

To Director Larry Voyles:

First let us start with an introduction - we are a group of Adobe Mountain Volunteers.

We are writing to you to express concern and to become better informed on the Game and Fish Departments visions and intent for Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center. Note, that we are not directing this inquiry to Mike Demlong for inquiries made to him often end with the termination of the volunteer. Also, we cannot direct our inquiries to Sandy Cates for it is believed that Mike has her in fear for her job and will thus be unable to fully answer, and we do not want to put her in a position that would in any way cause her any additional threats to her position.

Areas of Concerns/Inquiry:

New Desert Tortoise Pens

Many new tortoise pens were built in the recent past. We are given to believe these tortoises were taken back from the Herpetological Group due to inadequate care. We brought these tortoises in and built many new pens. Concerns were expressed over the layout of the new pens and inability of the tortoise to get out of the AZ heat/sun. Mike assured us the pens were appropriate. Twice in the summers of 2014 & 2015 we moved many tortoises into the hospital with concerns over heat issues the tortoise were experiencing, they spent the duration of the summer in the hospital. In the hospital, they were kept in boxes and kennels inappropriate for tortoise care, some even became injured during their stay in the hospital. If the tortoises were taken from the Herpetological Group due to inadequate care, why was this standard not held at our own facility?

- Could we get a true expert in housing DT that is unassociated with Adobe, come in to evaluate the situation?

This past summer Adobe lost the majority of its reptile collection:

We believe that Mike Demlong is directly responsible for the loss of life that occurred with our reptile collection. A volunteer had purchased an additional AC unit for the reptile building, another volunteer was onsite to install power to that new AC unit, and Mike stopped the installation, stating it was not necessary. It is our belief that the care of these animals is our concern. Just like in the North/Midwest it is required to have heat in the cold winters, in AZ it is our responsibility to have AC in the hot summers. Since there are lives at risk it is most prudent to have redundant sources, we do not understand why the 2nd AC unit was refused. There was even a warning that the single system would not be sufficient, a week prior to the lethal incident the AC circuit shut down. To us it feels like intentional neglect similar to the dog that lost their lives in June of 2014 at the Green Acres Dog Boarding Facility in Gilbert - where the caretakers were charged and found guilty of animal cruelty.

- We would like to understand how this happened when it could have been easily avoided?

Recent death of a Kestrel

We have so few animals anymore at Adobe that the death of any animal is notice. We recently lost a Kestrel. There has been no update in the Adobe Mountain Volunteer newsletter. There are many guesses as to what happened but it is known that for at least 4 days in a row the Kestrel was found on the ground on his back. Volunteers brought to attention of staff that the bird needs medical attention and yet received none.

- Is there a secret to the disposition of the Kestrel?
- Why was medical attention denied to this animal?

Falcon Care

Several years ago, Adobe took a new approach at releasing falcons and other hawks. Instead of just releasing an animal which had been in rehab for some time, they were turning them over to a falconer to fly the bird and make sure they had the strength and ability to survive. Along with this improvement came other changes - changes to the holding pens, changes to the cleaning routines, changes to handling protocol and then the direction to not put falcons in the flight pen because they tend to do more damage to themselves than good. Recently a Prairie Falcon has been put into the long flight pen. She is a long term resident of Adobe and we believe cannot be released due to injuries sustained to bones that cannot be fixed. With this action our questions are:

- Are we reverting back to the less effective protocol?
- Are we ignoring the information we were given - and if so why?
- What is the greater purpose?

On the note of change, many animals were put "in training" in the past where they then became calmer with the new bird handling techniques. We noticed that the birds were much calmer when we entered their cage to clean and/or feed. Now they are reverting, becoming afraid and jumping around upon approach. This is especially true when Sam H. enters a cage and forcibly captures with 2 hands or a net the bird for a show or directly following their return from a presentation.

Goshawk

There is a goshawk currently living at Adobe and has been for many months - She has a wing issue but it does not appear that she has had any medical attention and she is beating herself up in her current cage. The shade screens on the cage are being worn thin from her bouncing against it. We have many pictures at Adobe of animals in similar condition that were taken from other rehabbers that were put down. Once again, what exempts Adobe from having the same standard as the people they are persecuting? As volunteers, we may not be experts but, it does not take an expert to know that this is not right and in question of abuse.

- What is her destiny?

- Why has she not received medical attention?
- Is she going to become an education bird? If so it seems no one is training her to calm her down – she continues to beat herself up and look stressed.
- Can we get a 3rd party expert not associated with Game and Fish or Adobe to assess her

Bald Eagle

Recently the Bald eagle has been moved from his holding pen to a smaller confinement where he is not capable of flight. This lack of room will cause her muscles to atrophy and increase the chances she will beat himself up.

- Why was he placed in a smaller pen?

Presentations

At one time volunteers participated in most presentations with the animals of Adobe. Staff has put an end to that claiming that the volunteers are not capable of properly presenting to the public. Yet at more than one occasion Sam Huselton (sp) – a Game and Fish employee who has supposedly been trained in the handling of Birds of Prey, was seen poking and prodding the birds on display. A specific example was with the Gray Hawk, she would poke her in the belly to make her scream, saying she can get it to talk and poked her to prove it. This seems to us to be cruel and very unprofessional.

- How are the actions of hers considered to be appropriate and representative of someone who is “capable” of professional presentations?
- Is it Game and Fish intent to rid Adobe of volunteers?

Open House

For many years Adobe has had an open house in Nov. This is a time when we can invite the public into the Adobe facility. As volunteers it is a time we are proud to show the facility to friends, family and the public. This year there was no word of an open house at Adobe. It appears that a show at Sportsman’s replaces the open house. A few of us went to visit the event or had friends that happened upon the event. There was a very little public attendance. Most people going in to Sportsman’s said they had no idea the event was happening – it was only by chance of them shopping that they encountered the event. Many people in the public and vets we work with have questioned us as to when open house is going to happen. It feels like we owe the public a chance to see inside Adobe, since directly or indirectly they help fund the facility and it is an incredible tool for education, fund raising, and outreach. Even if only a small percentage of the people who come to Adobe walk away with a better understanding of the environment, animals and treasures we have here in Arizona, it is a win for all of us. They will be our future to help preserve our greatest treasures.

- Can we ask why there was no open house?
- Is it the intention of Game and Fish to close Adobe?
- Is there some problems with Adobe that we do not know of that the public should not know of?

- What notification was sent out about either cancelling open house or the Sportsman event?

Again, the reason this note is being written with an anonymous source is because of fear of retribution by Mike D and staff. Many volunteers of Adobe have left – some left because they did not like the changes brought on by staff, others were asked to leave by Mike, and yet others, their lives at Adobe were made so miserable they choose to leave on their own. Any questioning or conversations, not to Mikes liking, often ends in the volunteers being removed from service.

As volunteers, we just want to be part of a facility dedicate to the animals. We want to know we are part of a system that helps and does not intentionally hurt. We all volunteer because we love animals, we also love Adobe and want it to be the premier rehabilitation and education facility in the state. Is this a goal of Adobe? Can we set the standards for rehabilitation and education?

A summary of items we have voiced our concerns over:

1. The loss of our reptile collection due to neglect
2. The inadequate housing and lack of common sense regarding the tortoises
3. Recent death of the kestrel due to the neglect for 4 days by staff after being informed of its condition.
4. Modifying the falcon handling protocol (no housing falcons in the flight pens)
5. The neglect and torment of the Goshawk who has been at Adobe for the past 4ish months
6. The confinement of the Bald eagle to a smaller holding pen
7. The inappropriate handling and unprofessional presentation of educational birds for Adobe / Game and Fish
8. The lack of communication and public outreach regarding Open House

We have had enough exposure over the past few years and common sense to know that the care and handling of these animals is not to the standards as it should be and far from the standards it use to be. We are requesting a response in the Adobe Mountain Volunteer Newsletter, sent to all the volunteers and a face to face meeting not attended by Mike, Sam, Sandy because we believe they have been misleading us and/or due to their names being mentioned in this letter. We are not even sure we want Mikes supervisor because how can they know this is going on and take no action or worse not even know what is going on at all.

If you are unable to address our concerns we will forward them on to the Commission for a response.

Truly concerned

Adobe Mountain Volunteers

The attached letter was sent to the address listed below on the last week of Dec 2016.

Arizona Game and Fish

Attn: Larry Voyles

5000 W. Carefree Hwy
Phoenix, AZ 85086

To date we have not heard any response to our concerns.

We would like to know our concerns are heard and responded to. We are forwarding these on to you in hope that you can respond. If not we believe our next steps would be to escalate further up within state government.

Adobe Mountain Volunteers.