

# Traverse City Zoo ready to welcome spring visitors

By CLEO ISBISTER  
Special to the Record-Eagle

TRAVERSE CITY - The elk has shed its antlers, the woodchuck is out of hibernation and the bears are looking forward to summer visitors.

It's spring at the zoo.

Prior to the April 15 opening, zoo director Ken Gregory and zookeepers Ken Linderleaf and John Browne were awash in soapsuds and paint. They replaced old sand with new, rejuvenated cage furniture such as hollow logs, climbing trees and perches, cleaned ponds and gave the grounds a facelift.

The zoo currently has 45 animals representing 22 species, all Michigan natives except the buffalo, and even those were natural inhabitants of southern Michigan at one time.

The roster includes elk, whitetail deer, gray or timber wolf, black bears, coyote, red and gray foxes, a descendent skunk, raccoon, badger, albino red squirrel, mink, bobcats, lynx, crow, raven, great horned owl, barn owl and three varieties of hawk (red tail, rough legged and goshawk.)

Even though the winter was mild, Penny, the female bear, hibernated most of the time. Ben, the male, slept lightly and strolled out often for a stretch and a feed.

The other animals followed their normal patterns — even Skeena, the gray wolf, who pursued his relentless pacing.

The hawks and owls have been on occasional outings to area schools where Gregory takes them to extol their virtues, mainly as ratcheters, to wide-eyed students.

While there are no newborns at the zoo requiring four-hour feedings, there is a new acquisition — a two-year old bobcat named Reiko, who joins Bobby.

In fact, asked about his favorite animal, Gregory says, "The bobcats are kind of neat. They are friendly and playful."

Three notable absences at the zoo are a wolverine, a bald eagle and an otter. Wolverines and otters are costly, and eagles are on

the endangered species list and almost impossible to obtain. All three were once residents of the zoo here.

The wolverine never was a Michigan native but was designated Michigan's state animal because of the large number of wolverine pelts that came through in fur trading days.

The bald eagle at Clinch Park lived to be about 47 years old, estimated to be about 17 years older than average for an eagle.

There's still wistful talk of acquiring an otter because the children enjoy their antics, but the current price is around \$2,500.

Barbara Lehnhard of the Zoological Society says a master plan for the zoo is being studied.

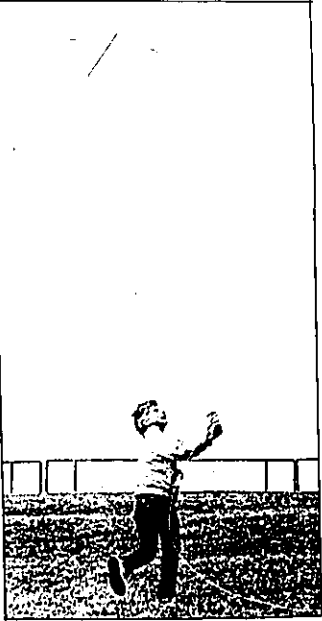
This year's plan calls for fence and waste water pump improvements. Long-range plans call for renovation of the small animal building. Projected for 1989, the cost of the renovation would be about \$250,000 and the society is presently conducting a fund-raising drive. Richard Griffin, president of the society, says donations are needed for engineering and building expertise, and those wishing to donate time and/or funds should write the society at P.O. Box 1145, Traverse City, MI 49685-0145.

Recently zoo directors from four downstate cities — Detroit, Grand Rapids, Saginaw and Lansing — toured the Clinch Park facilities and met with Gregory and the society's board of directors.

They indicated the zoo had the potential for becoming one of the midwest's finest small zoos, a standard compatible with the area's tourism reputation.

The last three weeks of the school year the society sponsors volunteer-guided tours for children bused in from area schools. Last year that meant about 2,000 children.

The society also sponsors a program called "New Opportunities For Animal Habitats" (NOAH), whereby individuals or organizations can adopt an animal and thus contribute to the upkeep of the zoo.

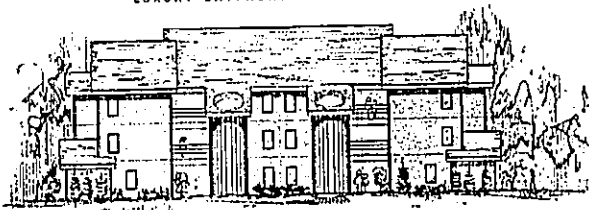


## Kite flight

Kite flying is another spring sport that can be enjoyed by resident and visitor alike. This young man is catching the breezes at the Open Space area near the Traverse City Zoo.

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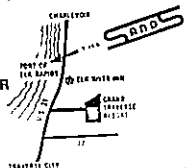


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