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> THE QUEQUE

# The Queque - September 15, 2010

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## Bears bounce



Observing the meltdown down the road at Wild Animal Orphanage, **Lynn Cuny**, founder and director at Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation, one of the few wildlife groups remaining untainted by major scandal, is openly critical of **WAO's operations**. "There have been problems there as long as I can remember," she said. "They didn't seem to me [as though] the genuine concern for the animals was the chief motivation." When the WAO board voted two weeks ago to close shop and start looking for

homes to relocate their several hundred animals, Cuny was one of the first brought in to consult. WRR will be taking in **six female macaques** from WAO to join an existing macaque troop in a one-acre enclosure.

The national scene is what concerns her.

"Legitimate sanctuaries around the country ... all of those are pretty much at capacity. If legitimate sanctuaries can't take these animals, then where are they going to go?" Cuny asked. "No one wants to see these animals go out of the frying pan and into the fire."

Another issue is how an organization that has seen so much bad publicity for failing to meet the needs of their animals raises funds. "Would you donate to WAO? I wouldn't," Cuny said. "If there was some **other legitimate organization** ... saying 'We're controlling the purse strings,' that would be one thing. But right now, to my knowledge, that is not what's going on."

Though they continue to solicit funds for animal food and transportation costs, **Suzanne Straw**, board secretary at the WAO, concedes Cuny's points.

"We do know with the history of the Wild Animal Orphanage it will be difficult to do fundraising," Straw said. "What we're trying to do now is not putting any money in anybody's pockets. It's strictly to feed the animals."

She told the QueQue, representatives of the **International Fund for Animal Welfare** will tour the sanctuary this week. One agenda item will be possibly setting up an account at IFAW for would-be donors to wary of WAO's past performance to give directly.

Funded by the **Discovery Channel**, 22 bears were transferred from WAO to the **Wild Animal Sanctuary** in Colorado last week. Still, 300 animals remain. And everyone must go, Straw said. While they'd prefer the animals went to accredited animal sanctuaries, they will also consider locations that agree to at least abide by terms of the **Animal Welfare Act**.

For her part, Cuny said she would be more comfortable if the transfers were subject to levels of oversight above and beyond that of the WAO. "You could sit there and check off roadside attraction after roadside attraction after private owner and say, 'This one will take six of these and this one will take six of these,' but let me tell you that would just add to the tragedy. We're hoping that is not what happens."

So far, WAO still holds the reins.

## Headlines for peanuts

As much as we detest the manipulations of our state Attorney General — what with all of **Greg Abbott's** suing of the federal government over national health care (if we get it here, how long before the Afghans start to grumble?) and fighting off the EPA's attempt to reduce **global-warming gases** (what global warming?) — we hate to see insinuation stand in for fact. [When you're done laughing, come back and

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enjoy the column.] When Abbott's challenger, **Barbara Ann Radnofsky**, suggested to the Houston Chronicle recently that the man's "concept lawsuits" pandering to the Far Right were bloated with **taxpayer money**, we winced. But it's worse than that. At least in the case of the global-warming challenge. It was cobbled together on the cheap. According to documents provided the *Current* in response to a state **Open Records request**, two staffers from the AG's division of environmental protection — may think about renaming that wing of the office, Greg — put the deal together in 22.25 hours at a cost of **\$1,418.28**. Our campaigning Abbott learned that the price of a statewide headline wasn't so high, after all.

Mainly, it seems, **staffer Jon Niermann** reviewed the complaints of states like Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, and Wyoming and poured on the linguistic smut of warming-denying bloggers by asserting that leaked emails from a **UK climate center** somehow proved conspiracy was afoot. Numerous subsequent independent investigations found no evidence of any kind of fraud related to "**Climategate**."

It hardly cost anything at all for Abbott to then to follow up on the quickly dismissed EPA complaint with a friendly letter asserting, "Texas has neither the authority nor the intention of interpreting, ignoring, or amending its laws in order to compel the permitting of greenhouse gas emissions."

Of course, the bill will come due.

As the *Current* reported online early last month: **Texas' sustained ignorance** on global warming is nearing the point of the criminal. Earlier this summer, a paper by a team of Princeton researchers suggested that climate-induced **crop failures** in Mexico could force one in 10 residents of that country to flee to the United States as **climate refugees** in coming decades.

"Depending on the severity of crop losses, between 1.4 million and 6.7 million people would migrate to the United States by 2080," we wrote. "At the high end, that would represent a doubling of the current number of Mexican nationals already living and working in the United States. And, yet, the team's numbers are likely low..."

If by some miracle Radnofsky gains the office, we recommend opening an immediate file under "**genocide, crimes of**."

**Bustin' Loose**

Wanted: one two-foot-high, **15-pound spider monkey** last spotted near the intersection of Toutant-Beauregard and **Scenic Loop Road** in Northwest Bexar County. Doesn't answer to it, but staff at **Primarily Primates** wild animal sanctuary affectionately know him as "W.C.," after the drunken brute of a comic, W.C. Fields. The gangly 10-year resident of Primates slipped through a newly-rent gap in the top of his enclosure's fencing after last week's high winds and rain, said **Friends of Animals President Priscilla Feral**.

Feral lamented news reports describing an "ape" loose in the Hill Country and subsequent inaccurate tales of attacks. "You wouldn't want to grab him, but really the populace here is not in peril," Feral said. "He's the one in peril."

W.C. was described as "**hungry and scared**," but sharing your watermelon is still taboo. Got a tip? Call either (210) 896-1350 or (830) 755-4616.

**Whose streets?**

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last Friday in favor of the City of San Antonio against claims by the **International Women's Day March Planning Committee**, composed of a variety of local social-justice organizations complaining of local policies they say violate their **First Amendment** rights to free speech.

Specifically, the organizations complained in their 2007 lawsuit that the City's seemingly arbitrary system of charging fees (or not) for marches have favored some organizations over others. The three-judge panel excused the City, in part, by recognizing that since being sued, the City has created **official policies** to assess fees and established an appeals process for groups to object when they're overcharged. "If," that is, not "when." Our bad. The judges added: "If future problems arise concerning the implementation, the plaintiffs are of course free to bring a new **as-applied challenge** to the ordinance."

The plaintiffs, however, aren't likely to wait that long. They're holding a community meeting from 6-8pm Wednesday (yes — tonight!) at the **Esperanza Center** [922 San Pedro] to discuss whether to file a motion for a rehearing, request a rehearing by the entire Fifth Circuit, or petition the **Supreme Court**.

Wherever this lawsuit finally settles, plaintiff attorney **Amy Kastely** said it's already made improvements in local policies: a former prohibition against leafletting during marches was repealed and police-presence overkill at some marches was rolled back.

**Budget truffles**



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In a move with all the subtlety of a head butt from a man in an iron mask, San Antonio's City Manager **Sheryl Sculley** adjusted the city's proposed 2011 budget to offer executive staff, possibly disgruntled over her decision to punch up her salary by **\$40,000** this coming fiscal, more money. Not only will our top-paid executives get the 2-percent cost-of-living raise, but last-minute budget tweaks could include **performance perks** for some, as well, the daily reported. We're counting on *fireworks* when the budget is taken up at 2pm today (yes Wed, see above) in the "B" Room of the Municipal Plaza Building [114 W. Commerce], and hopefully again when it comes to a vote in the main Council Chambers on Thursday. In a perfect world, our City's white-collar workers would be satisfied having a job during a major global recession. In a tolerable one, they wouldn't be so ready to ax social services to heap up their portions. Your attendance is requested.

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