Critter Corner – Spring 2024

By: Rachael Komulainen

Happy Spring, to all! Hart Park Barnyard staff, volunteers & critters are gearing up for a couple of really fun events that we wish to tell you all about. Firstly, the Cowboy Festival 2024 will be returning to Hart Park! This is a wonderful, free family event. In addition to all of the official events, put on by the City of Santa Clarita, our Barnyard will be providing FREE tours and presentations, throughout both days. Tour hours are, as follows: 10am, 1pm, & 2pm. Meet at the waterfowl pen & Gift Shop area, to partake in a tour. Also, we will be offering opportunities throughout both days to interact with some of our critters: alpacas, llama, pigs and tortoises. And, don’t forget to check out the Gift Shop and the Bookstore, located right next to the Barnyard. Both store hours will be 10am-4pm. The Barnyard will open at 9am, and remain open until 4pm, as well.

The second big event is our first “Critter Fair!” We are extremely excited to announce that we are filling the void left by the departure of the popular ‘Bow Wows & Meows,’ by hosting the Critter Fair here. It will feature adoptable animals from all of the L.A. County Animal Shelters. Let’s get those critters homes! Also, there will be various animal-themed vendors, from pet supply places, trainers, groomers, rescues, etc. We still have openings for vendors, so, if you are interested, please contact either the park office at 661-259-1750 and ask for Amanda, or you can email: [hartreservations@parks.lacounty.gov](mailto:hartreservations@parks.lacounty.gov)

Our goal with this event is to highlight the world of our animal friends. There will also be food/beverage vendors on site. The Barnyard will be providing animal presentations and tours, and the Gift Shop and the Bookstore will be open. We hope everyone will come out to support this event to help adoptable animals find homes!

In February, we began our participation in a very interesting study by the Natural History Museum/La Brea Tar Pits staff. They are doing a dung beetle study, comparing current dung beetles with ones that they have found from the past, at the Tar Pits. Dung beetles are insects that live on, in or below the dung (feces) of animals. They are a very integral part of the ecosystem, as they break down the dung. This process improves nutrients and soil structure, and helps with forage growth. There will be four collection days: Winter, spring, summer and fall. February was the winter collection date. They found four different species of dung beetle in our bison pen that day. What an interesting study! We look forward to the remaining collection dates, and the final results, once the study has concluded.

Recently, we have had a few new staff and volunteers that have joined our team – welcome to them all! Everyone is invited to come and visit the Barnyard to meet the new folks and to visit all of our amazing critter family. Barnyard hours are: Tues-Sun (closed Mondays), from 9am-2pm. On most Sundays, our pigs go on a walk-about in the Barnyard, so if you want to meet our piggies, stop by around 11:30am-12:30pm. If you are interested in volunteering with the animals, scan the Barnyard Animal Keeper Trainee program code and sign up. We hope to see you all really soon!