are based on myths.

FACT: the IUCN estimates that poaching claims an average of one rhino every 15 hours.

FACT: as of July 2014, 56 park rangers worldwide were killed in the line of duty over a 12 month period. The International Rhino Foundation estimates this number to be really two or three times higher since all countries did not submit reports.

If raising awareness is not enough, then take action: Do something! Become involved. Here in San Diego there are many things you can do. Of course, the number one action to take is to stop the market. Do not purchase items with rhino horn or ivory. You can also participate in events that help bring awareness and much needed funding to rhino conservation: Cinco de Rhino, Rally for Rhinos, and the upcoming Bowling for Rhinos event on June 6th.

Why?

Rhino's need our help! With few species remaining, and even fewer subspecies in existence, we are witnessing the accelerated extinction of a magnificent creature. According to a paper published in the *Science* journal in 2013, if poaching levels continue to accelerate as they are, Africa's remaining wild rhino population may become extinct within 20 years! And it won't stop there, other creatures living within their habitats will suffer as well.

AAZK San Diego would like to invite you to become involved. Join us for Bowling for Rhinos on June 6th. Help us bring awareness and funding, help us educate everyone about what is happening to rhinos. This is BFR's 25th anniversary and we want to make sure that you are there.

Visit our website at www.sdaazk.org and click on the Bowling for Rhinos link to register your team and learn all the details. There will be a silent auction, drawings, contests, and much more. All proceeds go towards rhino conservation. Let's all join the rally: Stop Killing Rhinos!

Rhinos Bowling for

American Association of Zoo Keepers



Benefitting Lewa Conservancy Fund, International Rhino Foundation, & Action for Cheetahs in Kenya

Saturday, June 6, 2015
Kearny Mesa Bowl
5:15 - 9:00 pm

SILENT AUCTION

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Comparing and Contrasting a Centralized versus Decentralized Nutrition Program

By Kelly O'Brien, Advanced Inquiry Program, Project Dragonfly

In January of 2015, an amazing opportunity arose for me to take time off from the San Diego Zoo in order to stay at the Perth Zoo in Western Australia. Perth Zoo is a small zoo spread across approximately 41 acres, which is less than half of San Diego Zoo's nearly 100 acres. Perth Zoo has about 1,300 animals representing nearly 170 different species ("About Perth Zoo," 2015), compared to the San Diego Zoo's 3,700 animals representing around 650 different species ("About San Diego Zoo," 2015). The magnitude of the San Diego Zoo can sometimes be overwhelming, especially when compared to other zoos around the world. The opportunity to visit a zoo that runs on a much smaller scale meant that I would be able to learn many new things by being more involved in the daily operations.

Depending on how a zoo is set up, its nutritional services will operate somewhere on a scale of having a centralized or decentralized approach to making and delivering the animal feed. The San Diego Zoo operates under a centralized plan. This means that all of the diets are prepared in a central warehouse and then delivered along with bagged grains and hay to each keeper's kitchen. There are specific staff members who only work in the central warehouse to make and deliver the daily rations around the zoo. Perth Zoo is an example of a decentralized plan where the keepers themselves prepare the animal diets in the kitchens near animal exhibits. My work experience at Perth Zoo sought to distinguish the pros and cons of each way of operating in order to learn and share techniques.

Even if a zoo falls somewhere in between centralized and decentralized, the most important aspect is that the approach is organized in order to minimize financial loss due to food waste (Harris, Toddes, & Maslanka, 2013). The design of the nutrition warehouse is one of the most important considerations in a layout of a zoo (Sifka, Maslanka, & Sweeney, 2013). From receiving bulk orders, to proper food storage, to creating a logical work space for efficient preparation and delivery of diets, the nutritional department plays a large part in the day to day running of a zoo (Sifka et al., 2013). Another aspect to consider is the feasibility of creating and storing food enrichment items, such as tactile manipulation items that are essential to zoo animal welfare (Maple & Perdue, 2013).



A wallaby enjoying a diet I helped prepare at the Perth Zoo.

While many keepers and staff at Perth Zoo expressed an interest in having a central warehouse that prepares and delivers the daily food rations, the layout of their zoo was a big consideration in discerning whether or not it would even be feasible. At the San Diego Zoo, we drive a large truck full of food bins and hay to deliver to each keeper kitchen or barn. This is necessary because there are many steep hills and the sheer volume of deliveries is simply too heavy to transport any other way. Perth Zoo is much smaller in acreage, so it would not be feasible to drive such a large truck to each location. Instead, the keepers use bicycles and small golf carts to pick up their daily rations. The idea of keepers riding bicycles around the zoo was novel to me and something to consider for the San Diego Zoo. The reduced emissions and added bonus of exercise was incredibly appealing, but with San Diego's steep hills, it might not be feasible.

However, that means that keepers are using a considerable amount of time out of their day to pick up necessary diet ingredients rather than focusing on other important keeper duties.



Posing with some fresh eucalyptus browse for the koalas at Perth Zoo.

There are many challenges associated with feeding browse to animals in a zoo. Figuring out the right amount for a variety of species can be one of the most challenging aspects of designing diets (Livingston, Lavin, Sullivan, & Valdes, 2013). According to Lachance (2013), feeding browse to captive zoo animals is one of the most important nutritional challenges due to the variety of browse available. The reason it can be so tricky is because keepers must provide enough browse to suffice nutritional needs while ensuring that the animals will actually eat most or all of what is provided (Livingston et al., 2013). A general guideline is to provide at least 30% of the daily diet as browse items (Livingston et al., 2013). These include hibiscus, eucalyptus, acacia, mulberry, and bamboo, along with a variety of other plants and grasses. This was an especially difficult challenge for the Perth Zoo because they relied heavily on the fodder to make up their browsing diets. While browse plants are an excellent source of fiber, soil content, amount of water, exposure to sun, time of harvest, and leaf-to-stem ratio all play a part in determining the nutritional value of the browse provided for the animals (Sullivan et al., 2013). A challenge that both the Perth Zoo and the San Diego Zoo had in common was how to store the browse once it was collected.

Historically, the nutrition warehouse kept some of the browse in the refrigerator along with the produce. Recently, a new cold storage refrigerator was built to house the browse plants. It was exciting to see that the Perth Zoo had just built a very similar cold storage unit to house their browse cuts.

Simply because the San Diego Zoo is larger in size, there are more animals and therefore more staff. This means that there is enough staff to work full time in the nutrition warehouse and provide the keeper staff with daily meat, produce, grain, and hay deliveries. On any given day, the nutritional assistants must prepare diets for each keeper kitchen around the zoo. In addition, they must receive bulk orders of hay, grains, fish, meat, or produce. They are also in charge of caring for bulk orders of live crickets and meal worms. Having a warehouse to house bulk deliveries reduces redundancy in orders, while at the same time acts as a central location to house expensive equipment for food prep and long-term storage (Polete, Lisi, & Edwards, 2013). In contrast, the Perth Zoo is much smaller in size and staff. There is simply not enough staff available to accomplish the tasks that the nutritional staff at the San Diego Zoo completes on a daily basis. It is clear that the size of a zoo plays a large part in determining whether or not the nutrition department can be centralized.

Because Perth Zoo is so much smaller, the sense of community amongst the employees is much stronger. Everyone knows each other and acts like a big family. In addition, they all help each other whenever they can. Many employees are cross-trained and can contribute to other departments when necessary. This type of collaboration is essential for the smooth running of the zoo. I was lucky enough to shadow several employees in many different departments. It was during this time that I was able to learn the most from each staff member as well as share some of my knowledge from the San Diego Zoo.

The first few days I shadowed a horticulture keeper whose main job was to cut down a variety of plant browse for the animals. The browse is called 'fodder' in Western Australia. There were many different ways of obtaining the fodder. The Perth Zoo had put an ad in the local paper asking the community for donations of plants that needed trimming. There were a few people who would call in asking that their plants be trimmed both to keep their plants looking nice and to help feed the animals. There were also a few people who donated parts of their land so the zoo could grow a variety of trees and plants. It is the fodder collector's job to drive around the city and cut down large branches full of healthy, green leaves for the animals. As one could imagine, it takes a lot of plant browse to satisfy large animals like the giraffe and elephants.



The truck collecting browse from the community and an inside look into the browse cold storage at Perth Zoo.

Sometimes the fodder collector had to drive to the far reaches of the city to find fresh cuts. The San Diego Zoo is lucky enough to have plentiful browse both on site as well as off-grounds at a plantation run by the zoo. I quickly became very thankful for the ease and efficiency of always having enough self-sustaining browse available for the animals at the San Diego Zoo.

This was different than any other work I have ever done before because I took the initiative to present and share information with zoo staff that I had never met before. It challenged me professionally by learning how to better communicate with zoo staff. It also challenged me to open my mind to new ideas and ways of working efficiently.



A female numbat participating in the native species breeding program eating a diet I helped prepare at the Perth Zoo.

The broader impact of this leadership challenge was to open up the gates of communication for zoos all around the world. While it is easy to share information with technology, it is more impactful to be able to experience the daily operations of a zoo in order to truly learn. This experience not only will create a stronger bond between the San Diego Zoo and the Perth Zoo, but has the potential to inspire other zoo professionals to step outside of their comfort zones and participate in work experiences at other zoos.

Wildlife conservation is a science that continues to grow and zoos are the center of the latest conservation information. Because experts in the field congregate at zoos, it is imperative that they connect with the surrounding communities in order to have a greater impact for saving endangered species. By opening up the lines of communication with more face-to-face interactions, zoo staff will create an open forum that can be spread about in the local community. With today's technology, it sometimes it seems easiest to communicate via email or other type of media. However, the impact of meeting face to face can create a deeper bond between zoos that allows communication to flow much more readily. The

more conservation organizations that open their doors to zoo professionals with a desire to learn, the more the community will have the desire to learn the latest conservation science. I hope that this passion for learning continues to spread among the zoo professional community, where it will subsequently spread to the communities at large.

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8AM-11AM
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AAZK San Diego Membership Form

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|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional (must already be an AAZK National; adding local San Diego membership w/access to workshops) | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full (must already be an AAZK National; adding local San Diego membership) | \$15.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter (local AAZK San Diego Membership Only) | \$15.00 |
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Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/ Zip _____

Email _____

Zoo Affiliation _____ Job Title _____

Work area _____ Species you work with _____

Professional AAZK San Diego Member. Benefits include:

- Access to online animal professional courses offered through CollaborNation Collaborative Learning Environment
- Free admittance to all our hands-on workshops and events
- Opportunity to sign-up for hands-on workshops before it is offered to others
- One-year subscription to our quarterly newsletter, *The Keeper*
- Free admission to special presentations by guest speakers
- Support of local and international conservation projects
- Free admission to our annual AAZK SD photo caravan at the Safari Park
- Ability to participate in local board member elections
- All National AAZK membership benefits

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- One-year subscription to our quarterly newsletter, *The Keeper*
- Free admission to special presentations by guest speakers
- Support of local and international conservation projects
- Free admission to our annual AAZK SD photo caravan at the Safari Park
- Ability to participate in local board member elections
- All National AAZK membership benefits

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- Free admission to special presentations by guest speakers
- Support of local and international conservation projects

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CALENDAR 2015

visit www.sdaazk.org for updates

June 15, 2015: AAZK San Diego board meeting.

You are invited to participate and join us at the next AAZK Board meeting at 5:00 pm at the San Diego Zoo's Warner Building Board Room. Our meetings are open to all and we welcome everyone's input and participation. For more information, email AAZK San Diego president at annkntsn@yahoo.com

May 31, 2015: Golf For Wildlife.

Join the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) San Diego Chapter as we host our 2nd annual "Golf For Wildlife" tournament, raising awareness and funds for endangered species. Mixing sports and wildlife has never been this fun! The 2nd annual "Golf for Wildlife" is in full affect to help save, conserve, and shed light on the over 16,000 endangered animal and plants. Habitat loss, disease, and illegal wildlife trade have put many animals at risk of extinction. By participating in this event, every dollar raised will go to the support of our earths beautiful wildlife!

June 6, 2015: Bowling For Rhinos. Celebrating BFRs 25th Anniversary!

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) San Diego Chapter is proud to be hosting our 25th annual *Bowling for Rhinos* (BFR) event. BFR is a national bowl-a-thon fundraising event geared to assisting rhino conservation in Kenya and Indonesia. 100% of all funds go directly to in situ conservation projects, conserving 4 species of rhinos, their habitats, and hundreds of other endangered plants and animals AND cheetah conservation in Kenya. AAZK San Diego has contributed over \$250,000 locally and nationally BFR has raised over \$5 million dollars! The event will feature a silent auction, drawings, a costume contest, most sponsorship raised contest, bake sale, and more. You don't have to bowl to participate! Registration and more details available NOW on our website.

June 21, 2015: Stand up for Giraffe

Join us on World Giraffe Day to raise funds and awareness for giraffe conservation while participating in various non-motorized watersports at the Carlsbad lagoon. Purchase your tickets now at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/standupforgiraffetickets-16917807618>

July 20 – 26, 2015: National Zoo Keeper Week.

August 2015: Pints for Preservation.

An opportunity for AAZK San Diego members to nominate and promote a conservation of their choice for a fundraising event! Voting takes place on Facebook and the organization with the most likes will be the beneficiary from the event. More information available as the date gets closer.

Details about these and all our events available on our website at www.sdaazk.org!

Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/sdaazk