

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY COMMISSION
AGENDA ATTACHMENT 3**

MEETING DATE: Thursday, July 26, 2007

AGENDA ITEM #: 9

ITEM: CORRESPONDENCE

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- None



"Russ & Denise Surber"
<rdsurber@charter.net>
05/28/2007 01:04 PM

To <libadmin@ccclib.org>
cc "Russ & Denise Surber" <rdsurber@charter.net>
bcc
Subject CALTAC Membership - Thanks for Joining for 2007!

To: Contact for Contra Costa County Library Commission
From: Denise Surber, Membership Co-Chair, CALTAC
Please pass the following message along to your Library Commission. Thanks.

Dear CALTAC Honor Board:

The CALTAC membership application for your Commission has been received, and we welcome you as members for Calendar Year 2007. Your support, interest, and active participation will have a definite impact on all of our California libraries. Thank you for joining.

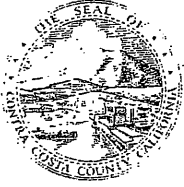
Each individual member of your Commission will receive quarterly issues of CALTACTICS. This newsletter contains information about workshops, legislation, and other activities of interest to Trustees and Commissioners. Please remember to send us the names and addresses of any new Commission members, along with the names of the outgoing members they replace, so the newsletter and other CALTAC information will reach them in a timely manner.

Soon you will see information on our annual awards. We hope you will nominate someone from your community for special recognition.

Again, thank you for joining CALTAC. Please feel free to contact any Board member with comments, questions, or concerns.

Denise Surber
Membership Co-Chair
California Association of Library Trustees and Commissioners (CALTAC)
507 18th St.
Paso Robles, CA 93446
Telephone/Fax: 805-238-3150
E-mail: rdsurber@charter.net

P.S. We invite you to subscribe to the CALTAC listserv where legislative news is posted & discussed. Visit www.caltac.org to subscribe.



County Supervisor Mary N. Piepho, District III

CHAIR
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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San Joaquin Valley
Rail Committee

June 14, 2007

Anne Cain, County Librarian
Contra Costa Library
1750 Oak Park Boulevard
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Dear Ms. Cain,

I would like to congratulate you and your team for making the cover story in the Library Information Technology.

The Library Information Technology is a prestigious, leading national magazine and I am proud that our County Library's database is nationally acknowledged. Your commendable work has made our digital library database and more efficient and effective for our constituents. I appreciate you and your team's hard work in making the Contra Costa County library one of the finest in the nation.

Keep up the good work and please feel free to contact my office at (925) 820-8683 if there is anything I can do to further support your efforts.

As always, it is an honor to work with you in service to the citizens of Contra Costa County.

Sincerely,

MARY N. PIEPHO
County Supervisor, District III

MNP:am

Email Log Entry

Your changes have been saved. The status has changed. If this issue was assigned to anyone, they also received a copy.

Ticket # 699

Date of original Email: 7/2/2007

Text of Email :

Commission mail, East Bay Vivarium show

to: ccclibcommission@ccclib.org

comments: I am writing to express my disappointment that the library hosted a show put on by the East Bay Vivarium. Last year, the library brought a gentleman who introduced the kids to exotic animals that he rescued and stressed the importance of responsible and humane pet ownership. It is regrettable that this year an exotic pet dealer was selected to entertain the children. I strenuously object to the sale of exotic animals. Many are poorly housed and cared for. Many are poached and it is extremely difficult for consumers to ascertain whether animals are legally and humanely obtained. Additionally, many reptiles spread ecoli and other diseases. Many of the local zoos and wildlife centers have travelling educational programs that are very entertaining and yet stress good stewardship of the earth and its creatures. I hope in the future you consider one of these non-profits rather than a shopkeeper. I reprint below an article from the Humane Society of the United States that outlines some of my objections.

Thank you for your attention,
G. Sutkowski

Reptiles as Pets: Hazardous to Your Health—And Theirs

An estimated 11 million pet reptiles—mostly turtles, lizards, and snakes—live in U.S. households, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. That figure, while far lower than for cats and dogs, means that about one out of every 25 households includes at least one reptile, and many have two or more.

America's love affair with cold-blooded critters is not as innocent as it first may seem. The global trade in reptiles as pets contributes to depleted wild populations, damaged habitats, and the individual suffering of the animals involved. For humane, conservation, and public health and safety reasons, The HSUS recommends that reptiles not be kept as pets.

Taken Wild, Sold to You

While several species of reptiles sold as pets are bred in captivity, most are taken from the wild or born of wild-caught parents. Many reptiles die before they ever reach the pet store from rough handling during capture and shipping. During this process, handlers may toss turtles, one on top of the other, into wheelbarrows or mesh bags for transport. Iguanas may be packed tightly together in bound mesh bags inside boxes for shipping.

The methods used to capture reptiles, including flushing out the animals with gasoline, often damage habitat for these and other animals. For reptile dealers, the loss of life and habitat involved merely constitute business as usual.

Animals who make it to the pet store may be sold in injured or weakened

condition. As many as 90 percent of wild-caught reptiles die in their first year of captivity because of physical trauma received before they are sold, or because the buyers cannot meet the animals' complex dietary and habitat needs. Captive iguanas, for instance, often suffer from malnutrition and bone disease because they don't get the diet and ultraviolet light they require.

Alarming, the number of animals collected from the wild can exceed the reproductive capabilities of a species. Some species of turtles, who are also collected for food and other uses, are in danger of disappearing in the wild altogether because of the commercial trade.

High Maintenance Required

Although reptiles are marketed as low-maintenance pets, many families are overwhelmed by the level of care they require. Pet reptiles need special diets and habitats. Kate Pullen, the director of Animal Sheltering Issues at The HSUS has worked with iguanas relinquished to shelters.

'The level of care, diet and habitat that iguanas need far outweigh that of dogs and cats, and the average person cannot adequately address these unique needs,' says Pullen.

'There are at least 6,000 species of reptiles worldwide; roughly 600 are traded commercially. For many species, the basic requirements of nutrition and housing are unknown. Some may live underground their whole lives, while others never leave the forest canopy,' explains Richard Farinato, The HSUS' Director of Captive Wildlife Protection, adding that these animals generally will not survive in a ten gallon tank in the living room.

Pet reptiles are also are highly susceptible to infection and disease. In the wild, reptiles rarely come into contact with their own waste or uneaten food—a common occurrence for reptiles in captivity. To complicate matters, it is difficult for anyone other than experts to tell when they are sick. Even when you detect symptoms, veterinary care for reptiles can be hard to find.

When they receive proper care, reptiles can live for many years, outlasting a caretaker's interest in the animal, particularly a child's. Reptiles can easily become too big and dangerous to have at home. The iguana purchased as a six-inch long hatchling weighing less than a pound can grow to five feet in five years. Snakes like pythons and boas can grow large enough to injure or kill a person.

When reptiles become larger and harder to manage, they may be neglected, relinquished to shelters, or simply let loose. Many shelters are not equipped to handle these animals, and they have few options for placement. Pets should never be abandoned to the wild. Animals who are often die from starvation, exposure, or predation. If they live, they can endanger people, native wildlife, and the local ecosystem.

Escaped and stolen animals also can wreak havoc for law enforcement. Alligators thought to be abandoned pets turned up in California, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wisconsin in June 2005 alone.

Salmonella Risk

In addition to the risk of injury, reptiles can transmit disease. Reptiles

carry Salmonella bacteria, which might not make the animal sick but can cause life-threatening complications in people. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) attributes approximately 6% of all U.S. Salmonella cases to reptiles or amphibians.

Because of the health risk, importing or selling small turtles (those with shells, called carapaces, less than four inches long) as pets in the United States has been illegal since 1975. Some states and localities have enacted further restrictions on keeping pet reptiles.

Despite the restrictions, illegal distribution of small turtles may be widespread. Investigators traced four cases of salmonellosis to small turtles purchased in 2004 from souvenir shops in Wisconsin, and discovered that many retailers tried to side-step the law by selling turtles for 'educational' purposes or by giving them away with purchase of a tank. In addition, unaware of the danger, families may take in turtles from the outdoors as pets.

Some groups are especially vulnerable to Salmonella infections. The CDC recommends keeping reptiles out of daycare centers and households with children under five, pregnant women, the elderly, or people with compromised immune systems. People who have pet reptiles should take precautions such as washing their hands each time they touch the animals, and disinfecting surfaces the animals touch.

'Reptiles are specialized creatures whose lives are intimately linked to their natural environments,' says Farinato. 'When you disrupt that link, you put the animals' welfare on the line.'

To protect their health and yours, reptiles should not be pets. Wild animals are best left in the wild where they belong.

Updated Jan. 12, 2007

Name: G. Sutkowski

email: gerrysutkowski@sbcglobal.net

Assigned to: Cain, Anne (County Librarian)

Status: Closed

Reply Date : 7/19/07

Reply:

Dear Mr. Sutkowski,

I appreciate your taking the time to express your views regarding the library hosting programs presented by Owen Maercks of the East Bay Vivarium. The Kensington Library did recently present this program. It is unclear from your e-mail whether you actually attended the program or noticed publicity for it in the library or on our website.

The Youth Services Librarians from all of our community libraries discussed this issue at length at their monthly meeting last week, and Pamela McKay, who is the Kensington Library Youth Services Librarian,

reported on Mr. Maerck's recent presentation. Our Youth Services Specialist, Linda Duncan, has also spoken to Mr. Maercks at length about your concerns.

Our Youth Services Librarians feel that Owen Maercks does an excellent job of introducing reptiles to children in a manner that emphasizes stewardship and conservation and instills respect for these fascinating animals. They feel that Mr. Maercks brings a great deal of knowledge and expertise to his programs, and imparts this to children in a way that captures their attention. He does not publicize his store in any way during his presentations, and deflects any questions about buying reptiles. Mr. Maercks has been presenting programs for children for over twenty years in libraries all over the state, and is a regular presenter at the Berkeley and Alameda City Libraries. He says that this is the first complaint he has ever had about his being hosted by a library.

It is true that exotic wildlife is sold at the East Bay Vivarium. However, Mr. Maercks states that virtually all the animals sold at his store are bred in captivity. He agrees with you completely about the unscrupulous methods used by many reptile dealers, and does not do business with those who obtain reptiles illegally and inhumanely. He has been the owner of East Bay Vivarium since 1989, and in that time, he says he has never had a legal problem regarding any of the animals in his store. Mr. Maercks says that the East Bay Vivarium is regarded as the "flagship" store of the entire industry, and that his store is known throughout the country for the excellent care given to the animals in its care. He employs a staff of 20 to ensure that all animals are kept in premium condition at all times.

Mr. Maercks also states that he does his utmost to make sure that the reptiles he sells will be well cared for. He and all of his staff do not sell an animal without giving detailed care instructions, and he says that he has turned down many sales to customers who seemed to him irresponsible and not likely to adequately care for one of his reptiles. The store's website also offers detailed instructional sheets on how to care for different kinds of reptiles. The son of one of our Youth Services Librarians has been a customer of the East Bay Vivarium for years, and raves about the helpful and knowledgeable staff there. He has gotten detailed advice and help from them regarding his reptiles, both in person and over the phone. Mr. Maercks points out that his store is in Berkeley, which is a community with many animal rights activists and animal rights organizations, and he has never had any complaints or problems regarding his business. He adds that the Berkeley -East Bay Humane Society is even one of his clients.

Mr. Maercks says that reptiles do not spread E-coli bacteria. He also said that they in themselves do not spread salmonella bacteria, but that if some species of turtles are improperly cared for and the water in their cages is allowed to become dirty, salmonella bacteria can be present in the water. As a precaution, however, he always reminds parents at his programs to have their children wash their hands if they have touched the reptiles he brings along. Pamela McKay says that he did so at the recent Kensington program.

Our Youth Services Librarians feel that the best way to protect all species of wildlife is to educate our children and to instill in them love and respect for all living creatures, for they will be the stewards of the future. This is one of the reasons we offer programs featuring animals of different types in our libraries. They feel that Mr. Maercks program offers much that is of value and compares very favorably with other animal programs the library hosts, including those presented by non-profits such as the Oakland Zoo.

Our community libraries offer a wide variety of programs for children of all ages, including literacy-building programs such as storytimes, cultural programs such as music, dance, and puppet programs, and educational

programs such as those introducing children to various types of animals. These programs enrich the background of children who already use our libraries, bring in new users, promote the use of library materials, and help our libraries play an active and vital role in the cultural life of our communities.

Owen Maercks suggests that you attend one of his programs so you can observe his presentation, if you did not attend the recent program at the Kensington Library. He would also welcome the opportunity to address your concerns directly, either in person at his store in Berkeley, or by phone. His telephone number is 510- 841-1400.

Once again, I appreciate your taking the time to voice your concerns regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

Anne Cain
County Librarian

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