

# ZOO SUMMARY 2016

Curator's End of the Year Report

December 2016

## We Are Our Own Rehab Story

If you have spent much time at the zoo during 2016, you undoubtedly will have noticed that the zoo has been in a constant state of change. We have modified exhibits, changed the Ed Center, added a critter or two, added more signage on grounds, refined our husbandry techniques, and even changed the way that we interact with guests. And while change may be difficult for some, it has furthered the zoo towards reaching its goal of modernizing and preparing for work in a brand new facility. In addition, our changes represent a refined focus on fulfilling our mission to educate, rehabilitate, and rescue.

## Telling Our Story in a Better Way

Our zoo has a history rich in rehab and rescue and yet previously, when patrons walked throughout the zoo, there was no information about who we are, what we do, or the positive impact that we make on the environment. There was no emphasis on our conservation or education messages, which are both major parts of our mission. Today, through our new educational signage, guests have a better glimpse into our story and a better understanding of what they can do to lessen human impact on animals. Some of our signage includes what to do if you find a baby bird or mammal. Our role in rehab, release, and caring for orphaned baby animals, are all told so that our guests and members can truly appreciate the scope of work that we do in protecting our precious animals and their habitats.

## Connecting Our Guests to Wildlife

Key talking points became the expectations for zoo staff this year, with an emphasis placed on the uniqueness of species and habitat, followed by our unique ambassador stories. The change in emphasis is designed to provide a greater educational opportunity for our guests, while highlighting important conservation messages.

## Redefining Rehabilitation

Our rehab policies changed this year with regards to how we rehabilitate our animals. Per our permit regulations, we no longer provide home care, instead ensuring that we comply with best practices by caring for rehab animals onsite and isolated from both zoo and home animals.

As a result, we had a very successful baby season, hand rearing our babies at the zoo and releasing them on time into the wild.

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*“Our family loves this zoo. We love the animal presentations and the staff is so knowledgeable and friendly. Their passes are a great price for families. We go so often and never get bored!”*

*“Great time over all just really disappointed the grizzly bears did not wake up....but the whole zoo is coming together so good.....great job big change.... zoo keepers keep up the good work!!! “*

*“What a great, educational experience. A "must do" when you visit Big Bear Lake “*

**Facebook reviews**

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# New Zoo Construction

After many years of hopes and dreams, the new zoo construction is finally underway! Although the design and budget has been modified several times, the outside structures will continue to be modern and designed for enriching the lives of our animals and for optimal guest experience. The new zoo design will focus on emphasizing the unique characteristics of our Alpine ambassadors. It will also provide the public with a greater viewing experience. Much of the zoo site is currently covered in blanket of snow but we anticipate a continued workflow once the snow melts.

Although we have changed the design of the zoo, our heart will remain the same...still saving wildlife since 1959!



Our most recent and accurate map of the new zoo. You can see a larger version just outside the restrooms at the center of the zoo.

Realistically, we are looking at a completion date of early spring 2018. In the meantime, we're still working on the old zoo and giving our animals here the best that we can



Ariel view of the new zoo site during the beginning of excavation.



BBAZ staff pose in front of a bulldozer at the new zoo construction site, while sporting their new Zoo t-shirts.



Before and after photographs of mountain lion cascade. Our mountain lions are now svelte and active, thanks to controlled diet and exercise.

# Evidence Based Management and the Five Opportunities to Thrive Create a Thriving Environment

Somewhere in Keeper Myths, a fat cat was considered to be a happy cat. This was particular true if cats were over fed in order to reduce aggressive behavior during training sessions. Today, we recognize that if we do not monitor and control the weight of our zoo animals, we are responsible for complications which may result in a shortened lifespan of our animals. This demonstrates the importance of regularly weighing our animals and controlling their diets.

Our keepers have worked hard to follow diet regimens and weighing protocols in order to chisel away at some of the weight issues that our heavier animals face. For some, like our mountain lions, black bear "Pooh" and red tegu, the results are steady and obvious and for others like our black bears "Zuni", "Huck", and "Halley", it's weight loss at it slowest.

## A Calorie Burning Combination

Reduce an animals diet and provide exercise and you have an almost guaranteed weight loss combination. Once keepers provided daily enrichment for all of their animals, and created more naturalistic enclosures, the combination created an environment where our animals became more stimulated and more active. Climbing structures added to mountain lions, snow leopards, foxes, raccoons and some of our larger birds, created habitats that improved the quality of life of our animals and encouraged a greater frequency and intensity of natural behaviors.

Monthly weights, diet regimen, and opportunities for exercise results in healthier animals. Don't believe me? The proof's in the pudding or rather purring if you ask our mountain lions.

# Zoo Welcomes Flying Squirrels

Our newest animal ambassadors have a new exhibit! Our flying squirrel ambassadors Lichen, Truffles, and Juniper now have a spacious location within public viewing!

Since the San Bernardino Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus californicus*) is currently only known to occur in the San Bernardino Mountains, it is difficult to survey, in part due to its nocturnal habits. As a result, little is known of its biology or population trends. Although rare, sightings on the mountain have been noted in Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Fawnskin, Moonridge, and other areas which support the growth of high elevation forests.

Big Bear Alpine Zoo's commitment to conservation includes the rehabilitation and rescue of local flying squirrels. Our current ambassadors enable us to connect our guests to wildlife and heighten awareness about these elusive night gliders. Our commitment also includes providing all of our animals with the Five Opportunities to Thrive.

Our new gliding ambassadors are living in a well perched environment just to the left of the nocturnal building.



Above: Flying Squirrel climbing a perch in front of its display window. Below: an education tube allows for guests to get up close and personal with our flying squirrels.



## Which Way to Weigh?

Our scales vary in size and capacity with some able to weigh objects over 5000 pounds while others as small as 1 ounce. Increments. Although we weigh our animals using the metric system, we'll use pounds just for your benefit.

Here are some fun weights to add to your database:

Mule Deer "Malibu": 105 lbs

Bobcat "Shakespear": 33.5 lbs

Red Tegu "Mars": 11.9 lbs

Grizzly "Harley ": 626 lbs

Grey wolf "Blair": 130 lbs

Black bear "Pooh": 374 lbs

Black bear "Zuni":664 lbs

Mountain lion "Cascade":132 lbs

Snow leopard "Asha": 100lbs

Sulcata tortoise "Speedy": 40 lbs

Bald eagle "Valentine": 9.9 lbs

Golden eagle "Lulubelle": 8.8 lbs

Raccoon "Dillinger": 18.4 lbs

Striped skunk "Chai" 5.8 lbs

Gray fox "Penny": 8.6 lbs

Arctic fox "Aurora": 9.0 lbs

Coyote "Lyric" 27 lbs

Coyote "Bonzai" 55 lbs



Mountain lion "Canyon" exploring her climbing structure and taking full advantage of her opportunity to thrive

## Improving Animal Care

From electronic record keeping to the monthly weighing of animals, keepers are now devoting their time caring for animals using modern techniques. The changes involve using a global network for zoo records (ZIMS), allowing access to valuable animal information across the globe, as well as better input and management practices for how we keep our animal information.

On the keeper side, animal care staff have been tasked with providing monthly weights on their animals. These weights are vital to monitoring animal health, providing both keepers and curator with an overview of weight loss/gain. The weights are recorded onto ZIMS where graphs are instantly created. For some of our animals who have health issues related to weight, this becomes an important tool. How much does grizzly bear "Mama Tutu" weigh, you ask? 392 pounds!

## Opportunities to Thrive

How we care for our animals enables us to provide more opportunities for our animals to thrive. And if 2015 might have been called "The Year of the Five Freedoms," 2016 should be coined "The Year of the Five Opportunities to Thrive." Here are the Five Opportunities to Thrive :

1. Opportunity for a well-balanced diet
2. Opportunity to self-maintain
3. Opportunity for optimal health
4. Opportunity to express species-specific behavior
5. Opportunities for choice and control

We are obligated and committed to provide our animals with the best care possible striving to work above minimum standards of compliance.



RVT Elizabeth performs stuffed animal health checks during National Zoo Keeper Week

## National Zoo Keeper Week Provides a Most Unusual Interaction Opportunity

During the zoo's celebration of National Zoo Keeper Week, some very special animals received wellness exams from our Registered Veterinary Technician. Those wellness exams were for stuffed animals brought to the zoo by our guests, others were free give-aways and some even purchased at our gift shop!

The purpose of the wellness exams was twofold: to illustrate how the record keeping process works when accessing new animals and to give a glimpse into the world of animal care personnel. The stuffed animals were weighed, named, and given a faux vaccination. The information was then recorded on official looking data sheets and handed back to each child along with their stuffed animal.

### What is National Zoo Keeper Week?

Ask any zoo keeper and they'll tell you, there's more to this job than just picking up poop, raking an exhibit, or feeding. Ask for more details and that list will grow into an impressive composite that qualifies this "job" as a profession. But to many of our guests, zoo keeping is what it appears from the outside: poop detail, raking, and caring for exotic wildlife.

National Zoo Keeper Week is celebrated during the third week in July and was created in order to recognize and promote dedicated zoo and aquarium professionals. Stay tuned for more details about future wellness exams and specifically, our zoo's weekend celebration of National Zoo Keeper Week.

## Zoo Animal Care Staff Enroll in 21st Century Learning

One of our major goals at Big Bear Alpine Zoo is to provide our animals, both zoo and rehab, with the best care possible. To do so, it is important to provide our animal care staff with the most current methods and technologies. To meet this goal, BBAZ reached out to the Nation's leading animal care training program with very positive results.

BBAZ became the first small non-AZA accredited zoo to be invited to join the San Diego Zoo Global Academy (SDZGA), a learning resource and certificate based program for zoo keepers across the county. As a proposed pilot program, BBAZ, set the stage for SDZGA to invite other small non-AZA facilities at a very reduced rate. BBAZ's dedication, combined with small budget and a passion for animal care, became the impetus for the San Diego team to reach out to other small non-AZA accredited zoos, offering the same discounted bulk rate.

BBAZ animal care staff are enrolled in the academy courses and have received multiple certificates. All staff have completed the following assigned courses:

- ZOONOTIC DISEASES
- ANIMAL WELFARE
- WORKING SAFELY WITH DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Not only are BBAZ animal care staff learning best practices, they are doing so along side some of the best zoological institutions in the country. Many zoos require their staff to complete the Animal Care Education courses offered by San Diego Zoo Global Academy.

You **CAN** teach an old dog new tricks!



## 2016 Welcomes New Staff

The Zoo increased its staffing this year, welcoming a new fulltime and part time Maintenance worker, one part time cashier and three part time zookeepers.

Replacing our previous maintenance worker who retired last spring, Oscar Mendez transferred from Parks and Rec and has been running at full speed since day one. If you see Oscar at the zoo, chances are he's fixing, painting, building, or creating! Along side Oscar, you'll find Wyatt Forrest, our part time maintenance worker.

We were extremely fortunate to add Brandi Wiemann to our list of energetic cashiers. Our cashiers, the zoo's "front-of-the-house" staff, play an important role by providing our guests with a very positive first impression.

Our animal care staff welcomed three part time employees who were able to replace two vacant positions. Previous docents Dar Larizadeh and Camille Holsheimer and zoo volunteer Lyndsy Jenkins have been working hard to learn the ropes of working in such a diverse environment.



BBAZ Employees of the Season proudly display their wooden plaques. Pictured at top left to right: Christy McGiveron and Summer McElroy; bottom left to right: Elizabeth Gaylord and Dar Larizadeh.

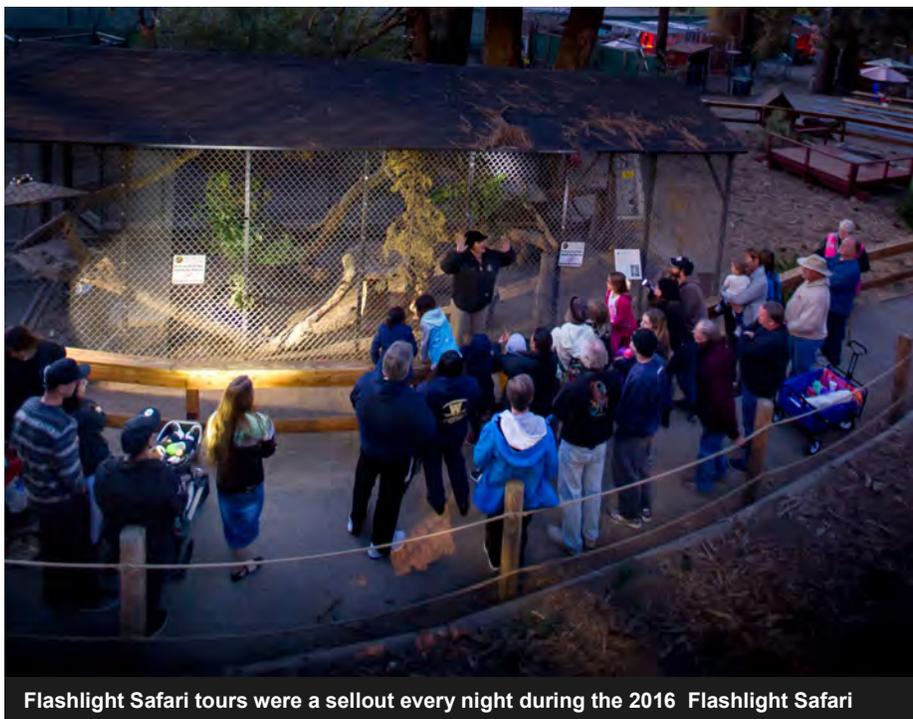
## Zoo Recognizes Staff

As animal care providers, we value positive reinforcement. The concept of positive reinforcement not only works with animals, it also works with staff, too. This year, staff at BBAZ recognized their peers for work performance, dedication, and team work. The peer selections took place four times this year, representing the winter, spring, summer, and fall seasons.

Our Employees of the Season for 2016 are:

- Winter - Christy McGiveron
- Spring - Summer McElroy
- Summer— Elizabeth Gaylord
- Fall—Dar Larizadeh

Each recipient was given a special wooden plaque with a laser-burned replica of a BBAZ animal photo and a certificate of recognition. Well done and congratulations.



Flashlight Safari tours were a sellout every night during the 2016 Flashlight Safari

## Zoo Utilizes Amazon for Wishlist

Finding ways to get both guests and members engaged can often be challenging. Often that engagement translates into generosity. In the past, our online wishlist was a resource for visitors to find ways of helping out the zoo during their visit. However, one of the greatest challenges for us was finding to harness that generosity in ways that benefited the zoo in a more focused manner.

This year, we generated a dynamic wishlist online through Amazon.com. On our Amazon wishlist, we were able to create a list of specific items, long with a detailed description of how each item would be used and the animals that would benefit. The Amazon list included materials and resources

- ENRICHMENT ITEMS
- HEALTH CARE ITEMS
- VETERINARY SUPPLIES
- VETERINARY RESOURCE BOOKS
- ITEMS FOR REHAB
- FACILITY IMPROVEMENT ITEMS
- DIETARY AND NUTRITIONAL SUPPLIES

Just like a wedding registry, we can control the number of items and reduce unnecessary repetition. If the last of a certain item is purchased, it is removed from the list, allowing site visitors the option to purchase another item.

Since most people enjoy buying special gifts for special people, why not offer them a chance to buy some gifts for some very special animals! It's about the easiest way to support the zoo! Type this link onto your browser: <http://a.co/0NUXt3W> and when you find the item you want to purchase for the zoo, click "add to cart" and make sure that you select Big Bear Alpine Zoo for the address. It's that simple!

## Flashlight Safari: Record Attendance for 2016

The 2016 Flashlight Safari saw record attendance numbers this year, increasing our attendance by almost 30% from last year. Based on guest accounts and feedback from some of you, the safaris were a success this year, running as smooth as a well-oiled machine. Keeper staff were satisfied as well, commenting on how the new format (their idea!) worked out so well and contributed to the success of these events!

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the success of these events could not have been possible without the steady support of the many docents who sacrificed their Friday and Saturday nights in order to volunteer their time as tour aids or gift shop attendants. While the keepers may have been leading the tours, you were instrumental in maintaining the integrity of those tours, keeping the groups together and offering assistance where needed.

The Flashlight Safari is a unique event which allows our guests to be connected to the zoo in a very distinctive way. Highlighting the nocturnal and crepuscular side of some of our animals, allows our zoo to connect our guests to our highly specialized animals as well as their counterparts in the wild.

## New Thoughts for Next Season

After collecting valuable feedback from staff and docents, we will be looking at ways in which we can provide more Safari opportunities for our guests, maximizing our turnout without turning anyone away. Stay tuned for more updates.

## Would you like to be a Flashlight Safari Tour Guide? Look for more info in the coming months.

Use paragraphs often. A wall of white text makes it hard for the reader to skim a story and find a way to quickly drop in and out of your content. White space gives



## Reaching Out and Making Connections

In an era where almost everyone has a smartphone and access to the internet, social media has become the go-to platform for keeping zoo visitors engaged after they visit the zoo.

We currently use two major forms of social media: Facebook and Instagram. Both accounts require constant interaction but continue to maintain high engagement values.

Our social media pages allow us to extend our mission of connecting people to wildlife outside of our zoo perimeter. Our posts highlight our ambassador animals while emphasizing the uniqueness of their species. We also use our social media pages to highlight events as well as our fundraisers.

Social media, specifically Facebook, has proven to be a very successful tool for keeping our guests informed. We have seen our page grow to 6,500 fans; up 2,000 since last year. As an added bonus, our page fans have forwarded our posts to their friends— that's free advertising.

If you have Facebook but have not yet joined our page, find our page and like us and then share with your friends!



BBAZ t-shirts and sweatshirts bearing our zoo logo went on sale on [booster.com](http://booster.com)

## Booster.com Fundraiser

The zoo needs a large mammal anesthesia machine. Our bears are long overdue for annual exams and the safest way to perform these exams is under gas anesthesia. The anesthesia machine that we currently have does not have the flow rate capable of delivering the correct amount of air and gas needed to keep our big critters asleep during their exams.

Enter [Booster.com](http://Booster.com), an online sell-on-demand company that lets you sell shirts and sweatshirts online without having to pay for a whole lot of shirts in advance. In addition, because they ship directly to the buyer, we don't have to worry about storage space for large quantities of shirts. Nor do we have to worry about the time spent packaging and costs for shipping. It takes about five minutes to setup and then click...instant fundraiser. Those five minutes of setup raised over \$2,000 which went to a dedicated fund for a new anesthesia machine.

I have seen a number of BBAZ t-shirts and sweatshirts around town and it's amazing to see that kind of support! Even better, is knowing that my family and zookeeper friends around the country have purchased t-shirts and sweatshirts in order to support our little zoo.

[Booster.com](http://Booster.com), it's a great company for a great cause. Stay tuned for details about our January campaign.



# Hail and Farewell

You already know about the flying squirrels. Added to our family of animal ambassadors is Leo the long eared owl. Leo came to us in rehab last year and was not fully recovered enough to be able to release back into the wild. Leo's exhibit is located right in between the flying squirrel and kit fox exhibits. We are hoping to have Leo trained as an education animal.

Every story has a final chapter and for zookeepers, one of the hardest parts of our job is saying good bye to animals that we have dedicated our lives to protect and enrich. 2016 saw the passing of some of our dear animal ambassadors at the Zoo. Although no longer with us, they still occupy a place in our hearts and will be remembered always for their contribution as an amazing animal ambassador.

## Our losses for 2016

- N. American gray wolf Navarre—kidney failure related to old age
- N. American gray wolf Nova—abdominal tumor
- Opossum Harriet—natural causes related to old age
- Raccoon Gibbs— squamous cell tumor
- Hedgehog Ron Carroway—old age

## What's new for 2017?

**We are really hoping to revitalize our education and outreach programs and will be creating a roster of education animals.**

**I would love to see docents who are interested in connecting people to wildlife be part of our programs.**

**As we refine our program, we'll be looking into how to qualify interested persons. Remember, handling animals is a special talent and takes a special aptitude and personality—it's not for everyone. For certain, we'll be expecting you to be familiar with our key talking points.**

**Stay tuned...we'll keep you posted.**

Flashlight Safari guests look on as Lead Keeper Summer introduces Cowboy, our Great horned owl ambassador.

