

Not like a zoo

Visitors find off-season is best time to see animals

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Detroit actually has two zoos at Woodward Avenue and Ten Mile Road.

The zoo people see in the peak season, May 1 until shortly after Labor Day, is a bustling, bustling place drawing millions of visitors.

Then there's the other zoo — same place, same animals — but offering an off-season charm.

That off-season zoo is much better, according to Jon Bakos, a seventh-grader at Hart Middle School in Rochester Hills.

THE BIRD HOUSE is an example of why the off season Detroit Zoo is better, said Bakos. "In the summer, the birds stay hidden because there are so many people. But in the winter they aren't so frightened . . . and we saw tons."

Jon should know. He and his father, Alan, are regular visitors at the off-season Detroit Zoo. "We come here three or four times," said the senior Bakos. "We love it."

Bakos and his son were among the hundreds of people who visited the zoo last Wednesday, even with temperatures in the low 40s and a definite threat of rain. The zoo is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, but open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

Another visitor was Shirley Davis of West Bloomfield and three of her nine grandchildren. "I come here whenever the grandchildren visit," she said. "The kids love it . . . and so do I."

David, 6, said he really likes the snakes "especially the cobras." And, being from Chicago, "I like the bears," he said.

Another visitor who likes the snakes is 2-year-old Briana Dillon of Detroit. "Ever since her uncle had



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

A spring visit to the Detroit Zoo, even on a chilly day, is worth it, thanks to restless animals such as this rhino.

one (a snake) and she got to touch it, she's been fascinated by snakes," said her mother, Tina Dillon.

Sue Schaub of Auburn Hills visits the off-season zoo "at least once a month, probably more. In the summer, I only come here when I'm

forced to go. It's too hot, and too crowded."

Schaub, and a friend, Shirley Bickford of Clarkston, said the animals are definitely more active in the off season. "Last week, we saw a Pere David's deer . . . three hours old."

Bickford said her favorite feature is the ducks. "You see a lot of wild ducks on the lakes or in the wild. But you can't get that close. Here you can get close enough to see the markings. It's fabulous."

SCHAUB ALSO BELONGS to the Detroit Zoological Society that has been helping to support the Detroit Zoo since 1911. The zoo is financed by the city of Detroit, but the society helps by selling memberships, currently about 20,000 worldwide, according to a spokesman.

"A membership in the society (\$25 per person, annually, and \$10 per family) is one of the best buys around," she said.

Sandy and Ralph Yackley of Farmington also belong to the society. That makes it easier, and cheaper, to visit with their sons, Jeffrey, 5, and Stephen, 2.

During their visit Wednesday, they spent some extra time in the Penguinarium and the bird house with, among other exotic birds, an Andean Condor with a 10-foot wing span.

Linda Hoke is a 1976 graduate of Grosse Pointe South High School who now lives near Raleigh, N.C. She had seen the zoo as a child, but brought her 4-year-old daughter, Heather, back to see the penguins.

"North Carolina has a fine zoo," Hoke said. "But it doesn't have a penguinarium like this. Heather loves it."

Robert and Frances Overmeyer of Kalamazoo had also seen the zoo before. But they were there Wednesday with a grandson, Tim Finehart, and his friend Lori Braun.

"You forget how much there is," said Frances. "I visit the Chicago zoo and it's nice too. But Detroit's has many more outside exhibits."

Lori, however, had never been to a zoo before. "It's so big," she said, "and there's so much to see."

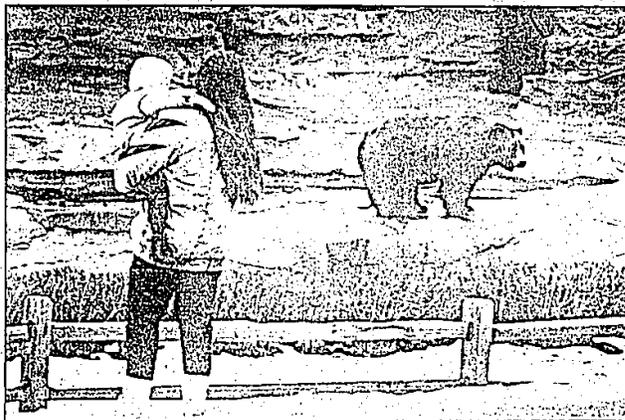
Her favorite? The Bactrian camel. There's one drawback to the off-season zoo, however. Some exhibits are closed, or severely reduced, for maintenance or expansion.

One visitor, from the Upper Peninsula, was miffed because some of the exhibits weren't open. The woman, and her two sons, called ahead, she said. "They told us all the exhibits were open," she said. "But they weren't. We wouldn't be upset if they'd simply told us."



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Cold weather wasn't enough to keep this couple from visiting the Detroit Zoo for an enjoyable walk.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

The grizzly bear exhibit always draws plenty of attention from zoo visitors, such as this mom and her young daughter.

Mercy joins other schools to vote in mock elections

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Seniors at Mercy High School will join others in Farmington high schools who participate annually in a mock election.

"I'll set it up so all the seniors (at Mercy) can vote if they want," said Kathy Dornan, Farmington, Hills city clerk.

The Farmington Hills City Council Monday agreed to include Mercy seniors in the mock elections, begun in 1990. Councilwomen Nancy Bates and Joanne Smith, however, opposed the approval because they wanted the mock elections to be held at city hall rather than in the individual high schools. "It's less costly," Smith said.

Initially, it was uncertain whether the mock election program should include just Mercy seniors who live in Farmington and Farmington Hills, or all seniors, regardless where they live.

"I don't think we could not allow non-Farmington students to vote," Dornan added. Of the 181 Mercy seniors, 54 are Farmington Hills residents.

The next mock election will be shortly before the November presidential election. Mock elections are not held for primaries.

THE CITY'S Committee to Increase Voter Participation recommended including Mercy and asked the city council to give its OK. As

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server editorials questioning why Mercy was not included from the start prompted the committee's recommendation, according to Shelley Faros, committee chairperson.

Sister Regina Marie Doelker, Mercy principal, told the Observer that school officials supported the recommendation.

Contrary to past practice, mock election results will be released as soon as returns are counted. Despite criticism from the Observer, city officials for the past two years have withheld the mock election results until after the real election. Results weren't released based on the notion that students tend to vote like their parents and would thus show the results of the real election before ballots were cast.

"I don't see a problem with it. My daughter votes differently than me. I personally don't see that it matters," Mayor Jonathan Grant said.

COUNCILMAN Aldo Vagnozzi agreed. "Everyday leading up to an election we have these polls . . . I think that is more of a push to conform."

disagreed. "I like the way it was running before," Marks said.

Bates suggested holding the mock elections for the four high schools — North Farmington, Farmington, Harrison and Mercy — at city hall to simulate having to go to a precinct to vote.

Dornan admitted that would be easier for the clerk's staff and less costly. "I think it would be a lower voter turnout if you had the kids come here," she said.

Most of the senior students who participate are taking a government class that semester. "That's where the turnout is," Dornan said.

City Manager William Costick also expressed concern about liability if the city asks students to leave school and vote at city hall.

The mock elections allow students to practice voting and to see exactly who's involved in the process. In the mock elections, students are following the same process and using the same equipment as their parents when they vote.

Students — who basically run the election with the help of the clerk's staff — fill out applications to vote and use voting booths loaned by the city.

It's expected that Mercy's inclusion in the program will cost the city a bit more. When students at the three public high schools voted in the November 1990 election for governor, costs topped approximately \$1,483. Those costs have increased since 1990, Dornan said.

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