SLOTH BEAR *(MELURSUS URSINUS)* ENRICHMENT AND TRAINING AT SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO

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Bears are highly intelligent animals that require a great deal of mental stimulation in captivity. At the National Zoo's Asia Trail the sloth bears are provided with a variety of enrichment options. Many of these activities can be done inexpensively with materials we already have on hand or which can easily be collected from staff and volunteers. Other activities make use of the pre-fabricated enrichment items sold online through companies like Boomer Ball and Otto Environmental. The sloth bears are also trained a variety of behaviors as part of their enrichment program, as well as for husbandry reasons. The video shows our bears interacting with a variety of enrichment as well as some of the behaviors we train with them.

Examples of Enrichment

Balls, Teasers, Bobbins, and Floats

Boomer Ball
www.boomerball.com

Jolly Ball
www.jollypets.com

Barrels and PVC

Barrels from
McCutchins Apple
Juice Factory

Treats in bucket →

Hanging Toys & Furniture

Paper Products

Boxes, bags, shredded paper, phone books, toilet paper rolls, paper mache, etc.
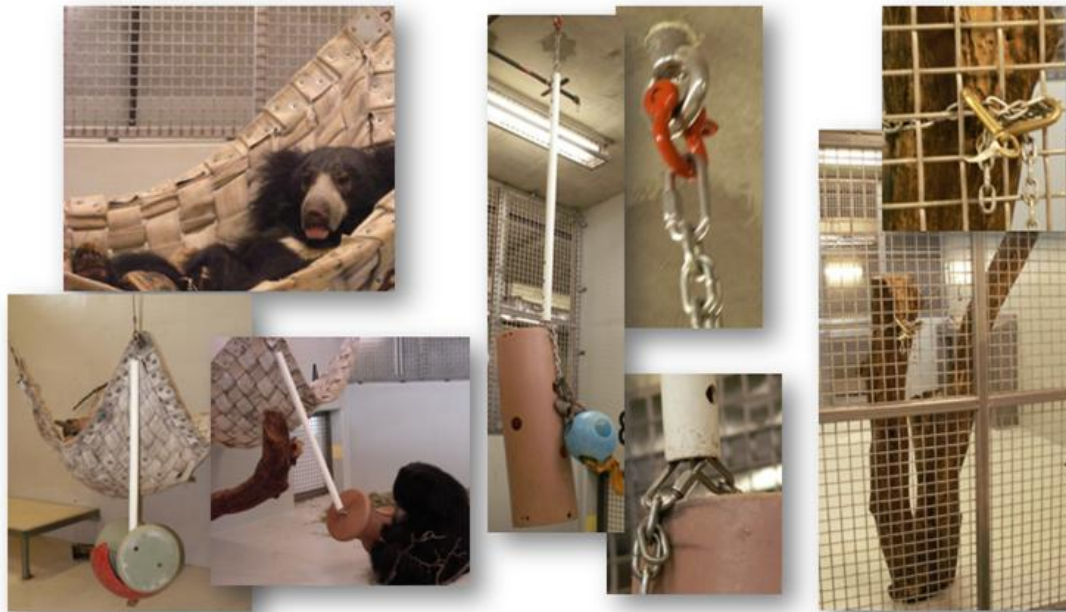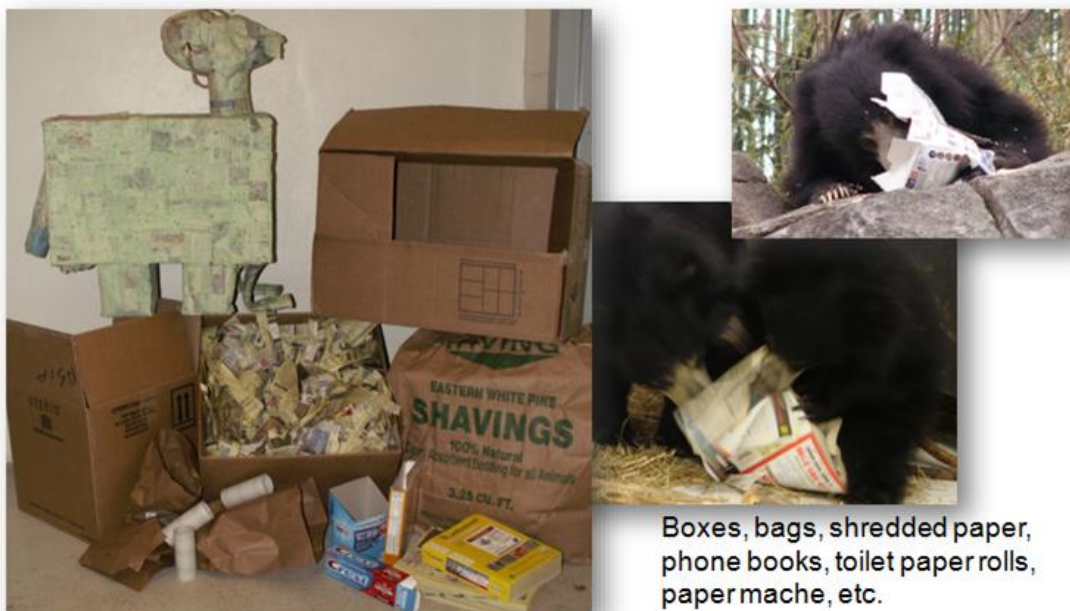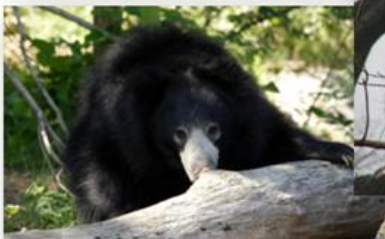
Sheets & Rags

Substrates & Furniture

Treats can be hidden in substrates & log holes

Household Items & Frozen Treats

Heavy duty metal bowls, cloth bags,
Frisbees, herbs, spices & extracts, etc.

Examples of Training

TARGET

- Visual: target stick at mesh or glass

- Criteria: nose touching target

STATION

- Visual: station on mesh

- Criteria: sitting or standing with face at station

STAND

- Visual: palm up towards ceiling

- Criteria: standing with 4 paws on ground

SIDE

- Visual: hand facing left or right, palm towards mesh, moving the way bear should face

- Criteria: standing with 4 paws on ground, side pushed up against mesh, in direction is hand moving

SIT

- Visual: hand up, palm towards mesh

- Criteria: sitting with paws down

FEET

- Visual: index fingers pointing outwards at mesh where feet should be placed

- Criteria: sitting, legs apart, back paws against mesh so feet can be touched

LAY

- Visual: hand up with palm facing direction bear should lay down, then swing arm down 90 degrees

- Criteria: laying on side with all 4 paws off ground

OPEN

- Visual: thumb and forefinger go from closed to open position

- Criteria: mouth open all the way; hold until bridged

UP

- Visual: index finger pointing up

- Criteria: standing upright with back paws on ground, front paws on mesh

BELLY

- Visual: hands up, palms facing mesh, fingers wiggling

- Criteria: in up position, pushes belly against mesh and allows it to be touched