Critter Corner – Fall 2023 Updates

By: Rachael Komulainen, Park Animal Keeper

Greetings to all, from the Barnyard! This year has been full of ups and downs, like every year. One of the highlights, was FINALLY getting the Barnyard metal fencing repainted! Gone is the teal blue color, and here to stay is the professional black color. This is very exciting! To most people, this difference is probably not something to get excited about – they just know that when they now enter the Barnyard, they are able to see all the way across the length of the Barnyard. Why is this? Because exhibit animal fencing should always be black or wood/dark brown. You may not realize why but your eyes go automatically past the fence and notice the actual exhibit – the animals and their houses, etc. When the fence was teal in color, it stopped your eyes. It distracted away from the actual exhibit and shocked the eyes into stopping at the fence. Come on by and notice the difference!

On a sad note, we lost one of our most beloved members of our critter family earlier this year: Leia, the female 10-year old, wild boar. Leia had been placed at Hart Park, along with her brother Luke, when she was a mere 4-months old. Leia suddenly became sick in the late spring. The vet came out multiple times and determined that she had an obstruction and surgery wasn’t an option (due to her age and size). She was given every kind of supportive care possible, to try and help her pass the obstruction. Unfortunately, she wasn’t able to survive the obstruction, though. The necropsy (animal autopsy) after the fact, revealed that she had a twisted intestine – so, there was no way that she could have been saved. She was so loved and well cared for by all the staff and volunteers but, just like some people we love, sometimes they can’t be saved despite all our efforts. I believe that Leia knew we were all trying our best to help her, and she was surrounded by loved ones, when she passed. Leia and Luke were the first two new animals that I took in, when I started at Hart Park, as Park Animal Keeper, in June 2013. It was a great personal loss for me to lose my precious girl… but I know that she had a great life here and I am so grateful for our time together.

Another one of our popular critters, a bison named Logan, somehow injured her back right leg, in late spring. Leg injuries are a really big deal for any kind of hoof stock animal, as it can be a death sentence. For a while, it appeared that it might be an unrecoverable injury. We had multiple vets involved with her treatment, and we tried a few different approaches and medications. Finally, Logan was able to turn the corner and recover from her devastating leg injury. While she is recovered, her permanent scar will help to remind us of how close she came to a different conclusion.

Pow Wow weekend is coming up (Sept 30 – Oct 1, 2023). As we have done in the past, we will be conducting Barnyard Tours and doing animal presentations, throughout each day. The schedule will be posted at the Barnyard entrance, so come check us out! It is a great opportunity to see the critters up close, learn about each kind of resident that lives in the Barnyard, get questions answered, and possibly get to interact with certain animals at specified times. We hope to see you all for Pow Wow weekend, and stop by anytime the Barnyard is open (Tuesdays thru Sundays, 9am-2pm) for a visit!