

AAV Member Spotlight: Joanne Paul-Murphy, DVM, Dipl ACZM, Dipl ACAW

It is with great pleasure that we present the AAV newsletter: Member Spotlight. This special feature showcases the association's most valuable asset—our members—by highlighting our diverse backgrounds, professional activities, experience, and geographic locations.

Most memorable AAV experience or contribution

My first presentation at the AAV conference in Canada – I was a veterinary student and I gave a talk about the radiology of the avian skull. I wasn't trying to be humorous, but somehow I made a comment about how radiologists look at images – and the whole audience laughed. It really helped me relax and all the "grown-up" clinicians were really nice to me after my talk.

What is your favorite avian species and why?

I don't have a favorite avian species – I have a favorite falcon (Peregrine Falcon), a favorite crane (Wattled Crane), a favorite penguin (Yellow-eyed penguin) and of course my favorite parrot is the Kākāpō.

What was the last interesting avian medical or surgical issue you dealt with in your work?

I just completed a sabbatical year, and while much of that time was spent writing papers and grants, the best part of the year was being associated with the Kākāpō Recovery Program in New Zealand. The kākāpō is an endemic psittacine species of New Zealand and one of the most endangered parrots in the world. In 1995 there were only 51 kakapo in the world. These birds are large (heaviest parrot in the world), flightless, nocturnal, have a lek breeding system, and large breeding seasons occur only every 3-4 years, that coincide with the masting of specific tree species.

The Kakapo Recovery Program is under the direction of the Department of Conservation with contributions from the Auckland Zoo, Massey University and many of the nations top scientists at universities, the ministries and private institutions. The predominant Maōri tribe of New Zealand's South Island, Ngāi Tahu, has strong cultural, spiritual and traditional associations with the kākāpō. No kakapo are held in captivity, and predator-free islands are the best method to protect them from invasive mammalian predators. I was first associated with the program in 2002, when there were only 49 birds on offshore islands and 24 chicks were hatched that year on Whenua Hou! I was able to join the team again in 2009 for another major breeding season, bringing the total population to 124 birds. This past year was outstanding, with 3 island populations adding another 34 chicks, and the total population is now 158 birds.

In addition to assisting with the health care of the kakapo (adults and chicks), I have also contributed to the program's studies to improve semen collection and artificial insemination, nutritional studies to improve the supplemental diets, and an ongoing investigation to determine the etiology of a clinical syndrome of vent dermatitis and cloacitis; also called "Crusty Bum."

Best benefits of AAV membership?

The people

If you had not chosen your present career, what would you be doing?

Wildlife biology

What was your favorite class or activity in vet school/vet tech school/college?

Poultry Medicine - NOT probably neurology with Dr. DeLahunta at Cornell University



Joanne Paul-Murphy, DVM, Dipl ACZM, Dipl ACAW

Professor, Companion Exotic Animal Medicine and Surgery
University of California, Davis
Davis, California, USA

AAV Member Since 1986 and recipient of multiple AAV Research Grants