



All the excitement at the remodeled Detroit Zoo doesn't seem to faze this feline resident.

BILL BREGLER/staff photographer

Animals, visitors will enjoy 'new' Detroit Zoo

By M.B. Dillon
staff writer

Redford Township's Jimmy O'Brien, then a fifth grader on his class trip, made sure Theresa Coffey was seated next to him on the train at the Detroit Zoo.

Just before the rumbling little train entered the tunnel, he turned to his sweetheart and said, "Pucker up!"

Coffey, now married to someone else and living near the zoo in Royal Oak, well remembers the Our Lady of Loretto School outing.

"He didn't try a thing. It wasn't dark enough," she said.

The zoo still is a place for romance, and for reveling in the wonder of nature's magnificent creatures. Plus, it's just plain fun. And you don't have to be a kid to enjoy yourself.

"We still have a reputation as a cheap date," said zoo director Steve Graham. "We have young couples, senior citizens, students — there's practically no market we don't touch."

IF THE zoo has locked horns with some lean years of late, it's making quite a comeback.

Greeting visitors are a colorfully painted, illuminated water tower

and an attractive, new \$12 million entrance, with rippling flags and no-cost parking in a brick deck.

Admission to the zoo, celebrating its 60th anniversary, is \$5 for patrons 13 and older and \$3.50 for senior citizens. Through Aug. 29, admission is free for all children.

The zoo is open all year, most days from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. With I-696 under construction right next to the park, getting to the zoo can be a bit of a hassle. But by Labor Day, 1989, the freeway will be completed. The zoo will have its own exit.

"This way, people will be able to come to the zoo without ever leaving

the freeway," Graham said.

Also scheduled for completion by September of next year is a \$6 million chimpanzee house. The 4 1/2-acre, jungle-like habitat will occupy the site of the old ape house.

DON'T BE SURPRISED if you hear squeals of delight coming from the renovated penguinarium. The popular, three-sided exhibit is one of the few places in the world where you can peer through glass to see penguins swimming underwater.

And Detroit's is the only zoo in the country that houses elf-like Blue penguins from Australia and New Zealand.

It's amazing to see these rounded, "tuxedoed" birds lumber along the rocks like stodgy old men, then dive into a pool where they become the picture of grace and speed, sleekly undulating through and over the water.

Feedings, at 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. daily, are a treat to watch. There's a pecking order in the penguin population. To see who's boss, notice who eats first.

You might catch human moms smiling and elbowing their husbands in the penguinarium. One of the signs says that male and female penguins take turns incubating their eggs over six weeks.

A male King penguin from the sub-antarctic is pictured with the couple's single egg atop his fleshy

feet, keeping it warm by covering the egg with a bulging apron of skin and feathers.

IF WHINING KIDS and testy parents get to you in the indoor exhibits, take a stroll through some of the zoo's open, landscaped areas. Buy yourself a praline pecan ice cream cone and saunter down a winding, tree-lined walkway. Follow the wooden fence past gardens, wild flowers and over brooks and ponds. A new brick wall surrounding the zoo does a pretty good job of keeping outside noise to a minimum.

Picnic tables in open spaces welcome the weary. It's okay to bring in your own food and beverages (excluding alcohol), so plan a picnic if you're in the mood.

If exotic African birds excite you, follow the painted penguin prints from the Penguinarium to the Bird House. The walls may need a coat of paint, but the Bird House occupants create a riot of color and a pageant of sound.

You'll see wading flocks of orange and black flamingos so beautiful you'll wonder how plastic flamingos ever became gag gifts.

Long-legged egrets whose feathers were once used to decorate ladies' hats share a tropical garden with spoon bills and spur-winged plovers.

It's a spectacular display in a natural-looking, open setting.

THREE LAKES grace the zoo. Gaze at one, and you're likely to see

white pelicans so large it seems they could carry youngsters on their backs, monkeys swinging one-handed from island trees, and red-billed ducks from South America and fuzzy baby mallards out for a swim.

Ever notice what expressive faces camels have? The two-humped, big-eyed creatures look at you as if to say, "My word. Can't you see I'm munching!"

Want to experience fright? Visit the tiger exhibit. You can get so close that a big, striped cat and you can have eye contact. Scary.

If you weighed as much as a hippo, 8,000 pounds, you probably wouldn't move too swiftly either. But these fellas sometimes are curious enough to open an eye, size you up and wiggle an ear.

If you want to get the creeps, visit the hooded vultures, and be glad you're not a carcass.

There's so much to see at the 125-acre zoo it's best to make a day of it. Come early. Wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. Don't forget a camera and sunglasses.

If you're in need of an unusual gift or would like a souvenir, stop in the zodiac on your way out. Animals are portrayed in art, humorous ways on everything from T-shirts and windsocks to books, posters and piggy banks.

For information on zoo activities call 398-0900.



Children and adults find themselves mimicking the chimpanzees around the Detroit Zoo monkey house.

This place is a zoo — too

By M.B. Dillon
staff writer

If you haven't been to the Belle Isle Zoo for a while, live it up. For \$3, a pleasant respite from the daily grind can be yours.

Belle Isle's is the only zoo in the nation with an elevated boardwalk. From spots, there's a glorious view through leafy trees of the Detroit River and the city skyline.

Underneath the wooden walkway live up to 30 species and 150 animals hailing from all parts of the globe.

"A lot of our visitors are parents with small children," said Khadejah Shelby, deputy director of Detroit's Zoological Parks Department.

"Our elevated boardwalk is three quarters of a mile long, with a refreshment stand halfway around. So unlike the big zoo, it's hard to get lost. And it's less stressful for the animals (than conventional zoos)."

"We have access for the handicapped, and can accommodate children in strollers."

COUPLES FREQUENT the zoo a lot, Shelby added.

"A fellow can get in for \$3, buy a pop and a hotdog, and have a nice talk. A couple can stroll and talk, observe the animals, maybe even read and compose poetry," said Shelby, pointing to a shady spot along the walk.

"You certainly can combine a trip to the zoo with a fitness walk, and nice fresh air. Even if it's hot, it's five to 10 degrees cooler here. We



Watching reindeer and other animals at the Belle Isle Zoo is easy from the main walkway.

get the advantage of the Detroit River. We're surrounded by water."

If you happen to be at the zoo at 4 p.m., you'll witness a feeding frenzy in the sea lion pool. The closer it gets to feeding time, the faster the whiskered pair swims and the more often the sleek creatures stick their heads up, looking and listening for the zookeeper with the hankered-for herring and squid.

IN LATE JULY, the zoo will be home to some new residents — siamangs.

"Siamangs are an unusual ape from the gibbon family," said Shelby. "They have a throat pouch that they can puff up to the size of their head."

The hooting sounds siamangs make with their pouches can be heard for up to three miles.

Belle Isle's flamingos, whose diet of brine shrimp keeps their feathers pink, are a sight to behold. So are the scimitar-horned antelope, considered sacred in India. Graceful secretary birds prance in a way that can only be described as regal.

For more information, call 398-0900. Belle Isle's Zoo is open from May 1 - Nov. 1.

And one last thing. Then Thomas of Grace Pointe took his grandchildren Jeremy and Lisa to the Belle Isle Zoo recently. They highly recommend the huge slide, on the lake just outside the site.