



# PAW PRINTS

## Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo Newsletter

a nonprofit organization -EIN: 33-0350180

### FOBBAZ



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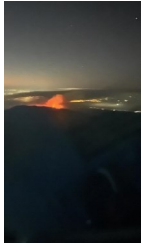
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The Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo's **VISION** is to be a valued nonprofit, whose cooperative support will be a key partner to ensure the success of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo.

The Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo's **MISSION** is to support the Big Bear Alpine Zoo by inspiring understanding, respect, and environmentally responsible action for the stewardship of wildlife and wildlife habitat through conservation, education, volunteer support, and fundraising.



The month of September was filled with FIRE...SMOKE and overall anxiety . The Big Bear Valley is surrounded by the San Bernardino mountains and early in September a fire was intentionally set in the vicinity of Highland, California. Unfortunately , the fire quickly spread and made its way toward our beautiful mountain community. Smoke was a major concern for the animals housed at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo. By September 10<sup>th</sup> over 30,000 acres of precious forest was burning and a portion of the Big Bear Lake area just to the west of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo was ordered to evacuate. While the actual area of the zoo was on evacuation standby, the air quality was off the charts due to smoke and excessive winds.



Birds and smaller animals are particularly susceptible to smoke and poor air quality conditions. The decision was made to evacuate about 50 of the animals from the zoo to the Living Desert and Gardens. The evacuees included birds, foxes and skunks. The evacuation took place on September 12<sup>th</sup> and all went smoothly with Big Bear Alpine Zoo Keepers and Staff heading up the evacuation effort. The whole plan needed extra assistance from additional San Bernardino County staff as well as the staff at the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in Coachella Valley – about 2 ½ hours down into the valley from the Big Bear Alpine Zoo.

Twenty-Six of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo animals remained housed at the Zoo during the evacuation warnings. Bears, Bobcats, Mountain Lions, Snow Leopards, Coyotes, and Wolves were safely kept inside their “luxury” housing which included air filters and large HVAC systems. Our “gaze” of four Raccoons was temporarily housed in the Black Bear building where Vinnie, Tosh, Karen and Bowie had fun exploring the new setting, smelling new scents and keeping Black Bear Pooh amused with their antics. Fire updates and smoke patterns were carefully monitored in case these remaining animals would also need to be evacuated.

The evacuated animals were all successfully returned to the zoo on Thursday September 19<sup>th</sup> and the Big Bear Alpine Zoo re-opened for guests on September 21<sup>st</sup>. As of November 5<sup>th</sup>, CalFire lists the Line Fire at 98% contained and almost 44,000 acres of beautiful forest destroyed. There is no way to determine the overall toll on our forest and animal population. Each evacuation is a learning experience-but lets hope we don't have to “experience” it again soon!



The Evacuation Transfer Teams



Silhouette of Pooh Bear ..wondering what is going on inside the Bear House...



# Many Thanks to Our Local Supporters... 'Del Lago's Boutique' and 'The House of Jerky'

The holiday season is almost here and there is no better place to shop than **Del Lago's Boutique** and **The House of Jerky** in the Village. Lucky me... it is truly a pleasure to shop when I collect our Friends of Big Bear Alpine Zoo donation cans every month.



Lucky for Big Bear Alpine Zoo, too. Del Lago's Boutique and The Big Bear House of Jerky next door has been a family operation since 2008. More recently both daughters, Rebecca (in the picture), and Amanda Wilmes, decided to keep this popular boutique and The House of Jerky franchise open after the untimely passing of their parents.

This family has supported Big Bear Alpine Zoo since opening the shop in 2008. The FOBBAZ donation can sits proudly on each counter and they are chock full every month. This happens simply because the owners and staff routinely nudge customers into donating their change to the can. Many customers that have been to the zoo know these donations go to veterinary services, a good cause. First timers learn about the zoo from staff that frequent the zoo often. Then these visitors look forward to making it a fun destination as well. Rebecca loves animals and said sharing stories and information about the zoo is personal for her. She wants everyone to know how much our zoo supports wildlife conservation to protect more animals in the wild. Thanks to this exceptional support from the owners and staff, it is a win-win for everyone.

Over many years, we are grateful for the hundreds of dollars **Del Lago's Boutique** and **Big Bear House of Jerky** has collected for critical veterinarian services. They are also big donors for our annual Bowling for the Zoo fundraiser. Every donation no matter how big or small benefits rescued animals that get rehabilitated and are either released to their natural habitat or permanently reside in Big Bear Alpine Zoo because they can no longer survive in the wild. Our zoo animals are true ambassadors. Sharing their life stories helps us learn how to better protect and preserve all wildlife so they never end up in a zoo.

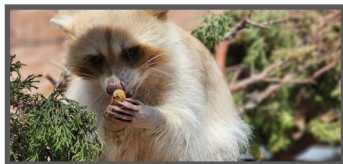
*Del Lago's Boutique is located at 625 Pine Knot Ave in the Village of Big Bear Lake. This family boutique proudly offers trendy and classic fashions for work and play at prices that everyone can afford. They specialize in junior, women and plus size clothing as well as beautiful lingerie, jewelry, handbags, and shoes. There is a nice selection for men, sizes small to 4x, as well. To support the community, locals enjoy a 10% discount and we call it the best secret in town. Get a jump on your holiday shopping and give it a go. And, while there, check out **The House of Jerky** next door. They carry the highest quality of meat made from premium top round steak. There are many flavors; also, vegan, and vegetarian options. This time of year, you can also find great stocking stuffers and travel snacks. Hot Tip: Additional off-street parking is available for Del Lago's and The House of Jerky shoppers. This is a great bonus on busy weekends and holidays. Enjoy!*

-Kimberlee Kidd, Friends of Big Bear Alpine Zoo Docent, Donation Can Collector



Big Bear Alpine Zoo—

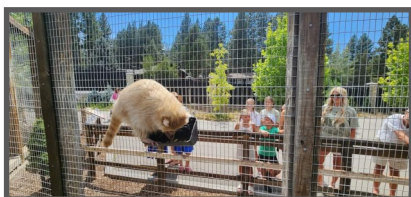
focus on Bowie



If you have spent time observing our little raccoon "gaze"...you may have noticed a very special little fellow. Bowie stands out in the crowd with his striking blond hair. Bowie is leucistic. Leucism is a genetic mutation that causes a partial loss of pigmentation in animals that results in pale coloring of the fur.

Bowie came to us from a sanctuary in Northern California in 2021 and was on the small side for a young raccoon. We don't know for sure...but think that Bowie was probably kicked out of his family home because he posed a threat to the family safety. Bowie was just too visible up in the trees. Bowie was not very good at climbing or locating food when he arrived at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo- all the tasks that a mother raccoon should have taught this little guy.

However, Bowie is a scrappy boy and soon figured out what to do...and is now quite comfortable in his Big Bear Alpine Zoo family.

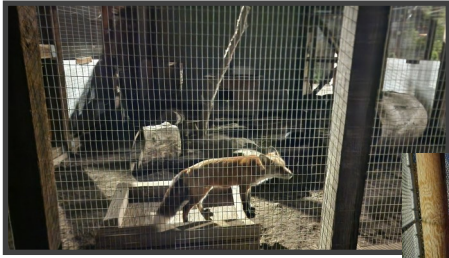




*Mark your Calendar!!*

Bowling for the ZOO will take place May 4th 2025 at the Village Bowling Barn in Big Bear Lake. Committees have been formed and these groups are busy getting things ready for another fun filled day. If you were part of a bowling team in April 2024, we will be reaching out to see if you want to secure a spot for the fun in 2025.

Thanks everyone and see you all again in May!

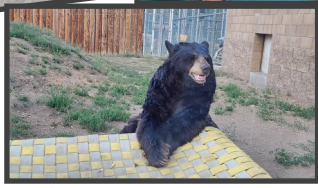


# Twilight Tours

Our 2024 Twilight Tour schedule was interrupted with Line Fire related closures and resulted in just

three Saturday evenings of fact filled visits in late September and early October. Each tour lasted about 90 minutes and involved visiting five different areas around the Big Bear Alpine Zoo. A Zoo Keeper was stationed at each "stop" to give a talk on the animals in that specific area. The stops included inside information on Black Bears, Raccoons, Owls, Foxes, Nocturnal Flying Squirrels, Mountain Lions, Bobcats, Snow Leopards as well as our Grizzley's, Wolves, Coyotes and Skunks.

There were 6 tours each evening, rotating around the zoo beginning at 5:00 pm. For guests who wanted to hang around and chat, we had a hospitality area set up in the Zoo's front courtyard. Our neighborhood partners, Moonridge Coffee and Dank Donuts provided hot beverages and treats. Souvenir 2024 Twilight Tour T-shirts were also available. If you missed the opportunity to purchase one...we have a few left- contact the FOBBAZ office.



# October fun.... Boo at the Zoo and Wolf Appreciation Day



Boo at the Zoo and Wolf Awareness Day took place on October 26<sup>th</sup> and what a fun day it was. There were stations to pick up facts and stations to pick up sweets....a little variety for everyone. The “wolf pack” truly enjoyed being the center of attention and happily received enrichment bags several times during the day. Enrichment bags were made up at the wolf station and contained special veggies, fruits and dried meal worms. Our super dedicated and flexible Zoo Keepers assisted in passing out the enrichment bags to our little wolf family.

Boo at the Zoo consisted of several stations strategically placed around the zoo. There was an Extinct Animal Cemetery where a ghoulish hostess explained what had happened to certain animals and the impact that we humans have on the animal world. There was a game area as well as a craft section where hundreds of little bats were constructed. Skull Island was visited by hundreds of guests and they had the opportunity to check out skulls, paw tracks and pelts. Of course...there was also an abundance of Halloween treats at each area.



## Fawnskin Doo-Dah Parade....

Fawnskin is a sleepy little enclave of cabins located on the north side of Big Bear Lake. Every year...residents and businesses from both sides of the lake get together for a fun day of crazy floats...wagons...food and laughter.

It was a beautiful fall afternoon in Fawnskin- October 26th. Docents Kimberlee Kidd, Rhonda Warner and Sherry Wentz represented Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo in the Doo-Dah Parade. Dressed in Docent attire and pulling wagons decorated with Bears, Wolves, squirrels ,snakes and blasting “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” on a Bluetooth speaker....our docents made their way down the road.

The ladies tossed out candy and zoo swag bags to onlookers lining the main street thru Fawnskin. A fun day was had by all. Thanks to Robert Herr for dressing up as the zoo’s Mountain Lion Mascot.

All the fun paid off as the team was awarded 1st place in the Adult Winner category.



# Snow Leopards



For two Saturdays in November we put the spotlight on our two beautiful Snow Leopards, Asha and Shanti.

The "girls" came to live at Big Bear Alpine Zoo in June of 2014 when they were about two years old. Asha and Shanti were born at the Woodland Park Zoo in May of 2012.

They were part of a recognized breeding program that was taking place at the Woodland Zoo located near Seattle, Washington. Unfortunately, both Asha and Shanti were diagnosed with a rare congenital eye issue. Both of their right eyes had stopped growing and the decision was made to remove them to prevent infection. The girls were removed from the breeding program due to this inherited eye anomaly and Big Bear Alpine Zoo was chosen for their forever home as our zoo satisfied many of Asha and Shanti's unique needs including a higher altitude.

November 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> were dedicated to our Snow Leopards with fun facts, game sheets and special snow leopard bags for guests that stopped by. Docents were on hand to share stories about the girls as well as ensure everyone learned a fun fact about snow leopards!

While we were roaming and enjoying Snow Leopard Saturday, we realized that we had a special group of students visiting us from Oak Valley College in Rialto, CA. The students were conducting ethograms which involve observing animal behaviors. Each student observed 2 animals during their visit and reported on 8 behaviors. The students are involved in study at Oak Valley of Scientific Principles. Visiting the Big Bear Alpine Zoo on November 9th included Roxy, Brooke, Isaac, Destiny and Nate under the guidance of their faculty advisor- Meg. Thanks for visiting and taking the time to chat with our docents!



When you visit the Big Bear Alpine Zoo, the animals that you can observe are full time residents. If we feel they will not thrive back in the wild, we will keep them with us and the Big Bear Alpine Zoo will be their forever home.



We do, however, get several animals into our Animal Support building that hopefully, you will never get to meet. Our goal with the animals that are entrusted into our care is to rescue, rehabilitate and return them to their original habitat. Fall was a busy time for the staff in the Animal Support building with the addition of many chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits over the last few months.

Bird wise quite a few pigeons and black birds were admitted to the support unit.. We did have one flammulated owl who was so tiny and cute (smaller than a screech owl). Unfortunately he had a very bad wing injury that could not be fixed and had to be humanely euthanized. His X-ray also showed what looked like a sewing needle imbedded in his body.

This is a good reminder to be extra careful what you discard outside where animals could accidentally ingest it!



**We ask you to continue to be aware that this mountain is home to many, many species of wild animals, all of whom are vital to our environment.**



Wood sculptures of Mama Tutu, Harley and Ayla near the Grizzly habitat

## Just arrived....

Next time you are at the zoo...take a look around at the recently rehabilitated wood animal sculptures. These were saved from the old zoo grounds and have been stored these past four years on our back lot.

Carefully cleaned...sanded and stained...the wood critters are slowly making their way back to prominent zoo locations.





**Santa Claws**

**December**

**14th and 21st**

Santa will be making two brief stops at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo while he is out and about visiting with children and shopping for goodies.

Visit with Santa at the Big Bear Alpine Zoo on December 14<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> from 10 am to 3 pm.

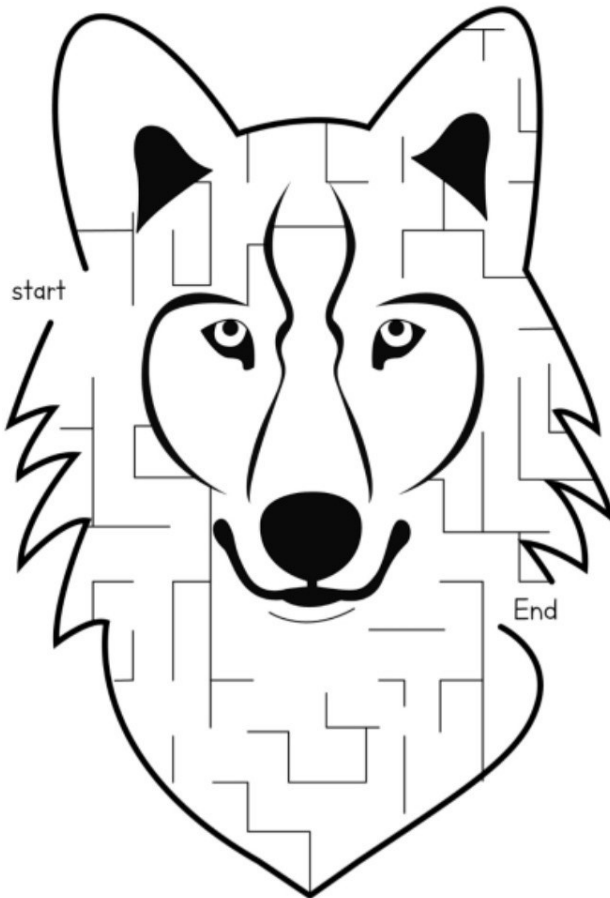
The Zoo staff will be taking care of Santa's reindeer while Santa takes a little break over by the Wolf enclosure. In honor of the visits, we plan to have some music and goodie bags available for our smaller guests.

Bring your camera.... There will be some good photo opportunities !



## Kids Corner

### Wolf Maze



HOMEMADEHEATHER.COM



### How can you help support the Zoo ?

If you have visited the Big Bear Alpine Zoo, you may have noticed this lovely photo opportunity spot with a very long bench in front. This is the Friends of the Big Bear Alpine Zoo (FOBBAZ) Donor Wall area.

Very special Donors- Families, Trusts, Corporations and Individuals have donated funds to FOBBAZ that results in the honor of a space on this special display. The amounts break down as follows:

- \$1,000 to \$4999 results in a 3" disc
- \$5,000 to \$14,999 results in a 4" disc
- \$15,000 to \$24,999 results in a 5" disc
- \$25,000 and higher- a 6" disc is displayed.



There is still room on the wall. If you would like to discuss the possibility of your name or business being up on our display, please call the FOBBAZ office to discuss the many options for supporting the Zoo.

**Please visit the FOBBAZ website for more information on how to support the Big Bear Alpine Zoo.**

[friendsofthebigbearalpinezoo.org](http://friendsofthebigbearalpinezoo.org)