June ~ 2021

Dear Animal Enthusiasts and Supporters of Monterey Zoological Society,

Just over six months past our previous newsletter, life at Monterey Zoo has begun approaching what some might define as a "normal way of life" but in truth, as we are in fact a brand-new zoo that was supposed to open in March of 2020, we’re not exactly sure what “normal” is or will be but we do know life is far better than it was in June of 2020 and promising to continue getting better. We very much thank those who have visited and exercised patience in helping us deal with Covid19 restrictions as well as the creation of necessary rules, restrictions and guidelines for our zoo as we work together to create an environment that benefits both the animals and our visitors.

To bring you up to date, our zoo founder and director as well as owner of Vision Quest Ranch has decided to close the pet boarding facility located on the property and within the same building as the zoo. Although Oxton Kennels has a very long history of providing pet boarding services to the Monterey and Salinas communities, the current small business climate coupled with changes in California laws no longer make it feasible to keep this business open.

There is an upside to this heart-felt decision however for with our commitment to our zoological accrediting organization, Zoological Assoc. of America (ZAA), the space freed up from removing the boarding facility from the building will enable us to move forward on building our animals a state of the art veterinary care facility they so very much need and will enable us to provide all necessary veterinary having to transport the animals to off-site veterinary. With a complete surgical suite, lab testing equipment, exam/treatment room and recovery area, this new facility is an addition that Monterey Zoo has very much looked forward to. We are very much hoping our donors will contribute to this project, estimated to cost approx. $225,000.00. Our goal is complete our medical clinic before the summer of 2022, after which time we will begin exploring the many other possible uses for the additional space that will be available to the zoo. This will definitely include some very fun, educational and exciting new exhibits for our zoo.
Several have asked about our on-going saga with PETA to which we unfortunately must respond by stating that we are still battling their terrorizing as we await a date on the appellate court calendar to address the appeals they’ve filed against all previous decisions against their false allegations in the Superior Courts. Much more information on this matter is available on our previous newsletter from Oct. of 2020 however we will continue to do our best defending that which we know to be the TRUTH as PETA continues to mislead and misrepresent the truth in order to hide their hidden agenda from those they mislead into supporting them. Sadly, it does greatly tax our efforts financially but we will never let that deter us from our mission and we sincerely appreciate all who contribute towards this unjust battle. BTW, we still invite and welcome PETA to visit, walk and talk with us in person, hoping they will one day allow “truth” to influence their future behavior.

Newcomers to Monterey Zoo...

As always, our family continues to suffer the loss of loved ones as well as the celebrate the arrival of new-comers. Although losses have been minimal, we did lose our very old ring-tailed lemurs, Guido and Pierre, who contributed greatly to our education programs. But in moving forward, our friends at Safari Bob’s in Florida had two baby ring-tailed lemurs in need of a home therefore they generously donated them to Monterey Zoo.

Now comes the fun part, raising them. Having only arrived in June of 2021, the “every four hour” feedings continue as we learn more and more about “Mork” & “Mindy”, our beautiful new ring-tailed additions. In keeping with our attempt to see as few animals as possible living alone at Monterey Zoo, we recently brought in an additional African Pied Crow to accompany Betty, our existing pied crow of many years. “Quora” is currently completing her quarantine, after which both will begin their acclimation protocol to assure their safe and healthy introduction.

The next new-comer was a bit special to our zoo director, Charlie Sammut, as many know his affinity for the reptiles at our zoo, especially our Asian monitor lizard, Leonidas (lft-below). “Leon” as his friends call him, came to us in March of 2021. He was raised and living with a very caring and loving family in Arizona who felt Monterey Zoo would be the ideal home for him when at 6+ feet long, he outgrew his enclosure in their home. We can’t thank them enough for their contribution as well as for doing such an incredible job of raising Leon. But Charlie’s love of and fascination with monitor lizards went even further when he took on a very special project in June of 2021, the adoption of a newly hatched, melanocytic Asian water monitor, better known to reptile enthusiasts as a “Black Dragon”. Currently less than 12 inches long and being very carefully raised in Charlie’s home at the zoo, little Django (rt) will one day grow to be the same size as Leon and hopefully be as incredibly sweet and loving when he joins our zoo’s new reptile-rainforest exhibit.
This new exhibit WILL BE opening soon, upon the state and OSHA finalizing the guidelines that will allow us to do so. Because Charlie can never have enough large lizards in his life, and because our friends at Safari Bob’s in Florida knew he would never find a better home, they also donated “Fabrizio”, a very sweet Red Tegu lizard that was very special to them. Fabrizio is almost full grown and we’re hoping he’ll play an important role in our reptile education and conservation programs that will soon be underway.

And finally from the scaly front, our baby Bearded Dragons born on Mother’s Day are growing fast and healthy. They are truly adorable… at least to a true lizard lover!

But in realizing the scaly-forked tongued creatures are not for all, and in keeping with our attempt to find all our animals a habitat-mate, our attempts to find an adult African caracal to pair up with our older male, Bartley, has failed for over a year therefore we decided to bring in a baby,, introducing “Mr. Spock” (better known to his friends as “Mr. Spock” 😊 ) He was born at a zoo in Florida.

Our hope and goal is to mirror our previous project with our Siberian Lynx, Vladimir, who we raised up and introduced to our existing adult lynx, Nadia. (See Oct. 2020 newsletter…) Today, Vladimir and Nadia couldn’t be happier together.

**Sharing with those who do so much for us...**

Monterey Zoo, in coordination with The Our Hero’s Dreams organization, provides disabled veterans and their families a very special, private hands-on experience we call a “Healing Safari” for if anything can take their minds off of a missing limb or devastating memory, a Siberian lynx or monitor Lizard in their lap or perhaps a tiger, very up close and personal, can! This program is truly one of the most rewarding for all of us here at Monterey Zoo.
The veterans who participate in this program also volunteer their time and energy to help us build and maintain our zoo, creating a mission they so very much need when their mission of soldiering is no-longer asked of them. This is the goal of Our Hero’s Dreams, teaching veterans how to help themselves while continuing to help others. We encourage you to visit www.ourherosdreams.org to learn much more about this special program.

Your help and support is so very much needed, now, more than ever…

While working with our veterans as well as watching those physically challenged and restricted to wheelchairs who visit our zoo, we soon realized the tremendous value of the “glass barriers” that were so generously donated by our friends at Coast Counties Glass. Coast Counties Glass has now furthered that generosity by offering us additional glass panels at their cost so we can install them in many other places of the zoo which in turn will create a much more rewarding experience for all.
We’re hoping you’ll help us achieve this goal. For a $750 donation, the OHD veterans along with zoo staff will volunteer their time to install one (or more) of these 38” x 84” tempered ½” window barriers. And for doing so, we’ll install a forever plaque with your family’s or company’s name on the window to commemorate your effort to help our zoo and our community. For more information, simply visit www.montereyzoo.org/donate/ and go to our Donate page where you can download a PDF with all the information you’ll need to get your glass panel on the way.

Our 2021 Annual ZOO Fundraising Gala...

In lieu of our annual Fundraising Gala that so many look forward to and that we were forced to suspend in 2020 due to COVID, we hosted a Virtual AUCTION. Thanks to your generous support and participation, funds generated from that effort along with state and federal grant programs kept our zoo afloat. This year, we are BACK-ON and planning to host our 2021 Annual Fundraising Gala on September 25th, 2021.

This year’s theme for the party will be Christmas in September because IF EVER we all needed Christmas to get here a little early, it’s this year! If you’ve attended one of our past galas, you’ll understand why you need to visit our website and purchase tickets soon as this event does sell out quickly.

This is truly a magical evening of fine food, award winning wines, spirits, live and silent auctions, live entertainment and best of all, animals. It is without a doubt, unlike any other fundraising event you will ever attend. Go to the EVENTS page of our website at www.montereyzoo.org/events/ to learn more about this event.

Might you have a service or item you could donate to our live or silent auction? It doesn’t have to be animal related. Sports tickets, a cool collectable, a musical instrument... Anything you feel someone might enjoy enough to make a donation to the zoo.

We very much THANK all those who have helped us achieve so much in such a short period of time. We thank those who continue to help us today as we strive to become the BEST “little” ZOO in the United States today. In fact, we’re not feeling so “little” anymore...!!!