

Weekly Zoo Article – Feb 1, 2008

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Another year has begun. As the education division of the zoo looks forward into 2008 we see many opportunities to reach you, our guests, and are working hard to provide new opportunities when you visit the zoo.

Each year starts with new docent recruitment and training. This year is no different. We are now almost four weeks into our new docent classes, and have several great new people joining our team. These docents (volunteer educators) extend the reach of the education division, by offering discovery carts on grounds for guests to view and explore animal biofacts and artifacts, they help with special events, assist the division in presenting over a thousand of education programs each year, and more.

So what can you look forward to in 2008? Two new events are occurring within the next month and a half!

On Valentine's Day the zoo will host Animal Attractions. This evening should prove to be a fun, unique way to celebrate this day for love. Ever wondered what some animals do to catch the attention of a possible mate? How do they hook that perfect partner? And is there anything unique about their mating rituals? Well here is your chance to find out. For a nominal fee (\$38 per couple), guests will feast on a catered Italian dinner, be treated to a program about animal courtship and mating, and take home a souvenir to help remember the night. Due to the content of the program, this is an event geared towards adults. The ultimate goal is to provide a fun night, with good food, great company, and lots of laughs. Space is limited, so if you are interested please call with your questions (276-1250) or come on down to the Finnup Center for Conservation Education to purchase your ticket.

On Saturday, March 1st, we will kick off "Year of the Frog" with a Frog Festival. This event is open to all, and is FREE. Visit us in the Finnup Center, and just outside the building, between 11 and 3 to play games, and learn about frogs and their amphibian friends. Why would you want to learn about these wet critters? All animals play an important role in their habitat, and amphibians are no different. They consume many pests that, in too large a number, could cause problems for other animals, including humans. Their dependence on water and their permeable skin makes them environmental indicators, warning humans of possible problems in the environment. They provide great nighttime choruses, which bring back memories for many

of their childhood days, wading through ponds trying to sneak up on and get a good look at these amazing creatures. Unfortunately, amphibians world-wide are in trouble. We want to take some time to explore and appreciate these fascinating creatures and show our guests how they can help amphibians.

Earth Day is celebrated in April. Each year we host a free festival, open to school aged kids, 3rd grade and higher. We play games, do crafts, watch a performer, and learn about the world. This is done with the cooperation of many area and state agencies and businesses. The zoology classes that meet here at the zoo and the LRZ docents help make this event go off without a hitch. Teachers and students travel from booth to booth participating in hands-on activities that encourage learning and an appreciation for nature.

Summer Edventures occur in June and July. There are five Edventures throughout the summer for two age groups, 3rd-5th grade and 6th-8th. This year we will adventure into the wild world of cats, get jumping with frogs and explore the magical creatures of the popular “Harry Potter” stories. Look for registration forms later in the spring and be prepared for a rip-roaring time at the zoo.

Every Friday at 10:30 we have our weekly story time. Stop by the Finnup Center to hear a story and have a chance to meet an animal or touch animal biofacts that go along with that story. Adults can stop by our free monthly informational coffee hour, at 9am on the first Thursday of each month, to get an inside look at some of the happenings of the zoo, meet some of our animals, and meet new people. We have coffee, tea, hot coco, and cider available and look forward to meeting everyone interested in coming. Both of these offerings are free of charge and require no reservation.

Be sure to take advantage of some of these education division programs and events that will be offered over the next six months. Our goal is to continue to provide quality opportunities for all members of the community and encourage visits to the zoo and conservation efforts at home. The most important thing is to have fun, and we look forward to helping you with that on your next visit to the zoo.

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