Meet My Friends

Stee Maxwell
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian
Part of the Veterinary Medicine Commons, and the Zoology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowastate_veterinarian/vol40/iss2/7

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Iowa State University Veterinarian by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Meet My Friends

Stee Maxwell*

HEEOOWW! HEEOOWW! 6:00 a.m.! My morning alarm clocks were working again. Needing no winding or plugging in, they were assured of waking you if given half the chance.

The peacocks, my permanent neighbors in the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, Washington where I was a preceptor roused me that morning and every morning with their piercing cry. They roamed free in the zoo and during the day, males would not miss an opportunity to display their beautiful plumage to the females and any onlookers, man or woman. They even found garbage cans attractive enough to show off their majestic attire.

Their cry startles one at first and at times it sounds like a person crying for HELP! While taking an evening walk around the zoo after closing hours one night, I found three young girls trying to climb over the fence to get out. They were a little shaken when I approached but quickly chorused, "There are people in this zoo who need your help. We keep hearing cries of help from all around the zoo!" Undoubtedly wondering what kind of a zoo they were in, I assured them that the cries heard were our resident peacocks voicing their opinions. Not having a key, I helped them over the fence without ripping any of their pants and doubted that I would see them near closing hours again!

Enough on peacocks, it is time for a tour! There are several interesting personalities living here and projects I would like to introduce you to. Starting from the trailer that was provided by the zoo for preceptors, we walk past the lion-tailed macaque cage. Originating from India, these monkeys have a silver-tipped mane surrounding their face and a lion-like tuft of hair gracing the end of their tail.

Casper, the head male of the troupe greets us with his lips held back from an impressive row of teeth, head tilted slightly upward to make sure we see them, which we do visibly impressed with how long and sharp his carnines appear. His morning greeting challenges us to battle him for supremacy. Casper has been a primary factor in making Woodland Park's breeding program one of the most successful in the country.

Continuing on, our tour brings us inside the vet office which brings forth a series of short chirps. Although it sounds like a chick, a glance into an aquarium-like cage proves us wrong. Out pops a face and head that resembles a catfish out of water. But the body is longer—approximately a foot and a half with gray fur covering it and a tail to boot!

Our friend is a young river otter brought to the zoo by a park ranger who had found him after some dogs had dragged him out of the water. Guessed to be about 2½ months old, it was also decided that "it" was a male because an extensive routine physical exam revealed "it" had an os penis! Oberon, nicknamed after the king of the fairies in medieval folklore, was one that craved attention and would literally chirp away until someone came over and patted him. He would then quack with delight. An amazing creature—three animals in one! It was hoped that Oberon would provide a mate for the female otter in the zoo. However, one's hopes must not be too optimistic, since it will take Oberon 6-7 years before he reaches maturity.

* Mr. Maxwell is a fourth year veterinary student, ISU.
Stepping back behind the vet office to help Dr. Foster, the veterinarian at Woodland Park, we see a blue heron in a wire fence enclosure. The heron was hospitalized for an infection in his foot called bumblefoot. This has been opened and a bandage put on to protect the area. Today is the day the bandage is to be removed and we have been enlisted to help. Our job is to hold onto this heron by its long cylindrical neck and body while Dr. Foster removes the bandage. Looking at the long pointed beak on this bird, one views it with respect. We are doubly cautious when Dr. Foster relates a story of a vet that unfortunately lost an eye while handling a blue heron. He had apparently let go of the bird and not watching it closely, it turned and rammed its beak into his eye.

With that story in mind, I hold firmly onto the bird's neck with one hand, grasping his body for dear life with the other arm and hand. Dr. Foster removes the bandage quickly and with my eyes still fixed to the bird's beak, I release it quickly and jump back. All of us come through the incident unscathed.

As we walk towards the children's zoo, a large flight cage is passed. This is part of "Project Babe" so named for the first bald eagle rehabilitated by the project. Woodland Park Zoo participates in a rehabilitation and release program for injured golden and bald eagles. The flight cage is their last step before regaining the freedom of the skies. The birds are usually released in the San Juan Island area off the Northwest coast of Washington. A few have radio transmitters attached to them. Hopefully information can then be collected on some of their habits.

Reaching the children's zoo, we use the back gate and almost trip over four timber wolf pups. These pups are part of a litter of seven born to Sylvia, the dominant female in the zoo's pack. A clean area in a shed had been provided for Sylvia to have her pups. But instead she decided that she preferred a more natural environment and prepared a den under a dead stump in the enclosure. During a rainstorm one night, she moved the pups into the man-made enclosure to protect them. It was felt that seven pups might be too many for her to raise, so four of them were removed that night to the children's zoo. They are now two months old and full of mischief. Attempts are being made to socialize them by having zoo employees feed and play with them. Hopefully, they will then feel more relaxed in a zoo environment.

Wanto, "one of noble birth," is also introduced to us. A 9-month-old baby mountain gorilla, he was removed from his mother because of improper care and knowledge on her part. Gorillas usually reach sexual maturity at 12 years of age. Before they reach sexual maturity, much of the maternal care by younger females is learned by watching and helping older females with their babies. It was felt that Wanto's mother, giving birth at 8 years of age, had not gained enough of this knowledge to take care of him despite efforts by zoo personnel to show her some aspects of infant care. Remarkably human-like in his efforts at play and walking, he makes us ponder how closely they are related to us.

From the children's zoo, we head towards the nocturnal house. A unique exhibit in the Seattle Zoo, it allows people to view nocturnal animals in simulated night conditions. A walkway through a series of exhibits is bounded by glass panels on two sides. Enough light is provided to give the appearance of night though often one must wait to view all of the animals as they scurry out of their burrows or tree-top resting sights. In this area, exhibits of South American, North American, Australian, African, and other nocturnal animals are viewed.

Some of the most fascinating creatures are the slow lorises. Inhabitants of India, Ceylon, and Southeast Asia, their eyes are very large and are stuck on top of a short muzzle. They move around on limbs that are short and thick but which possess incredible strength. Yet one of their most fascinating characteristics is that in handling them, they are treated much like poisonous snakes. If bitten, certain products in the saliva produced by the slow loris sensitizes a person to the saliva. If he or she is bitten again, an anaphylactic reaction may occur that can be serious.

Stepping back into daylight, we head for the feline house to see the 2-month-old snow leopard cubs of Nicholas and Alexandra. Today at 2:00 they are being checked over concerning their general health, weighed, temperature taken, and the eruption time of their teeth noted.

continued on page 60
The snow leopard is one of the rarest of the big cats as well as one of the most beautiful. With their black spots set on a thick whitish-gray fur, they are well suited for the mountains of Central Asia and the Himalayas. Usually found at a height above 8,000 feet, it is estimated that there are only one hundred and twenty left in the wild.

Woodland Park Zoo is noted as one of the most successful in breeding and raising snow leopards in captivity, producing ten per cent of the snow leopards in a captive state. If the time comes when these beautiful creatures are no longer found in the wild, through such programs as Woodland Park's they may still be enjoyed in zoos. Also, through the maintaining of gene pools in the zoo's of vanishing species, it may even be possible to restock populations in their natural habitats and ranges.

Our next stop is to see those gentle beasts with the large, lovely eyes, the giraffes. During a preceptor period at the Woodland Park Zoo, you are asked to do a project that would increase your knowledge as well as the zoo's. Since I was always intrigued by the physical shape of a giraffe, I decided to do a study on them. My subject—the sexual activity of giraffes! Apparently the zoo had trouble with their male, Billy, not producing any offspring from his three gorgeous girlfriends, Duchess, Princess, and Tessie.

If you are waiting for a detailed description of some examples of Billy's sexual prowess, you are going to be waiting a long time! Through my periods of observation, the only suggestive sexual activity was Billy approaching one female's genitals, sniffing, and then flehming (curling his lips) much as a horse would do. In fact, it was more exciting to watch the act of rumination by these tallest of earth's creatures. To see the bolus of food travel up that long slender neck was to marvel at the adaptations Mother Nature made to help these creatures survive. Concerning Billy's future with his harem, he is rather young now. As he matures more sexually and physically, coupled with some suggestions left with the zoo, there may be baby giraffes present sometime.

Ending up our tour at the northwest corner of the zoo, we see what may be the loveliest being in the zoo, Gertrude, a 3,000 pound female hippo. Her mouth, when opened, appears to be able to engulf anything in sight! A few teeth do shine back at us from the depths of her cavern. They are incisors and canines, though only the canines on the lower jaw are long, appearing much like tusks.

With one of these canines, she hooked her companion, Kubwa Sana, a 700 pound baby male hippo on a six-year breeding loan from the Portland Zoo. It is hoped that Gertrude will accept Kubwa Sana as a mate when he is full-grown. However, Gertrude considers Kubwa Sana as her baby and is very protective of him. As long as he stays close to her, Gertrude's quick temper is checked. But let Kubwa Sana start to waddle off and she is liable to let him know his place is by her. The laceration caused by Gertrude's canines made a triangular-shaped incision on the lateral abdomen, giving a good view of an inch-thick skin. Though no suturing was required, Kubwa Sana was subjected to a course of penicillin injections to prevent further complications. The first day went fine because he didn't know what was happening to him. The remaining days did not go so well! There was no structure able to hold a 700 pound baby hippo. Consequently, the injections were given by trying to get the needle through his thick skin with Kubwa Sana traversing every available square inch of his enclosure trying to find someplace to hide. Fortunately, both Kubwa Sana and treators made it through the treatment period safely. Gertrude's and Kubwa Sana's enclosure that they occupy with Watoto, an African elephant, and Bamboo, an Indian elephant, are some of the older structures in the zoo. But Woodland Park is undergoing an aggressive development program to make better habitats for their animals as well as making the exhibits more pleasing to the Iowa State University Veterinarian.
public. When I was there, work was beginning on a new waterfowl exhibit and also a large gorilla enclosure. With such plans, a visit to Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle will be even more a delight in the future than it is now.

Thank you for joining me! I hope that you have enjoyed the tour and at the same time learned a few things. Though this was just a partial introduction to some of the characters at the zoo, the friends I have introduced you to can now be considered friends of yours. The veterinarian in this zoo as in others plays an important part in keeping the animals I know at the zoo healthy. Through knowledge of nutrition, disease conditions, and most importantly preventative health care, the animals appear healthy and more enjoyable to the public. As more zoos are expanding and upgrading their animal health care facilities, the opportunities for zoo veterinarians will still be there, though there are only so many zoos!

Through my zoo preceptorship, I was able to learn new methods of restraint for animals, experience different behavioral traits, and the attempts at maintaining the health of the animals. Most important of all though, my stay at the zoo showed me the remarkable diversity that can be found among the creatures in the kingdom of nature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to Chantry Maxwell, Bill Wilcke, Dorothy Fullenkamp, Mike Westfall, Janet Gale, Doug Morrison, and Dr. David Graham who all helped make this paper presentable to you.

* * *

Contagious Equine Metritis

Contagious Equine Metritis (CEM), a uterine infection of horses, has recently appeared in Central Kentucky. This is the first time the disease has been detected in the United States. Kentucky authorities report that two or three stallions may be infected, with possibly 40 mares having been exposed to the disease.

The disease is highly contagious. It is most commonly spread by breeding, but can be spread through handling or examination using contaminated instruments. CEM results in infertility and abortion.

In mares, signs of the disease usually appear 2 to 3 days after exposure, and include a grayish-white purulent vaginal discharge. Diagnosis is usually based on the signs and the laboratory culture of the bacteria. At the present time, there is no effective blood test that can be used to detect CEM. Stallions, even though infected, usually are unaffected by the disease.

The CEM organism is believed to be gram-negative coccobacillus, which is susceptible to treatment with antibiotics. Infected animals often respond to treatment and recoveries have been reported following a period of non-breeding. CEM can be in remission; consequently, negative cultures can be misleading.

Quarantine of infected animals, artificial insemination, and other preventive measures afford the best means of controlling CEM. To avoid transmitting the disease from horse to horse, handlers, trainers, and all others involved with breeding animals must take great care to maintain hygienic conditions, using disposable gloves, gowns, and boots, and carefully cleaning any and all equipment used to examine suspected horses. (from AVMA News Release, March 16, 1978.)

Issue No. 2, 1978