

PAW PRINTS

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FAREWELL TO PEG

The Passing of a Beloved Mountain Lion

By Don Richardson,
Curator of the Moonridge Zoo



“One day years ago we received a blessing that captivated our hearts and bonded our emotions as only a family can be bonded. The little ball of fur and claws and spit was far from fearsome. It was in very short order that ‘Peg,’ our smallest mountain lion cub, gave us an amazing amount of love in such a small package. That love and family bond allowed us to reach out to others with her help.

“She soon was letting children of all ages have the chance of a lifetime! She gave hundreds of thousands of visitors the chance to experience the awesome power, strength, and awe-inspiring gentleness that encompasses America’s greatest cat. We all expected she would be part of our family of animals joining us on the new and exciting journey to our new home. We never expected this gracious cat to be moving on so soon to another journey that her body could not take her on. We had to make a very difficult decision to let her take that journey before her time with us should have been over. We will forever carry her in our thoughts, in our vision and in our hearts and with her sisters who will always remind us that for a very brief moment our family was complete. The staff and docents wish her Godspeed on her new journey, and we will forever feel a part of us is missing.

“Our smallest mountain lion ‘Peg’ was euthanized December 29, 2005, after it was evident that her three-month battle to gain control over a debilitating metabolic disease was not possible. Irritable Bowel Disorder creates an inability to absorb and process food and proteins necessary to sustain life. If controllable, people and animals afflicted with this disease remain on medication to control it’s effects for the remainder of their

lives. The medications often produce as much harm as the affliction itself.”

Background: Don and Debbie Richardson received these little orphaned cubs over three years ago. Peg was the smallest of three Mountain Lion sisters who came to the Moonridge Zoo in 2002. These little

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Betsy Henke



We're off and running with our 2006 calendar...

Committees are already meeting for such events as BEAR COUNTRY FAIR, ZOOCASION and RUN FOR THE GRIZZLIES. Please check the calendar for the dates and times of all of our scheduled events.

*We've begun the year with a few "housekeeping" changes. The **Board Meetings** have been changed from the 3rd Friday to the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The only exception to this will be in June and September when we will meet on the 2nd Wednesday because we've scheduled four General Meetings this year. The **General Meetings** will be on March 22, June 21, September 20, and November 8. All of these meetings will be at the Discovery Center at 4:00 p.m.*

*I'm pleased to announce that on March 22, members of the Design Firm, **PGAV Destination Consulting** will make a presentation regarding their concepts of our proposed new Zoo. The Friends are very excited that we have been able to retain PGAV's services, as their reputation and experience are both impressive.*

We plan to dedicate this year's Paw Prints to highlighting some of our "hidden" docents and volunteers. There are a number of these "secret" people who go about their business quietly and without fanfare. We depend on their help and talents in so many ways. So look for them in the coming issues. Our appreciation and gratitude goes out to them for all they do.

On a personal note, I feel privileged to be your new President. I want to thank Paddy Speyers for leading us so effectively these past years. She has laid a foundation that will sustain us through the challenging years ahead and she has created an organization that will be able to meet these challenges successfully. This is an exciting time in the history of the Zoo and the Friends. I want to know any of your ideas, comments, opinions, etc. Please feel free to call me at 909.584.9510 or email me at betsy17@charter.net. I look forward to hearing from you!

Betsy Henke

(Farewell to Peg, continued from page 1)

felines were very small and completely camouflaged with spots. Young cubs are born helpless (in an "altricial" state) and are usually protected by their mother in a sheltered area until they are big enough to roam and begin to learn and practice hunting skills. By the time our Zoo had received the cubs, their little eyes were open, their little ears had unfolded, their first teeth had erupted, and they were very capable of playing. Don and Debbie shared their home, kitchen, and bedroom with these three pound packages of terror until the cubs became too "mountain liony" to stay in the Richardson's home. Peg, Cascade, and Canyon moved to their new home at the Zoo and were constantly held, fed, and played with by a few lucky Zoo curators and keepers. And now, more than 3 years later, Cascade and Canyon will continue to teach and entertain visitors to the Zoo, but it will take several months for them to become accustomed to the empty spot in their hearts caused by Peg's passing.

By the way, the mountain lion has the honor of having the most names for any mammal in North America. Can you name the four names? (Mountain Lion, Puma, Cougar, and Panther). Another interesting fact is that the mountain lion is actually classified as a "small cat" unlike the Big Cats such as Lions, Tigers, and Leopards. Small cats cannot roar like the big cats do, because the bones in their throats are hardened and close together and can only produce smaller vibrations. Instead, small cats including mountain lions mew, scream, and growl.

Anyone with a house cat knows that small cats can purr non-stop whether they are breathing in or out, but big cats can't purr continuously. They can only purr when they breathe out. The purr is interrupted when the cat breathes in.

Another difference is the cat's eyes. A small cat's pupil closes to a vertical (up and down) slit, while a big cat's pupil closes to a circle, like a human's pupil.

So, your house cat is actually a miniature version of the mountain lion !



THE FISHER PROGRAM AT THE MOONRIDGE ZOO

Our Zoo's curator, Don Richardson, recently attended a Fisher and Martin Conference to help with the research of the wonderful little animal called the fisher. Next summer, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (a division of the Department of Interior) will review the status of the fisher and determine if the protection level should be raised from the current "Special Concern Animal" to an "Endangered" animal. California currently has the fisher listed as endangered, but the fisher population is quite strong in the eastern U.S. California's fisher population is mainly located in Humboldt county, and in the Sierra range. The Moonridge Zoo is one of only five fisher exhibits in the U.S. This means that Don's attendance at the fisher conference was vitally important not only to our resident fishers, but to the overall research as well.

The **fisher**, *Martes pennanti*, is a North American marten. Despite its name, this animal seldom eats fish, but is a typical marten; a medium sized mustelid, agile in trees and slender enough of body to pursue prey into hollow trees or burrows in the ground. Their name is thought to originate from the French word *fichet*, which referred to the pelt of it's cousin, the European Polecat. Fishers are also known for one of their calls, which is often said to sound like a child screaming.

The fisher is a cousin of the weasel family, and a smaller cousin of the Wolverine. It weighs as much as a red fox, but has much shorter legs. The males weigh between 10 and 14 pounds, which is about twice the size of females. The fur of a fisher is a grizzled dark brown and approaches blackish on the rump and tail. Fishers are extremely agile and active predators. Excellent tree climbers, they can outclimb martens and squirrels. Fishers have five toes on each foot with retractable claws. And they can rotate their hind paws 180 degrees, so they can grasp limbs and climb down trees head first. They prey upon snowshoe hare, mice, squirrels, and porcupine. In fact,

the fisher seems to be the only predator that seeks out the porcupine. Fishers will also eat insects and berries.

Fishers range over 7 to 10 square miles, traveling at any time of day or night. Fishers are solitary, except during the breeding season and when the young are with the female. One to five young fishers are born in April in a hollow tree, log or rock cavity. The fisher is a mammal that has "delayed implanting" of the fetus... this means that the fertilized egg doesn't implant in the uterine wall for the first 300 days... then the gestation period is about 53 days after the egg buries itself in the womb. Don Richardson says that there isn't a lot of research done on fisher breeding in captivity, but that is one area of study that the Fisher Conference is looking into.



Friends of the Moonridge Zoo

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Mailing Address:

PO Box 2557 • Big Bear City, CA 92314

Hours:

Office Open Tuesday - Saturday
10 am - 6 pm

VISIT US ON THE WEB

Before your next visit to the Zoo why not spend a few minutes browsing our website www.moonridgezoo.org?

Learn what's new at the zoo and when the next Special Event is scheduled. You can read about some of the animals and find out why they are with us.

Looking for a way to help the Friends of the Moonridge Zoo or want to join the Friends yourself? You'll find out right here. There is even a wish list where Don Richardson, our Curator, has listed some of the special needs he has for providing the best possible environment for our animals.

Does Winter have an Effect on the Animals at Moonridge Zoo?

The Moonridge Zoo is an Alpine Zoo. This means that the Zoo is located high in the San Bernardino mountains at 7,000 ft. All of our animals are compatible with the alpine climates. So, our animals are used to being in the snow and freezing temperatures in the winter, and reasonably moderate weather in the summer.

In the colder weather, we make many adjustments for our animals. Diets are increased for smaller animals that need more energy to stay warm. For example, the pair of fishers have turned into ravenous eaters this winter. Stacy Bell, one of the lead keepers, tells me that regardless of how much food she puts in the fisher's enclosure... they gobble up everything and look for more. The mountain lions' eating habits don't change, but the raccoon's eating habits change drastically.

On the other hand, our three grizzly's appetites have dwindled to very small amounts of food. We think the grizzly's instinct is trying to tell them to hibernate, but the local conditions are not right for hibernation. Apparently we could force the bears into hibernation by feeding them foods rich in fat and calories during the fall and early winter, then letting nature take over with the deep sleep. However, we do not feed them high calories in the fall, but we do keep them on a healthy diet year round.

As you'll recall, hibernation is a dormant state resembling sleep over the winter while living off reserves of body fat, with a decrease in body temperature and pulse rate and slower metabolism. In addition to bears, bats and many amphibians also hibernate in the colder winter climates.

The biggest problem at the Zoo in the winter is for the keepers. During and after a big snow storm like we just had in mid-March, the keepers must keep the walking path to the enclosures open and free from snow/ice buildups. Us non-keepers can ignore the snow for a day or so until the storm stops, but these dedicated keepers must be on the job every day of the century. You'll see the



magnitude of the snow/ice problem in some of the pictures in this article.



Extra layers of hay and straw are put out to give our animals a warm, dry, comfortable winter bed. And an animal walking path must be cleared inside of the enclosure to give the creatures a visible path to food and bedding. Imagine for a moment that you are as tall as a fisher... your eyes are about 6-8" above ground. If the fisher had to travel through two feet of snow, they couldn't see the target... and there would be lots of tunneling around to

find the food/bedding. So our keepers cut a path through the snow for most of our little creatures.

Our two female mountain lions pretty much stay in their little house in the cat enclosure. They come out for food and a stretch occasionally, but usually retreat to the house. Chirpa, our 21 year old mountain lion, does get a heat lamp in her enclosure... By the way, Chirpa is among the oldest mountain lions in captivity... and next year she may take the "oldest" honors. The two younger females have slowed their food consumption as well.

Don Richardson, curator of the Zoo, carefully monitors the feeding activities of all the Zoo animals, and adjusts their diet accordingly. For example, the normal summertime diet of fruits/berries/roots and rodents changes significantly in the winter-time... no berries are available, and the rodents are easier to spot on the snow. So, Don follows nature with the seasonal changes in diet.

Some of the smaller animals, like the Kit Fox, also get a heat lamp. **Duncan**, our Kit Fox, is very happy to stand by the infrared heat lamp during the cold mornings and evenings... then retreats to his box for the night. However, it's not unusual to find him standing on a tall pile of snow for a different view of his surroundings. You can see the nice warm smile on his face in the attached picture.



The American Pelicans are a natural in cold water and snow too. Our two pelicans walk around on the snow and swim in the ice cold water as if they belonged there (they DO belong there). You can see one of our pelicans is waving to us in the picture as if he was saying "hey, come on in, the water's fine."

"If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to the man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth."

(Chief Seattle of the Suwamish tribe, in a letter to U.S. President Franklin Pierce)



Our cloven hoofed Mule deers don't seem to care at all about the snow. Their sharp hooves cut through snow and ice very easily to find their hay piles. After taking in several gobs of hay, they'll nestle down in the snow and do some serious cud-chewing for the next several hours, perfectly content with the snow.

The Bald and Golden Eagles and red-tailed hawks are also perfectly content with the snow and cold. The worst thing that happens to them is that their food will freeze if they don't get to it quickly. Yoda, the little pint-sized Saw-Whet owl, will sit on his food if it turns up frozen... that's the quickest way to thaw his food.



Join Friends of the Moonridge Zoo!
(a non-profit organization)

Members of the "Friends" are scattered across the U.S. from California to Maryland to (2) members in the United Kingdom!

See benefit packages under box at right.

Check appropriate box

- Individual Membership\$30.00
- Couple.....45.00
- Family Membership65.00
- # in Family _____ (immediate household family members - 2 adults & 3 children under 18. Each additional child add \$3.00 to pass price)
- Contributing Membership \$150.00
- Sustaining Membership \$500.00
- Keepers' Circle \$1000.00
- Curator's Circle \$5000.00 - One Time

Are you interested in docent training? Yes No

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone No. with area code _____

E-mail _____

Date: _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Paid by: Check Mastercard VISA

Acct.#: _____ Exp.Date: _____

Signature _____

Please make checks payable to:

FRIENDS OF THE MOONRIDGE ZOO (FOMZ)

Mail to: Membership

P.O. Box 2557, Big Bear City, CA 92314

**CURATOR'S CIRCLE MEMBERS
2005-2006**

- Charles & Marjorie Fautz-Dye11 /05
- Jim & Lola McGrew12 /05
- Carolyn Radakovich4 /05
- Laurie Rennie.....3 /05
- Chris & Lorraine Wolfe12 /05

Thank You!

**MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATIONS,
DUES & PRIVILEGES**

BASIC MEMBER BENEFITS

- Free admission to the Big Bear Zoo for one year
- Free or reduced entry to reciprocal zoos
- Subscription to Paw Prints, FOMZ newsletter
- 10% discount in gift shop
- Free or reduced entry to zoo special events
- Docent training

MEMBER CATEGORIES AND BENEFITS

INDIVIDUAL – \$30 per year, one person –
Basic member benefits

COUPLE – \$45 per year, 2 adults –
Basic member benefits

FAMILY – \$65 per year, 2 adults, 3 children
(under age 18, immediate household) - additional children
\$3 per child per year – *Basic member benefits PLUS*

- Four (4) free one-day guest passes

CONTRIBUTING – \$150 per year –
Basic member benefits PLUS

- Free admission to Zoo for family members
- Two (2) additional guests each visit
- 10 free one-day guest passes
- Animal Adoption of your choice

SUSTAINING – \$500 per year –
Basic member benefits PLUS

- Free admission to Zoo for family members
- Two additional guests each visit
- 12 free one-day guest passes
- Animal Adoption of your choice
- Paving Stone with family name in a new specially designated area

KEEPERS' CIRCLE – \$1,000 per year –
Basic member benefits PLUS

- Free admission to the Zoo for family members
- Two (2) additional guests each visit
- 15 free one-day guest passes
- Animal Adoption of your choice
- Paving Stone with family name in a new specially designated area
- "Behind the Scenes" Tour of the Zoo

CURATOR'S CIRCLE – \$5,000 – ONE TIME –
Basic member benefits PLUS

- Lifetime free admission to the Zoo for family
- Four (4) additional friends each visit
- Unlimited one-day guest passes
- Animal Adoption of your choice
- Paving Stone with family name in designated area
- 20% discount in the gift shop
- Annual behind-the-scenes Tour of Zoo
- Annual Dinner Party with Zoo Curator
- Lifetime plaque on Curator's Circle Recognition Wall



MOONRIDGE ANIMAL PARK

Curator: 909-584-1299

Open Year 'Round

Park Hours September-May

Monday-Friday 10:00AM-4:00PM

Saturday-Sunday 10:00AM-5:00PM

Animal Presentations at Noon

Group Tours 909/866-9700

Monday-Friday 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Admission General (Ages 11-59)	\$.5
Seniors (Ages 60 plus)	\$.4
Children (Ages 3-10)	\$.4
Children under age 3	free

Yes! I'm wild about the MOONRIDGE ANIMAL PARK

*Please help me Adopt a wild bird or animal for
\$15.00*

I want to adopt _____
(name of bird or animal)

for _____
(name of person)

Mail this form to: FOMZ, Fran Fish
P.O. Box 2557 • Big Bear City, CA 92314

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email Address: _____

Make check payable to: **FOMZ**
(Friends of the Moonridge Zoo)

Date: _____ Amount \$ _____

Paid by: Check Cash MasterCard VISA

Acct. # _____

Exp. Date _____

Signature: _____

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Events Calendar for 2006

APRIL

- 6 Docent Refresher Course, Noon, Educ. Bldg at Zoo
- 30 B & B's Spring Tea Tour, 1-5 p.m.

MAY

- 17 Board Meeting, 1 p.m. at office
- 27, 28 Bear Country Fair, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

JUNE

- 14 Board Meeting, 1 p.m. at office
- 21 General Meeting, 4 p.m. at Discovery Cntr.
- 24 Sentinel Day, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

JULY

- 1, 2 Zooccasion, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- 19 Board Meeting, 1 p.m. at office
- 21 General Meeting, 4 p.m., Discovery Cntr.

AUGUST

- 6 Concert on the Green, 6 p.m., Fawnskin Inn
- 19 Music in the Zoo, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
- 26, 27 Native American Arts Festival,
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

- 2 Ice Cream Safari, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- 9 Run for the Grizzlies, 7:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- 13 Board Meeting, 1 p.m. at office
- 20 General Meeting, 4 p.m. at Parks & Rec
- 23 Flashlight Safaris, 6:15 p.m.

OCTOBER

- Flashlight Safaris
(every Saturday night through October)
- 21 Wolf Awareness Day, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- 31 Boo in the Zoo, 2 - 5 p.m.

NOVEMBER

- 8 General Meeting, 4 p.m. at Parks & Rec

DECEMBER

- 8 Installation Luncheon



Education is a Big Part of the Zoo's Purpose

There are many reasons why the Moonridge Zoo is alive and well today. Naturally, one of the biggest reasons is that we provide a "home for life" to injured and imprinted creatures of all shapes and sizes. But there is another reason why the Zoo is here in Big Bear... it's called Education. The Friends of the Moonridge Zoo are dedicated to educating the public regarding the treatment, protection, and conservation of alpine wildlife.

During the last 12 months, the Zoo staff, keepers, and specially trained Docents have given 300 off-site educational classes/exhibits to Big Bear Valley parks, schools, community events, and even "off the hill" events to Native America gatherings and schools. Last winter was a very good wet winter for us here at 7,000 ft... but it did present problems with exhibiting our creatures in other communities, so the total number of exhibits/classes was down a little from the year before.

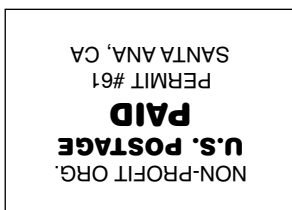
In addition to taking our animals on "day trips", the Docents led about 100 tours at the Zoo. These tours included school children from all around Southern California, as well as many small groups of regular visitor on busy weekends. Last year the Docents also led the "Flashlight Safari" visits after dark, as well as the 3pm feeding tours each day.

On special occasions, Debbie Richardson, Lead Keeper, will take one of our mountain lions on an outing in the Big Bear area. There is an inherent danger taking a 135 pound wild carnivore out of it's enclosure... and that's why Debbie or Don are the only handlers who take the big cats on tour. One of the young female cats, Canyon, was always ready to jump in the carrier and head out to the next class. However, since the passing of her sister, Peg, Canyon won't get in the carrier... she must be thinking that the last time she saw Peg in the carrier, Peg

didn't come back home. Who can blame her for feeling that way? However, with abundant love and patience, Don and Debbie will bring Canyon back to her old self... wanting to go see new things and meet new people.

We are anxiously looking forward to our new Zoo location. This will give us a better opportunity to teach visitors about our animal residents, as well as the natural flora and fauna in our wonderful San Bernardino mountains.

If you are interested in becoming a Docent for the Moonridge Zoo, please contact the Friends of the Moonridge Zoo (FOMZ) office at 909-878-4200. The next Docent training classes start in April 2006. This is a marvelous way of helping care for the animals by educating the visiting public... and it gives the docent a very warm glow inside as well.



FRIENDS OF THE MOONRIDGE ZOO
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Gift Shop: 909-584-1171
www.moonridgezoo.org

The logo features the words "PAW PRINTS" in a large, bold, stylized font. To the right of the text is a detailed illustration of a raccoon's face and paws. Below the raccoon are several small paw prints of varying sizes.