

Squawk 'n Talk



Gateway Parrot Club



Meeting Announcement
Sunday, February 19, 2017
Varieties Bird Store
Valley Park, MO
2:00 p.m.

Due to inclement weather in January, our meeting was cancelled. We are happy to announce Anne Tieber, Curator of Birds at the St. Louis Zoo has been rescheduled to speak in February.

The following is a description of Anne's presentation: "The St. Louis Zoo is committed to connecting people to animals and is renowned for its innovative approaches to animal management and conservataion. Learn about our Wildcare Institute centers and how they are making a difference in the lives of animals and people around the globe. Anne Tieber, Curator of Birds will share information about the three avian Wildcare centers that the zoo participates in: Center for Conservation in Punta San Juan, Peru; Center for the Conservation of the Horned Guan (Pavon) in Mexico; and The Pacific Bird Conservation Program"

Come join us for a fun Sunday afternoon:

Program
Food
Fellowship
Raffle
Meeting

February 2017

Information from the Perch

We were disappointed that we had to cancel the January meeting due to inclement weather, but we are very happy to announce that our speaker, Anne Tieber, will be able to speak this month. Anne was recently promoted to Curator of Birds at the St. Louis Zoo. What a fun job that would be!

Chef Christine will be making chili, cornbread, and fruit pizza for our lunch. Feel free to bring something to add to the buffet (snack, salad, dessert, etc.)

Quaker Parakeet Society (QPS):

The Quaker Parakeet Society (QPS) is one of several avian organizations that GPC has a club affiliation with. The society strives to provide factual, detailed information on Quakers as companion parrots through education, encourages legalization of Quakers in states where they are currently banned and strives to prevent further restriction of ownership, promotes protection and preservation of Quaker natural habitats, and supports and encourages veterinary and avicultural research of all avian species. Membership is only \$15.00 a year. Their website address is: quakerparakeetsociety.org

QPS is an enthusiastic group and many members attend the annual American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) Conference where their annual meeting is held.

QPS provides its members with these services:

- Publication of The Sentinel three times per year. This publication averages 60 pages per issue. Contributors to the Sentinel are professional and hobbyist writers, avian behaviorists, Quaker breeders, enthusiasts, and owners. Each issue shares with its readers the joy of living with a companion Quaker, the latest information available on Quaker health, care and behavior, as well as updates on Quakers in the wild and legislation.
- Offers a discussion list where owners can have closer contact with other Quaker owners.
- A very important service provided is the QPS Re-home and Placement Program (QPSRAPP) where members assist in the re-homing of Quakers in

the United States if for any reason the owner(s) decide they would like to find a good home for their bird or owners are moving to or living in a state where Quakers are banned.

The following article was written by our member, Heidi Hellmuth. She mentioned that it was written for a zoo audience, but it does have applicability for anyone using enrichment more safely.

Safer Enrichment – It's as Easy as 1,2,3

Heidi Hellmuth – Smithsonian's National Zoo & The Shape of Enrichment

Valerie Hare – The Shape of Enrichment

By definition, an enriched environment offers more potential for harm than a sterile one. Yet the behavioral, physical, and welfare benefits of enriched environments are generally considered to outweigh the risks. To make enrichment safer, caretakers should make every reasonable effort to anticipate problems and to reduce the potential dangers associated with enrichment. By using a simple, three step process, animal caregivers can help improve the safety of their enrichment efforts. 1) Evaluate – utilizing an enrichment approval system that includes a detailed safety checklist can help to more critically evaluate potential safety risks; 2) Read – The Shape of Enrichment's new safety database is an anonymous, living catalog of known safety incidents involving enrichment, which can help others to learn from these unfortunate experiences and help to avoid problems before they occur; and 3) Share – in addition to sharing enrichment successes, submitting enrichment safety incidents to The Shape of Enrichment's website will allow others to benefit from these experiences, and provide safer enrichment to the animals in their care.

The catalyst for this paper, and for the presentation at the ABMA conference, was a talk given at the 2007 International Conference on Environmental Enrichment (ICEE), held in Vienna, Austria, titled *Enrichment Gone Wrong!* (Hare, Rich, & Worley, 2007). It featured a variety of examples of enrichment safety hazards, along with tips for how to minimize and mitigate some of the most common risks. After the talk, during the question and answer period, there was a suggestion of putting all of these safety incidents in a common location as a resource for people to learn about enrichment risks, so that they could make their own enrichment efforts safer. That discussion led directly to the development of the new enrichment safety database on The Shape of Enrichment's website, and to this presentation at the ABMA 2010 conference.

Step One

The first step to safer enrichment is EVALUATE. The most important part of this step is to encourage critical thinking about enrichment safety. For example, an earlier version of the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park (NZIP) enrichment approval form had a single, open-ended query in the safety section:

SAFETY

Note any potential safety concerns and restrictions on use.

The vast majority of responses in this section involved some version of “none”. It appeared obvious that people were not putting much thought into potential safety risks that their enrichment strategy might pose, and were making assumptions that they would be safe. As a result of learning more about enrichment safety at ICEE, the safety section for NZP’s approval form was completely revised, to encourage more critical thinking:

SAFETY

Please evaluate item for potential safety risks (a box must be checked for each item below):

Low Moderate High

Body part entrapment – holes

Body part entanglement – hanging materials

Item lodged in mouth

Ingestion

Other potential risks?

Additional comments:

RESTRICTIONS on USE

Note any restrictions on the use of this item (ex. supervised only, on or off exhibit only, etc.):

Including the checklist for the most common hazards helped encourage people to really think about their enrichment idea, how it might be used by the animals, and to better assess possible dangers.

Enrichment safety hazards can be organized into three main categories – animal safety, human safety, and other risks. For animal safety, main categories to consider include body part entrapment, entanglement or strangulation in hanging materials, items or components becoming lodged or stuck in an animal’s mouth, and ingestion concerns.

When evaluating enrichment for body part entrapment, it’s important to consider the size of holes or gaps in the device, and to evaluate the entrapment risk for all body parts: head, snout, teeth, paws, limbs, antlers/horns, neck, full body, etc. Examples of incidents involving entrapment:

- Maned wolf and feeder ball – a maned wolf was given a soft plastic feed ball unsupervised overnight. In the morning keepers found the wolf with the ball wedged over its lower jaw. The wolf had to be sedated to remove the ball, and received minor lacerations, but recovered fully.
- Fishing cat and PVC pipe – a fishing cat pool had a PVC pipe in it, used as a hiding area for live fish which are given as enrichment. The PVC pipe was large enough for the fishing cat’s paws to easily fit in to try and get the fish, but a cat stuck its head in to pursue the fish and got stuck in the pipe. The cat was sedated and the tube removed. Although the fishing cat recovered, it sustained severe injuries to its claws, and drowning was a definite risk during this incident.

To reduce the risk of body part entrapment, here are some tips to consider:

- Make sure all holes and openings are either too large or too small for any body part to become entrapped, and establish minimum/maximum hole sizes as part of your enrichment protocols
- Soft, flexible items can change shape during use, which may pose additional risks for entrapment as hole size can vary
- Make sure that enrichment items are evaluated for safety with each individual animal that will have access to it, not just generally for the species
- Check enrichment items daily for wear and damage

Another common enrichment hazard involves entanglement or strangulation in hanging materials. Several animals have died over the past few years due to this, in some cases gaining access to items that staff thought were safely out of reach. Some examples:

- Gorilla and braided rope – a gorilla pulled apart a braided rope in its enclosure, and got the rope caught around its neck. Staff tried to revive the gorilla, but it died due to strangulation.
- Saki monkey and wire – a young saki monkey accessed a piece of wire which was used in bamboo screening in its enclosure. The wire got wrapped around the monkey's waist. Luckily the wire was able to be removed by a keeper and the monkey was uninjured.
- Cockatoo and rope – a pair of cockatoos had rope in their enclosure for perching and enrichment. The rope became frayed, and this was not noticed by staff. One morning the male cockatoo was found dead in the enclosure, hanging upside down from the frayed rope in which it had become entangled.
- Maned wolf and bungee – a ball was hung on a bungee cord, at head height, for a maned wolf. The wolf pounced on the ball, stretching the cord, which then wrapped around its leg. Luckily the wolf remained calm and was able to extricate itself without injury.

A few suggestions to reduce the most common entanglement/strangulation risks:

- Check all items daily for wear and damage
- Be aware of the length, diameter, and flexibility of hanging materials to make sure they cannot loop around an animal
- Cover flexible hanging materials with a more rigid material like a garden hose, fire hose, PVC pipe, metal conduit, or other material
- Never hang an item with a looped attachment, no matter what the material, as this loop poses a significant entrapment hazard

Evaluating enrichment items should also include whether or not the item, or any part of it, could get stuck in the animal's mouth; or in some cases even cause an animal's mouth to become stuck shut:

- Giraffe and rubber ball – a giraffe target was made from a rubber ball glued on top of a piece of bamboo. The ball fell off, and was stuck back on the bamboo but not re-glued. The giraffe used its tongue to dislodge the ball, which became stuck between the animal's cheek and molars. It took several days, but staff was able to massage the ball free eventually.

- Polar bear/otters and cardboard – there are several instances where animals’ mouths were glued shut due to cardboard. In all cases the cardboard was given in areas with water features, and the adhesive used in the cardboard was moistened and caused this adhesive to activate, literally gluing the animals’ mouths. In all cases the animals were sedated and recovered fully.
- Lion/tiger and balls – In multiple cases, large cats got balls stuck in their teeth, or lodged in their mouths. The tiger got her teeth stuck in a large ball but was able to free herself. The lion had a ball lodged in its mouth and passed out, but revived once the ball was removed.

Risks can be identified and reduced by thinking carefully about the item, how the animal might use it, and if the whole item or any parts might become stuck in an animals’ mouth. It is also important to consider how easy/difficult it would be to intervene and assist if an item did become stuck.

Along with the other risks already discussed, accidental ingestion of enrichment items needs to be considered when evaluating their suitability and safety. It’s important to think not only about the entire item, but all materials and parts, in case it becomes damaged or comes apart:

- Fishing cat and cloth bag – a fishing cat was given a rabbit in a cotton bag. While eating the rabbit, it also ingested part of the bag, and went off food. The cat required surgery to remove the obstruction, but recovered.
- Giant anteater and shoes – an anteater was given tennis shoes for enrichment, and tore up the shoes with its claws and ingested small pieces. The anteater had to be sedated for treatment, but recovered.
- Macaque and sisal rope – a macaque became lethargic and uninterested in food. After not responding to treatment, exploratory surgery was performed. The macaque was found to have a large ball of rope strands (from exhibit features) in the stomach, as well as rope in the intestines. The rope caused damage to the intestines, including perforations allowing leakage into the abdomen. Due to the severe damage, euthanasia was required.

To reduce the risk of ingestion, materials used for food-based enrichment should be considered carefully. When using feeder devices made of materials that are potentially ingestible, like cardboard/paper/cloth, use only food that doesn’t stick or absorb such as kibble, dried fruit, insects, seeds, nuts, etc. If using foods like meat, fruit, honey, peanut butter, etc., feeder devices should be made of strong, non-absorbing materials like hard plastic or metal (Hare, Rich, & Worley, 2007).

Animal safety may be the most obvious enrichment risk, but there are other potential dangers including escape, human safety, and other hazards. Here are a few examples:

- Orangutans and PVC feeders – after removing food from PVC feeders, the animals used the pipe to break the light fixtures above their exhibit. Luckily keepers were able to move the animals before they were injured by the broken glass.
- Fur seal and gorilla with ice blocks – in both cases animals threw the ice blocks out of the exhibits. The gorilla would apparently intentionally throw the ice blocks at visitors when agitated; while the fur seal used the toy sticking out of the ice as a handle and flung the block, striking a child in the head.

- Bonobos and branch – bonobos pulled a branch off of an old climbing structure, propped it on the wall, and escaped the enclosure. Luckily for all involved the animals returned to the exhibit on their own.
- Tiger and PVC rattle – when the normal 6 inch PVC was unavailable, a tiger rattle (PVC with rocks inside) was made from 4 inch pipe instead. The tiger managed to get crack the PVC, and the sharp edges cut the animal’s tongue. Luckily it was not injured seriously.

Step Two

In addition to careful evaluation of potential enrichment risks, a safer enrichment program also involves step two, READ. In 2009, an enrichment safety database was added to The Shape of Enrichment’s website, to catalogue actual safety incidents that have occurred at zoos and other animal facilities. The database entries are completely anonymous, to encourage facilities to be willing to share their experiences so that others might benefit from their unfortunate incidents.

The database is searchable by Taxa, Enrichment Type, and Hazard; and multiple options can be selected in each category. (Figure 1)

For example, searching under the taxa - Mammal, Carnivore, Large; enrichment type – PVC and plastic objects; and all hazards currently yields three entries. (Figure 2)

This database can be an important resource for everyone who works with animals. There are many papers written and presentations given touting and sharing enrichment success stories. These are great because they inspire and encourage us to continue and expand our enrichment efforts with the animals in our care. Just as important, however, is learning about enrichment risks and hazards, so that we can benefit from the experiences of others to offer our animals with safer enrichment strategies.

Step Three

This database is only as good as its entries, which brings us to step three – SHARE. The Shape of Enrichment’s safety database is the most visited page (except for the home page) on the website, which means people are interested in this resource. Several enrichment coordinators require their volunteers and interns to read the database prior to submitting any new enrichment ideas.

As of October 1 2010, there are 47 entries in the safety database, only one of which is non-mammalian. This is a great start, but there are certainly many more stories to share out there. The database needs everyone’s involvement to be a more comprehensive and complete resource for us all. To help achieve this goal, and to allow others to learn from your experiences, please contribute your enrichment safety experiences to the database.

Sharing is easy, and anonymous. How do you submit something to the safety database? First, go to The Shape of Enrichment website – www.enrichment.org. Next, go to the Services tab, and click on Safety. On the Safety page there is a link to contact the Safety Editor. (Figure 3)

Your submission is emailed to the Safety Editor, who edits the entry and removes any references to the facility involved, so that all information is posted in an anonymous manner. The edited

entry is emailed to the submitter for approval, and once approved the entry is added to the database as a resource for others.

The goal of this paper, and of the safety database, is to help all of us use the information available to offer the animals in our care with an enriched, and safer, life. It is about looking at RISK ASSESSMENT, not RISK AVERSIVENESS. Sharing safety issues should not make us fearful to offer enrichment; instead it gives us powerful information to reduce and mitigate enrichment risks, and should give us more confidence in the safety of our efforts.

Please be a part of this effort, and use this three step process in your enrichment program:

- 1) Evaluate – critically evaluate safety risks prior to approving and implementing enrichment
- 2) Read – use The Shape of Enrichment’s safety database to learn about safety incidents at other facilities, in order to avoid some of the same issues at your facility
- 3) Share – submit any enrichment safety issues to the safety database so that others can learn from your experiences

Safer enrichment, it really is as easy as 1,2,3.

References

Enrichment Safety Database, The Shape of Enrichment Website,
<http://www.enrichment.org/Safety.php>.

Hare, V., Rich, B., & Worley, K. (2007) *Enrichment Gone Wrong!* Paper presented at the 2007 International Conference on Environmental Enrichment

General Meeting Information:

Come and enjoy the fun on February 19th and bring a bird (as long as it is clipped). It's so enjoyable seeing all the different species of parrots and talking to other parrot owners. To learn more about the Gateway Parrot Club, go to our website: gatewayparrotclub.org

You don't have to be a member to attend, but we would love to have you join. Meeting starts at 2:00 and it will be a full afternoon of meeting, socializing, eating, program, and raffle. For members who have not renewed their membership for 2017, now is the time to do it. Renee Davis, our membership chairman, will be at the meeting to sign you up. An annual membership fee of \$20.00 includes your family (two voting members) and brings you our monthly newsletter by email or U.S. mail. Thank you for joining and helping support the parrot community in St. Louis.

We meet at Varietees Bird Store, 60 Meramec Valley Plaza, Valley Park, MO on the third Sunday of the month, however there are several months where we have had to change to another Sunday, so check out our website for the dates. Varietees will be open in the afternoon so you can purchase bird food, supplies, toys, cages, play stands, etc.

We do have a raffle most months so if you would like to donate item(s), they are always welcome. It does not have to be bird related. We sell raffle tickets for \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00.

Membership Report:

Welcome to the following new members who joined in December:

Katya Emelyanova

Christy Sigwerth

Perry Sigwerth