

## IAATE International Symposium, 9-12<sup>th</sup> October, ZooMarine – Portugal

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This October saw the first IAATE Symposium held in Europe and it was a roaring success! We had 36 delegates, who between them represented the grand total of **12** countries including the UK, Europe, the USA, and even China!

ZooMarine Algarve were brilliant hosts, and all the work Miguel Santos did organising the backstage tours and liaising with the hotel was incredible, however the symposium was not without its initial challenges! Steve Martin was lined up to host his one day workshop '**A Comprehensive Course for Bird Trainers and Show Presenters**' however Hurricane Matthew put paid to that and Steve was stuck in the US. A huge shame for all of us who attended, but also for Steve. Fortunately no major damage was sustained to Steve's land or the birds! However, natural disasters aside, we pushed on with the Symposium.

Day One started off well with 2 presentations from the UK (Andy Hallsworth and Andy Reeve) and one from France (Amandine Diot), and aside from a few minor technical hitches getting the first videos to play, all went swimmingly. After this we were lucky enough to be joined by Chirag Patel from Domesticated Manners in the UK. Chirag works as a private behaviour consultant across the world and works closely with Dr Susan Friedman. He is regularly spotted presenting at conferences across the world and he works with a myriad of species and humans.

Chirag really got us all thinking about our training skills, body language and most importantly our animals with an interesting twist on the traditional training games we are all familiar with. This provoked lots of lively discussion between all the delegates, with everybody seeming to thoroughly enjoy the learning environment.

After lunch we had more papers – Mark Habben the Zoological Operations Manager for the Zoological Society of London, and the Chair for the Falconiformes Taxon Advisory Group, followed by International Board Member, Gareth Morgan from African Lion Safari in Canada.

Mark talked about new husbandry guidelines for birds being used in shows, which were actually approved by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) the very next morning. He has been working on the guidelines with the help of other industry professionals for nearly 2 years now so it's awesome that these have been recognised and approved – hopefully the welfare of all birds used for shows across Europe will be improved because of these guidelines.

Gareth did a great job of showcasing the vulture enrichment feeds they do each day at African Lion Safari including all the work they do for Vulture Awareness Day each year. His video of the vultures learning how to figure out the enrichment devices was hilarious and one of my favourite things about the presentation!

We finished Day One with our practical activity – a telemetry chase! This was designed so that delegates with lots of telemetry experience could take small groups of less experienced trainers out to teach them how telemetry works, with a fun ending! We had 3 receivers from ZooMarine and our very own International Board Member Gareth Morgan managed to bring one over from Canada with him too (I'm not sure exactly HOW he got it through Customs, and I think it's safer not to ask!) so we had 4 groups.

Miguel and his team were fantastic, with 2 of his trainers playing birds. They each set off in different directions and off we went! Two teams were following each transmitter (or bird) and unbeknown to the delegates, Miguel had a rather excellent end point for the chase. There were some moments of hilarity as we saw our 'birds' cycling past us when we got too close, and everybody got a little bit competitive!

When we all made it to the end point, we were up on the top of a cliff, with a great view of the sun setting over the sea, and there were beers and food waiting for us all! We even managed to get a group photo before it got too dark.

As often happens, the best networking happens in the bar, and our hotel was all inclusive, so there was plenty of networking done after each day.

Day Two was our 'zoo day' and we were bussed over to ZooMarine where we were given a private demonstration of the husbandry training ZooMarine do with their dolphins, seals and sealions. After that it was a trip to the veterinary hospital and even the rehab centre – ZooMarine Algarve rescue a lot of marine mammals and sea turtles every year, and manages to rehabilitate and release many of these animals. In fact 90% of the turtles they rescue survive to be released – a rather impressive statistic.

We were treated to a huge spread for lunch, including drinks at the biggest table I've ever seen, and the owner of ZooMarine even made a quick visit into the room while we were eating!

Once we had had the backstage tour it was on to the Bird Shows. The first show was incredible, an array of birds including a Trumpeter Hornbill, a Striated Caracara, Marabou Stork, Bengal Eagle Owl, Black Kites, White Storks and ibis, was presented in both Portuguese and English by Bart Hendriks who made this look effortless. I can only imagine how daunting it must have been to present the show to all of us trainers as well as his standard audience, but he did a fantastic job.

The Parrot show later in the day featured some brilliant behaviours by the species including macaws, cockatoos and Amazons, several of these behaviours occurred with no trainer on stage. There was an amazing bit of audience participation where a little girl was picked to come onto the stage and plant a tree to help regrow the rainforests, and she was treated to a flock of lovebirds flying out to her once she had done this. A really impressive way of getting our conservation message across to the audience.

Day Three and we were back to papers with Carlos Calretas from Al Wabra starting us off with a great talk about the training they do at their facility in the UAE. Right up until the moment Carlos arrived we were not quite sure if he was going to make it...He was only back in Portugal for his wife to have a baby and despite being due the week before the symposium, his daughter was born at 0002 on Weds 12<sup>th</sup> – Just 9 hours before he presented his paper!!

We were even joined by Mike Simmons from A World of Wings via a live Facebook call to talk about breeding success and assisted hatching with falcons here in the UK.

After lunch it was my turn to present – taking Robin’s advice to talk slowly (apparently I get very excited and babble....Anyone who knows me will of course know that is true!) and then we rounded off the day with our Enrichment Workshop, hosted by Enrichment Queen and President of IAATE Robin Shewokis. During the workshop we split into small groups again and got to help each other coming up with different enrichment ideas from the 6 categories (auditory, visual, dietary, tactile, olfactory and social) for different birds we work with. It was really fun getting to talk to people from different countries and collections and learning about the different bird species they worked with.

We had one final meal with everybody in the hotel restaurant before everybody had to start thinking about their flights and head back to their rooms.

The feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive and I have to say I was thrilled to have been a part of the symposium and I really hope we get to host another one on this side of the world at some point in the future.

Mark Habben, Zoological Operations Manager for ZSL and EAZA Falconiformes TAG Chair said ‘A fun, educational and interesting Symposium. The presentations were diverse, relevant and very well presented with all attendees learning something new despite their range of knowledge and experience. We couldn’t have asked for better hosts and I will highly recommend future symposiums to anyone interested in avian training and enrichment’

Andy Hallsworth, Animal Training and Presentations Manager, Banham Zoo said ‘IAATE International Bird Training Symposium, Portugal. A perfect venue for like-minded people from 12 countries around the world to share a common language: bird training. Thank you to all involved, it was an excellent few days.’