

Beisser says New Zoo needs more interest, volunteers

By Kym Gilhooly
Emerald Reporter

Although New Zoo events have enjoyed six years of success in Eugene and Springfield by attracting more than 20,000 people, Bob Beisser said the organization needs to generate continuing interest to keep itself alive.

"The only way we're going to turn the wildlife problem around is to have a grass-roots reawakening of values and a shifting of priorities," Beisser said, founder of the non-profit educational organization.

"Our society is becoming increasingly urbanized and removed from nature and that's part of the reason we don't think of animals," Beisser added. "We've gotten so far removed that they're just not a part of our reality."

The New Zoo offers the public a chance to interact hands-on with animals and learn more about them through exhibits designed to heighten public awareness about the destruction of wildlife habitat, Beisser

Event marks sixth year and 20,000 visitors

said. Beisser founded the New Zoo in 1984 because he wanted to "turn people on to nature."

Beisser wants the New Zoo to become an activist organization that will keep "the idea of wildlife conservation in the public eye" and work to reverse the trend of declining wild animal populations. He said the New Zoo is a pilot program that could be replicated in communities across the nation, and is in the process of drafting letters to national organizations to publicize the program.

The 1989 New Zoo was held at Island Park in Springfield and featured a cougar provided by Terri Raines of Eugene, a wolf from Wolf Haven in Tinano, Wash., an elephant from the Wildlife Safari in southern Oregon, a black bear cub from Wildlife Images in Grants Pass, amphibians from the Oregon Herpetological Society and various birds from the Willamette Wildlife Rescue and

Rehabilitation. Many of the animals have been injured and are being rehabilitated for reintroduction to the wild, or are simply too damaged to survive on their own and can be effective educational tools, Beisser said.

Beisser said the event is unique because many of the animals are uncaged, which encourages a "hands-on experience" with the public.

"There's real value in actually seeing the animal face to face," Beisser said. "If a person can't see the animal alive, then it's just a picture in a book or on TV, and it's somehow less real."

Beisser said the New Zoo for 1990 is tentatively scheduled for May 5 and 6 and is in need of volunteers to provide community outreach, equipment set-up and security for the event. Beisser encouraged local service organizations to get involved, adding that the Kiwanis Club sponsors the New Zoo

in Florence. A new exhibit planned for 1990 will focus on deforestation as a global problem and will stress the major role forests play in climate conditions.

Beisser said he's hopeful the 1990s will cause people to take an active role in "designing the

future." Beisser is hosting weekly meetings to encourage volunteer support for the New Zoo's annual celebration and hopes to find a group of people "willing to make personal sacrifices to make things happen."

Beisser encourages anyone interested in the New Zoo and wildlife preservation to call 342-8169 for more information.

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urging of friends who had been hearing him tell jokes for years.

Since then, Frog has hauled his worn yellow newspaper delivery bag full of jokes and bumper stickers (reading "Impeach Bush" and "Impeach Quayle First") along 13th Avenue, where he offers passers-by the "rare and distinct pleasure of buying the world's funniest joke books."

"I'm not getting rich, but I pay my rent and everything," he says, adding that he does not have any need for large sums of money.

"I get what I need to pay my rent and eat, and occasionally go to a movie or a bar," he says. Frog's musical tastes range from blues, jazz, classical, reggae, bluegrass and even punk.

For \$3 each, Frog offers seven different collections of new and collected jokes. His most recent book, *I Was a Teen Age Frog*, was published in November of last year.

Frog plans to print his next book, *The Regurgitated Frog*, this spring in time for the reopening of the outdoor Saturday Market in April.

Frog boasts that his joke books contain "political jokes, dumb jokes, sick and tasteless jokes (indeed, *The Regurgitated Frog* will feature a frog on the cover throwing up), religious

jokes, drunk jokes, lawyer jokes ..."

The only kinds of jokes you won't find in his books, he says, are racist and sexist jokes, because "neither kind are funny."

Frog has a great memory for jokes. Sitting on a bench in Taylor's he fires off on cue, "How many Eugene residents does it take to change a light bulb? One hundred — one to screw in the bulb and 99 to apply for the job."

"What's the matter with political jokes? Too many get elected."

"Have you heard of Zsa Zsa Gabor's new perfume? It's called Felony. You slap it on."

Recent weeks have found Frog himself in hot water with local police. Frog was arrested Jan. 15, charged with consuming alcohol on an unlicensed

premises — the 13th and Kincaid street corner that serves as his place of business most afternoons.


He was also cited recently for soliciting on public property, a charge that he is currently contesting in court.

"There's more pressure these days," he said. Though Frog admits to having had a beer on the street, he insists he was not "causing anyone any problems" and is being harassed.

"Had I been anyone with short hair or a yuppie, (the arresting officer) never would have come over," he said.

But Frog may have had the last laugh. The publicity that followed his arrest was good for business.

"A lot of people read about that and came up to me. I sold a lot of books that day. There's humor in that."



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