

Zoo Guests Carry On About Vultures!



IVAD At Cheyenne Mountain Zoo

The focus of our IVAD event is to help zoo guests fall in love with vultures. We do that in a number of ways from getting them engaged in fun hands-on activities to letting them get up close and personal with our own Cape vultures.

The response over the years has been incredibly rewarding as guests have shifted their reaction to our vultures from disgust and disdain to excitement and a deeper appreciation of how important they are to our earth. Kids now actively look for our vultures when they visit our mixed species exhibit in African Rift Valley!

The following sections will share fun ideas for activities that we have found to be a big hit with kids of all ages!

Vulture Vomit, Anyone?

There is SO much material to work with when it comes to vultures! Vomit being one of my favorites and apparently I'm a kid at heart because kids cannot get enough of this station!

The vomit is made from a combination of school glue and borax with a little food coloring for fun. The result is a slimy, sticky creation PERFECT for throwing at vulture enemies! Kids don't just have fun making vulture vomit but they learn why vultures vomit in the first place. It's educational AND fun!



Kids can compare their armspans to the wingspans of Cape vultures and native turkey vultures (see photos at left)



What is IVAD?

International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) was first celebrated on September 5, 2009 in an effort to raise awareness about the plight of vultures around the world. It was developed in response to the Asian Vulture Crisis which wiped out 99% of the vulture population in parts of India, Nepal and Pakistan as well as in response to the crisis taking place in Africa. In the first year, over 150 organizations in 42 countries participated. Over the past 4 years, over 370 organizations in 60 countries have celebrated IVAD.

IVAD is celebrated in a variety of ways from special keeper talks or feeding demos with vultures to free-flight bird shows to fun vulture-themed kids' activities.

Want To Plan Your Own IVAD Event?
I hope that as you read through this poster, you will be inspired to celebrate IVAD at your institution! I would love to share more ideas with you and help you as you raise awareness for vultures!

Stomach Juices Like Battery Acid!

The reason why vultures can eat what they eat without getting sick is because of their strong stomach juices that kill bacteria and other pathogens. I created a fun science experiment kids can do to get an idea of what goes on in a vulture's stomach.

Since kids and battery acid don't mix so well, I use a milder acid - vinegar - to get the point across. Toss in a little antacid and red Kool-Aid for effect and you've got yourself a cool interactive experiment!



Vultures Pee on Their Legs?!

Despite what people may think, vultures are actually very clean birds. They have a variety of ways they stay clean from those bald heads, to using the sun's rays to kill bacteria on their feathers to urinating on their legs.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo guests can try out the methods vultures use to stay clean by putting on a shower cap, rubbing baby oil on their heads and seeing how easy it is to get the gunk and oil off your head when you're bald! A solar oven with feathers inside helps demonstrate the power of UV radiation. As for the peeing part... Don't worry... No one pees on anyone else. Instead spray bottles are used to spray each other's legs. This also helps to demonstrate how this has a cooling effect in addition to the germ-killing benefit.

Contact Info
jturner@cmzoo.org
719-633-9925
ext. 139



A Sweet Way To Make a Little Cash For Vultures

The focus of IVAD is to raise awareness and educate people about vultures, but I wanted to raise a little money for conservation efforts as well. An easy way to do this is to throw a bake sale. People love to eat! Something that we have learned from our local AAZK chapter's fundraising events is that kids like to decorate their own cookies. So I found some vulture-shaped cookie cutters online and zoo staff, docents and volunteers help me by baking up vulture cookies in advance.

I took this a step further and developed "edible vulture vomit" in 4 different flavors: "lion-flavored", "zebra-flavored", "hippo-flavored" and "giraffe-flavored". It's basically just chocolate bark with various ingredients to make it fun. For example, "hippo-flavored" vulture vomit is dark chocolate bark with macadamia nuts and chopped dried cherries. Let me know if you want my recipes!



Other Fun Ideas For Activities

- Build a vulture nest
- Make a vulture puppet, a vulture mask or other fun craft
- Display some vulture biofacts
- Allow kids to fly like a vulture
- Have kids participate in the "Lucky Dip" game where kids can learn about the dangers of poisoning
- Have an Observation Station where guests can look through binoculars at wild vultures flying overhead

