



# governmentattic.org

*"Rummaging in the government's attic"*

Description of document: Smithsonian Institution (SI) National Zoological Park  
Animal Escape Investigations, 2014-2021

Requested date: 20-April-2021

Release date: 28-April-2022

Posted date: 09-May-2022

Source of document: Records Request  
Assistant General Counsel  
Smithsonian Institution  
Office of General Counsel  
MRC 012  
P.O. Box 37012  
Washington, DC 20013-7012  
Fax: 202-357-4310

Preferred during COVID-19 pandemic:  
[SIRecordsReq@si.edu](mailto:SIRecordsReq@si.edu)

The governmentattic.org web site ("the site") is a First Amendment free speech web site and is noncommercial and free to the public. The site and materials made available on the site, such as this file, are for reference only. The governmentattic.org web site and its principals have made every effort to make this information as complete and as accurate as possible, however, there may be mistakes and omissions, both typographical and in content. The governmentattic.org web site and its principals shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information provided on the governmentattic.org web site or in this file. The public records published on the site were obtained from government agencies using proper legal channels. Each document is identified as to the source. Any concerns about the contents of the site should be directed to the agency originating the document in question. GovernmentAttic.org is not responsible for the contents of documents published on the website.



# Smithsonian Institution

Office of General Counsel

---

## VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

April 28, 2022

Re: Your Request for Smithsonian Records (request number 096189220)

This responds to your request, dated and received in this Office on April 20, 2021, for Smithsonian records pertaining to the National Zoological Park “animal escape investigations” for the period from 2014 to the present. The Smithsonian responds to requests for records in accordance with Smithsonian Directive 807 – Requests for Smithsonian Institution Information (SD 807) and applies a presumption of disclosure when processing such requests. The policy is posted on our website at <http://www.si.edu/OGC/Records-Requests>.

Enclosed are three pages of responsive material. Please be advised that certain information has been redacted from the enclosed documents consistent with SD 807 under Exemption 7(E), which protects both investigatory and non-investigatory materials even when they have not been compiled in the course of a specific investigation. *Tax Analysts v. IRS*, 294 F.3d 71, 79 (D.C. Cir. 2002). The exemption invoked appears above the redaction.

Please note that, in an effort to respond to your request, the enclosed document was created from information that may have been in other formats or resided in other information sources within the National Zoological Park unit. Although SD 807 does not require that the Smithsonian create records that do not already exist in order to respond to a records request, in this one instance, we did so in an effort to be of assistance in providing the information requested in a manner that fosters openness and accountability and supports the Smithsonian’s mission. This does not obligate the Smithsonian to create records in response to any pending or future requests for its records.

This concludes the Smithsonian’s response to your request. Thank you for your interest in the Smithsonian.

Best Wishes,

*Claire C. Dean*

Claire C. Dean

Assistant General Counsel

Enclosure

---

Office of General Counsel

Smithsonian Institution Building Room 302 MRC 012

Mail: P.O. Box 37012 • Washington DC 20013-7012

Street: 1000 Jefferson Drive SW • Washington DC 20560-0012

Telephone: 202.633.5115 • Fax: 202.357.4310

You have the right to appeal a partial or full denial of your request. Your appeal must be in writing, addressed to the Smithsonian Institution Office of General Counsel at the address below, [SIRecordsReq@si.edu](mailto:SIRecordsReq@si.edu), or (202) 357-4310 (fax number), and made within sixty days from the date of this response letter. Your letter must explain your reason(s) for the appeal. The Smithsonian Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer will decide your appeal and will respond to you in writing. You also have the right to request mediation services from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), within the National Archives and Records Administration, to resolve disputes about the withholding of information. Your request for mediation should include language authorizing OGIS to make inquiries on your behalf, including the right to review all documentation that OGIS deems necessary regarding your request. You should note that you understand that any documents you provide to OGIS, except those provided in confidence, may be copied and forwarded to Smithsonian Institution officials as a part of the dispute resolution process.

### SD807 Animal Escape List 2014-2021

Date	Escaped Animal	Summary of Event
1/9/2014	Blue-winged Teal (Duck)	The duck was observed sitting on the exhibit graphic sign. Staff responded and captured the duck. Duck was placed in a crate, weighed and released back into its enclosure.
2/16/2014	Black Crane	Male crane escaped through piano wires. Keepers responded with nets and caught bird on front of exhibit at 8:20AM.
2/19/2014	White Faced Whistling Duck	This bird was observed outside its enclosure, but on the ledge in front of the enclosure. Keepers responded with a net to catch bird, examine it for injuries and returned the bird to its enclosure.
3/2/2014	Bamboo Partridge	Male Bamboo partridge popped out of the wires and then sat behind exhibit sign. Keepers responded immediately, and keeper aide staff was used for crowd control. Stand-down called at 2:46PM.
3/11/2014	White Faced Whistling Duck	This bird was observed outside its enclosure. Keepers responded with a net to catch bird and returned the bird to its enclosure.
4/4/2014	Black Crane	Crane escaped through piano wires. Keepers responded and bird re-entered exhibit through wires at 10:10AM.
1/27/2015	Crested Oropendola	Bird escaped as it was being transferred from net to kennel. Bird flew out of net and up to second floor. Keeper responded with net and secured bird in kennel.
4/12/2015	Bison	Zoo Police notified staff that a bison was outside of its enclosure. Staff responded promptly to appraise the situation. The area was secured by staff and Zoo police while keepers prepared a makeshift shoot back into the enclosure and safely through the electrical "hot" wire. Keepers drew the animal toward the chute while making a normal shift with the other bison in the yard. They were able to move the bison quickly through the chute and back into the holding to secure her.
4/13/2015	Green Tree Monitor	Keeper called code green when the green tree monitor jumped out of his cage during husbandry and ran down the hall. The animal hid behind a small shelf. Keepers maintained a visual on the animal, recaptured it and it was back in the enclosure within 5 minutes of escaping.
5/1/2015	Tamandua	Keeper staff observed female was not on exhibit, checked both sides of their exhibit, did a visual sweep of the building, and then called for help. Within minutes staff on site searched as Zoo Police arrived and used flashlights and found the female tamandua on pipes running above the stairwell. She was returned to her enclosure unharmed in a crate.
5/17/2015	Male blue-winged Teal	The duck flew at the wire mesh and was able to force itself out. The bird was immediately caught by keeper with a hand net within feet of the exhibit, and placed back inside within 30 seconds.
6/24/2015	Blue-naped mousebird	Bird flew out of basement holding cage and landed on edge of nearby cage. Keeper kept an eye on him and directed the recapture. Bird flew towards the keepers and was caught in the air with nets. Bird was then returned to basement holding cage.
6/25/2015	Baltimore Oriole	Bird escaped during exhibit cleaning. Keeper used bugs to lure bird back into exhibit. A net was used to coral the bird and return to exhibit.
7/13/2015	Agouti	Guest reported animal near restaurant and staff were called in to recapture. Staff followed and crated the animal before being returned to the holding pen. Exhibit was examined and secured.
7/22/2015	Baltimore Oriole	Baltimore Oriole escaped exhibit. The bird is trained to perch on hand. Keeper asked him to fly back down to hand. He perched on hand and was placed back into enclosure.
8/26/2015	Stanly Crane juvenile	Keepers saw that the male chick was out of the enclosure in the front of the exhibit, trying to get back in. Several staff went around to the front, from opposite directions, with others backing up, to corner the chick. Keeper was able to immediately catch the chick and he was returned to the enclosure where we proceeded to clip wings of both chicks.
9/21/2015	Stanley Crane Chick	Notified bird was out of enclosure and found by the owl exhibit. Keeper was able to guide the bird up into a corner by the gate door and catch by hand. Bird returned to exhibit unharmed.
9/23/2015	Tree shrews	At approx. 1330 Keeper was replacing zip ties on the small elevated hide box for a Shrew when it was noticed that the shrew was no longer seen in the enclosure. The other stall was also checked and proved a second Shrew was also not visible. A search of the room was initiated. Chirping and rustling were heard in the guillotine door cable housing running along the top left of the stall. Keeper was able to shine a light from a cell phone down the housing tunnel and spotted the Shrew. A Code Green was then announced by staff on the general radio frequency. The second shrew was spotted after shining a light down another of the Cable housing tunnels. One Shrew was recovered by opening the panel over the outside access guillotine door. The other was recovered by forcing open the cable tunnel.
12/24/2015	Lesser Tenrec	A female lesser tenrec was discovered to be missing from its enclosure, while 4 others remained in enclosure. Keepers, staff and zoo police were called to search for the missing tenrec. It was discovered that there was an access pipe going to the sub-basement and that area was explored as well. No animal was discovered in either area after an intensive search.
4/20/2016	Grevy's Zebra	Around 7:20-7:25 keeper shifted zebra into the lower holding yard but he did not shift all of the way into his stall as he normally does and was able to block the gate from closing, thus keeping himself in secondary containment. The keeper called a code green and ensured other staff in the area were secured away from the zebra. Staff were able to lure zebra back into the primary exhibit yard.

Date	Escaped Animal	Summary of Event
7/13/2016	Stanley Crane Chick	At 4:03 PM staff saw Stanley Crane chick outside of the enclosure in the keeper walkway area. Keeper called a code green. Staff repaired a discovered hole in exhibit, and returned the chick to the exhibit where it was reunited with its parents.
1/30/2017	Bobcat (Ollie)	Approximately 0730 – Keeper conducted routine AM checks and accounted for all 3 bobcats. Approximately 1015 – Keeper returned to bobcat enclosure for AM feed, two male bobcats responded for food (normal behavior). One female bobcat (Ollie) did not respond for food (highly unusual). Keeper searched enclosure for Ollie and could not find her. Two male bobcats were secured in holding. Keeper enlisted help of other keepers on duty to assist with search but the female bobcat was not located. Approximately 1040 – Keepers notified Unit Curator that bobcat (Ollie) could not be found. Keepers began searching immediate surrounding area. Approximately 1115 - Unit Curator contacted Associate Director, and OPS to inform them of the situation and discuss forward action. Available animal staff gathered as quickly as possible and mobilized to conduct a more expansive search of the immediate bobcat exhibit area. Zoo staff were notified in person or by phone of the Code Green. Approximately 1145 – Code Green was called over radio, emphasizing that no assistance was needed from other than those specifically called to respond and assuring staff that there was no threat to human safety. Staff searched in the immediate area for about half an hour with no signs of the bobcat. The search was then disbanded so as not to scare the animal away and a plan was put in place to lure the bobcat back into her exhibit because of the familiar surroundings. Four “Have A Heart” traps were set with food items in and around enclosure. Two digital camera traps were set up along walkway between exhibits. Bobcat exhibit doors were left open to give bobcat (Ollie) a clear route to get inside. Senior staff met with Director to implement a communication tree to notify proper authorities (Animal Control, USDA, Park Police, MPD, AZA, etc.), zoo staff, and the public. As of 2300 – after several checks throughout the evening, no traps had been tripped and there was no sign that bobcat (Ollie) had returned to the enclosure. On the afternoon of 1, Feb. two large “Have A Heart” traps were set outside of the Bird House based on a possible sighting by a Zoo visitor. Ollie was captured around 1530 that afternoon.
11/2/2017	Red Panda (male)	At approximately 8am keeper called code green red panda, he was secure in secondary containment and only needed additional department keeper assistance. Red pandas had been locked out on exhibit for the day, the male red panda followed keeper through keeper access door back into holding and was loose in the building. He proceeded to climb up the holding caging onto the top. Staff responded to the red panda holding. Keepers secured the female red panda out in the yard. All holding doors were opened and using grapes red panda was enticed back off the top down into the holding caging.
5/4/2018	Oropendola	Bird escaped from holding in basement while removing food dish. Waited for staff to come, started recapture with nets around 6:35am, bird was re-caught about 20 minutes later.
5/11/2018	Green-winged Teal	Bird had squeezed itself into the exhibit next door. Keepers captured bird in a net and walked out of exhibit with bird in net instead of crate. While opening door, bird squeezed out of net and flew away towards American Trail. Keepers called Assistant Curator to tell him what happened and he called the code green over the radio. Elephant staff was notified that bird staff would be accessing the elephant trek. Curators were notified by phone and some came to help look. American Trail staff was notified to keep an eye out in all of their water features. Bird staff walked all of American Trail several times, all of bird house plateau and also checked elephant house pools from visitor viewing. Code green stand down was called after an hour of hard searching.
5/26/2018	Prairie Dog	Prairie Dog reported to be out of exhibit. There was no recapture as the animal re-entered its enclosure on its own before staff arrived on site. Because of the nature of the animal it went underground and could not be confirmed by keepers until later in the day, however several visitors and police confirmed that the animal did go back into the exhibit.
5/30/2018	Band Tailed Pigeons	Keeper called the Code Green at approximately 0850 and required only fellow keeper's assistance. She came to the room within about 10 minutes with nets. We were able to get the pigeons to one end of the room and down from the pipes by waving the nets and safely captured one and then the other with the nets. Keeper placed them one by one back into their enclosure.
5/31/2018	Band Tailed Pigeon	Bird escaped from cage, had a small curtain up, she saw a “crack” opening and shot right thru. Keeper came from BH and we caught the bird within 3-5 minutes of trying.
8/12/2018	Adult female orangutan "Bonnie"	Keeper was standing in front of room #3 working with another animal when she heard a clicking sound to her right, coming from room #4. The crash gate in the middle of the orangutan line was open so keeper shut it while she watched orangutan in room #4. She noticed orangutan playing with the door, then saw her open the door. At this point keeper yelled out that a Code Green was going on—Bonnie was out of primary containment and into secondary containment, along the back of the orangutan line. Keepers responded immediately to secure the crash doors on both sides of the secondary containment. Code Green was called over radio and support staff in the building were instructed to shelter in place. Keepers enticed Bonnie back into room #4 using treats and were safely able to shut and lock the door behind her. At no time did the orangutan escape secondary containment.

Date	Escaped Animal	Summary of Event
9/17/2018	Kori Bustard, Tatu	At about 11:00 a Kori behavior watcher alerted a keeper that one of the birds was in the back of the exhibit, a keeper responded immediately and discovered she was indeed out of her exhibit. Keeper called for a code green, and staff responded. Staff were able to lure animal back to exhibit door without incident.
3/25/2019	Baltimore Oriole	Keepers attempted to catch bird outside of enclosure. When bird landed on his enclosure, Keeper was able to net him and put him safely back into the enclosure.
4/10/2019	Smallwood anole	Keepers were transferring an anole from 1 cage to another and it jumped on top for about 10 seconds and was recaptured. Code green was called from keeper at reptiles and stand-down was called about 3 minutes later.
7/10/2019	Blue Grey Tanager	Bird escaped enclosure during routine cleaning at 9:18 AM. A Code green was called. Doors were immediately locked to secure secondary containment. Additional Bird House Keepers were contacted to assist at 9:37 AM. Bird was recaptured at 10:10 AM using hand held nets. Bird was offered sugar water and examined by Curator before being returned to enclosure.
8/6/2019	Prevost's squirrel	Prevost's Squirrel escaped the holding enclosure through the opened door during cleaning. It ran up the mesh into the area between Exhibits to the skylight ledge. Staff called a code green and notified Curator/Assistant Curators who responded. Attempts were made to lure the animal down from the skylight ledge using treats but to no avail. The keepers keep eyes on the P. Squirrel the entire time it was out of its enclosure and stayed within secondary containment. At approximately 12:10, the squirrel began to move down the mesh walls and towards his exhibit. The door to the holding enclosure was opened and the squirrel was lured into the holding enclosure with a nut treat. The holding door was closed and secured. Curator called the Code Green Stand Down over the radio at approximately 12:30pm.
8/12/2019	Scarlet Tanager, Juvenile	Bird flew to the ground when keeper opened the door and went right out under the curtain. Bird was recaptured in secondary containment and returned to holding area within 10 minutes.
11/5/2019	False water cobra	At approximately 9:45am keeper was tubing a False water cobra for vet to swab snake for a culture recheck. Upon returning the snake to its enclosure, keeper placed the head into the enclosure and pulled the tube to free the remainder of the snake. Instead of crawling the rest of the way into the enclosure it turned and sprang out of the enclosure onto the floor. The snake crawled under a table to the other side of the room. Keeper was able to walk around the table and retrieve the snake. The animal was back in its enclosure within 1 minute of escape.
6/1/2020	Vulture	Keeper noticed animal was not in exhibit and called code green. Keeper and staff responded. Animal was corralled into the bus lot. Keeper was able to handle the vulture by securing the wings, while another keeper netted the bird. They carried the vulture back into her stall where she received a vet check.
8/26/2020	Pine snake	Around 9 am, Keeper was doing her checks and noticed Ex. 7(E) [REDACTED] Keeper called to Curator immediately to communicate that the pine snake had damaged his holding drawer. Curator called a Code green on the radio and only asked for RDC keepers to respond at this time. By 9:05, RDC Keeper showed up to search the room. By approximately 9:10 am, Keeper recaptured the adult pine snake and placed it into one of our secure holding bins. Keeper then called an "all clear" on the code green over the radio.
10/18/2020	Neon Day Gecko	At 11:32am Keeper contacted Curator to inform him that he observed a Yellow headed (neon) day gecko, Phelsuma klemmeri, laying on top of its enclosure. He watched the gecko dart away from him as he approached and noticed it went towards a light fixture. Curator instructed the Keepers to gather nets and other tools to recapture the gecko and place some gecko diet in the location the gecko was last seen. Staff began observing the area that the gecko was last seen with all preparation made to recapture. At 1:08pm the Curator was informed that the Day gecko was recaptured and placed back into the secure enclosure. It was found inside a light fixture above the enclosure and a bag was placed over the fixture and the gecko was flushed out and recaptured safely and unharmed.
3/10/2021	Scarlet Tanager	Keeper noticed animal was out of cage and tried to catch the bird. Additional keepers were called to assist and the bird was caught in about 10 minutes.
7/26/2021	Scarlet Tanager	Bird was spotted in the hallway out side of containment. Keeper was able to catch the bird within 10 minutes of being seen. Bird was returned to enclosure without incident.