

By Judith Doner Darné
staff writer

A team of editors, after interviews with zoo experts locally and across the country, found the Detroit Zoo;

- Lacks broad-based funding, leadership and volunteer support.
- Is the only zoo which isn't accredited of seven animal parks picked on the basis of reputation or proximity to metropolitan Detroit.
- Lacks a capital budget.
- Has only modest aid from a 2,530-member private Zoological Society whose fund-raising efforts don't measure up to what other zoos are doing.

"There is not one city employee from janitor to director," boasts Cincinnati Zoo Director Edward Maruska.

Private contributions from individuals and corporate foundations have grown from an average of \$135,000 several years ago to \$5 million. The Troy-based Kresge Foundation has given \$200,000.

• The city successfully went for \$4 million in revenue bonds, which the society will pay off over 20 years.

"We work very aggressively," Maruska said. He says new exhibits are a key to attendance, which is close to a million annually. Admission is \$3.75 for adults and \$1.50 for children.

THE TOLEDO Zoo boasts a yearly grant from Dearborn-based Ford Motor Co. (\$800) as does the Cleveland Zoo (\$500). Modest as the grants are, they are more than the Detroit Zoo gets from Ford, which claims it hasn't been solicited since 1979 — other than last year's special appeal for the train which it turned down.

In 1982, the city of Toledo — beset by financial problems — turned over the zoo to the Toledo Zoological Society, reported Tom LaRock, development and marketing manager. The society has 11,000 members.

A half-mill countywide property tax for operations was approved in November 1982 for five years — raising \$1.8 million annually of the \$2.9-million zoo budget.

Capital improvements are financed by another half-mill countywide tax, approved in 1980 for five years.

Annual attendance of 450,000 is based on \$2 admission fees for adults and 75 cents for children.

CHICAGO'S ZOOLOGICAL Park, popularly known as the Brookfield Zoo, has a whopping \$15-million operating budget. Half comes from county forest-preserve funds and half from its own revenues and fund raising.

Owned by the Cook County Forest Preserve District, the zoo is managed by the Chicago Zoological Society. The zoological society is spearheading a \$24-million capital-improvements campaign, which features matching funds by the county, reported Jean Baker, public relations manager.

The society is headed by a 30-member board

which directs operations after 200 governing members make policy. The society has 17,155 members.

Brookfield Zoo, celebrating its 50th anniversary, averages 2 million in annual attendance. Admission is a relatively modest \$3 for adults and 50 cents for children. Admission is free on Tuesdays.

THE MILWAUKEE County Zoo is a strictly county operation, according to Rudy Underkofler, assistant director of administration, finance and marketing.

One-third of the \$5 million operating budget comes from property taxes. The rest comes from admissions, zoo memberships, concessions and food. A \$662,000 capital refurbishing fund is included in the operational budget.

The zoo gets no operating support from the 15,000-member zoological society, which undertakes agreed-upon special projects, Underkofler said. "Being a government agency, no one is particularly interested in contributing to a body that also taxes them," he said.

Attendance was 1.2 million last year. Admission is \$2.50 for adults, \$1.25 for children.

RIVERBANKS ZOO, Columbia, S.C., is designated as a "special purpose district" and is funded and run by two South Carolina counties.

A millage allotment is received from each county, so that a portion of total tax revenue makes up 40 percent of the zoo's \$1-million budget.

• The Riverbanks Zoo Society — 12,000 strong — supplies about 13 percent more, with the rest generated from admissions, gift shop and concessions.

"Actually our funding from the county is reassessed each year," said Mary Leverette, public relations coordinator. "If we make more revenue than anticipated, then their (counties') allotment is usually smaller."

A relatively new zoo, started in 1974 with the help of a bond issue, it has a direct mail campaign each spring and fall to solicit members. Last year, a \$800,000 education center was built through private donations.

"We do a lot of PR, and that helps," Leverette said.
Admission is \$2.50 for adults, \$1.25 for children.

BALTIMORE'S ZOO is in transition. Starting July 1, the Baltimore Zoological Society is slated to take over the reins from the city of Baltimore.

"It's more appropriate for a specialized institution to be the operating authority," said James Hundley, society director. He described the current method of operation as "sort of a two-headed beast. There's a lot of inefficiency there."

"The zoological society is in a better position to raise funds, because people wouldn't be as apt to say they're already paying taxes toward the zoo," Humble said.

Currently the society — 7,000 active contributors, up from 800 in 1978 — is restricted to providing funds for special projects. "We've taken on new responsibilities for the zoo gradually. It's sort of a logical step to take over operations," the society president said.

The Baltimore Zoo has a \$3-million operating budget, of which the city provides two-thirds from its general tax base, the society one-third. Capital improvements come via a bond issue.

"There have been times over the past couple of years when we've worried about the survival of the institution," Hundley said. In his mind, marketing is the solution.

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Zoo can no longer wait for handouts to support their programs. Among their market devices are supporting societies, fund-raising, grants, taxes and revenue from new exhibits.

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