



Garrett Loders, Maria Pelster and Caleb Hardy are shown during a rehearsal for *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, being produced by the Vernonia Homeschoolers. See page 11 for schedule and details of play. Photo courtesy of Carol Pelster.

# Rare frog is on display at Oregon Zoo



Oregon Zoo visitors can now check out this rare, bright-red tomato frog, native only to Madagascar. Photo by Michael Durham, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo.

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What's red and hops? A tomato frog! Local residents can get a peek at this rare species, native only to the island of Madagascar, in a new display at the Oregon Zoo's Bamba du Jon Swamp exhibit.

True to its name, the Madagascar tomato frog (*Dyscophus antongilii*) looks quite a bit like a ripe, red tomato. Don't try to eat one though. One reason these amphibians are so brightly colored is to warn would-be

predators about their toxic excretions. When threatened, a tomato frog puffs itself up to appear larger and, if that doesn't work, it secretes a white, sticky toxic substance from its skin.

But even though tomato frogs have defenses, it's not easy being red in Madagascar these days. The frogs' bright reddish-orange skin makes it easy for poachers in the pet-trade industry to spot them on the ground and pick them up.

Yep, just like tomatoes.

Tomato frogs are also susceptible to pesticides and detergents found in irrigation runoff. The frogs often hang out in ditches near farms to catch the water, but this, along with the poaching, has caused their numbers to drop.

These problems have prompted conservation efforts by zoos in the United States and Madagascar to educate the public and save tomato frogs from possible extinction. The Madagascar Fauna Group, an international consortium of zoos and other conservation organizations, has started an exhibit in the tomato frog's native country at the Parc Zoologique d'Ivoloina.

The zoo opens at 9 a.m. daily and is located just off Highway 26. The zoo is also accessible by MAX light rail line. General admission is \$9.75 (12-64), seniors \$8.25 (65+), children \$6.75 (3-11), and infants 2 and under are free; 25 cents of the admission price helps fund regional conservation projects through the zoo's Future for Wildlife program. A parking fee of \$2 per car is also required. Additional information is available at [www.oregonzoo.org](http://www.oregonzoo.org) or by calling 503-226-1561.

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