

animals died of liver cancer, we wanted to find the link between the two diseases. We turned to one of our trustees, Dr. Baruch Blumberg, who won a Nobel Prize for identifying the virus of hepatitis B. If our research can help find an anti-viral agent that could control hepatitis, it might also repress AIDS."

Donaldson insists that the primary basis of success in a zoo is to satisfy visitors, and since he came to Philadelphia from Cincinnati, nine years ago, he has focused on that. "When we make new signs for an exhibit, we first put our people in front of the exhibit to learn what visitors ask about, and then make signs that answer those questions. That is why our hippo sign tells them that the hippo weighs as much as two Volkswagens, and that the hippo can stay underwater for six minutes."

Donaldson's greatest crowd-pleaser to date is the children's Treehouse, designed by architect Robert Venturi and declared by *Time* one of the best designs in America in 1985. There is not a single sign or label in the building—children learn through experiencing rather than reading. They crawl into a twenty-seven-foot honeycomb, and it smells of honey. They crawl inside a bee to look at the world through a bee's eyes and hear the bee humming; they crawl inside a dinosaur, a frog, a fish; they climb into eggs, into flowers, into a butterfly chrysalis.

All or part of the zoo can be rented for private parties. A child's magical birthday bash in the Treehouse will set his parents back \$1,200. The Mellon Bank held its Employees Appreciation Night here in 1987 for 6,000 guests, renting the entire zoo for \$6,500. All told, the zoo grossed \$175,000 from such rentals in 1987.

"Some zoos are holier than thou about what a zoo should or should not do, and how pure is pure enough. That's never worried us here," Donaldson explains. "God does not give grants, so you have to run your zoo in a fashion that gets it adequate support. Zoos, like individuals, have to earn enough to pay the piper.

"Very often what is good entertainment for visitors is also good for the animals. In the wild, animals must forage most of their waking hours to find enough to eat. If a zoo feeds them everything they need at once, they get bored, even neurotic. So we hide treats for them—puffed rice, grapes, sunflower seeds, popcorn—and they, as well as our visitors, enjoy this treasure hunt, which keeps them in view and not sleeping in the private areas we provide for them when they want to be alone. We serve their psychological as well as their physical needs."

ST. LOUIS ZOOLOGICAL PARK. St. Louis' affection for its zoo, which opened in 1915, is tremendous. Admission is free because its trustees feel the zoo is an institution of learning, like a free school or free library. "It's one of the few things you can contribute to that you know most citizens will enjoy," says Robert Hyland, a CBS senior vice president and the president of the St. Louis Zoological Commission. "It's as much a part

... SOME ZOOS DON'T

BY JOHN SEDGWICK

Now that the Atlanta Zoo has cleaned up its act, the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston is uncontested as the worst metropolitan zoo in the country. The problem is that there's so little for the visitor to see. Most of the animals have been relocated to an ungainly sister facility in suburban Stoneham. The Franklin Park Zoo itself, all seventy-two acres of it, currently offers only a few grazing animals along one "range" that resembles a series of vacant lots divided by chain-link fence; a "Bird's World" of four displays situated incongruously inside a Japanese pagoda; and a Children's Zoo stocked largely with barnyard animals.

All this is very sad, for when it was built in 1912 the Franklin Park facility was intended to be the zoological equal of Boston's other cultural institutions. The location is partly to blame, but the lion's share of responsibility belongs to the zoo's municipal overseers. The zoo is funded by the state legislature, which has invariably played politics with the zoo's annual appropriation. It has long been managed by a Metropolitan District Commission, more accustomed to tending highway potholes than African crowned cranes.

In the 1970s, a group of Boston gentry calling itself the Boston Zoological Society took over some critical operations—like the veterinary department—that the zoo simply couldn't afford. But their intervention amounted to a system of dual management that, when compounded by the inevitable class tensions between the Irish pols at the MDC and the Brahmin aristocrats at the BZS, made a bad situation worse.

Recently, the MDC has taken a firmer grip on the zoo, and appointed a new executive director, the zoo's former veterinarian Dr. Mark Goldstein, who points to the imminent completion of the \$26 million Tropical Rain Forest as proof that the zoo is indeed looking up.

But, even after the Tropical Rain Forest opens, the zoo will still be nearly empty, and the zoo's persistent money woes continue. This summer, the legislature cut \$4 million from the zoo's much-needed \$7 million budget in a last-minute round of cuts. That means, once again, skimpier staff, less maintenance and no improvements.

of the community as the Mississippi River—or the arch, or the Cardinals." In fact, barring a World Series, the zoo actually outdraws the Cardinals.

The St. Louis Zoo sits in the middle of Forest Park. Many of its classic buildings are being modernized, for instance, the glass barriers in the zoo's 1930 Bird House were replaced recently with vertically strung steel wire, so a visitor can now hear the birds as well as see them. St. Louis claims that its Herpetarium is one of America's most complete.

The zoo's newest project is the Living World. It reflects the zoo's devotion to the community it serves. This \$17 million building, scheduled to open this spring, will not only set the context in which the rest of the zoo should be viewed but also serve as a major link to the community. To say the building will hold lecture halls, classrooms for the city's hundred thousand schoolchildren, and exhibits on the diversity of life, on ecology, on behavior and evolution does not capture the imagination, or the ambitiousness, of the project. Live exhibits, some brought in through a direct tunnel to the children's zoo, and high-tech displays will engage visitors at every turn.

"In this fast-food world, this fast society, we think we should pause and really get into the experience of animal life, whence it came and where it's going," Hyland says. "The public's environment today is TV sets and computers," he says.

In the early 1960s, St. Louis began working with a species of antelope from Somalia called Speke's gazelle. At the time, there were five or six of the animals in American zoos, and the species' status in the wild was unknown. St. Louis gathered up the captive animals, and attempted to raise a healthy, genetically diverse group out of this tiny, inbred pool. The question was whether it would be possible to breed out undesirable genes and encourage other, "good" ones with such a limited population. The project was remarkably successful. By the early 1980s, the herd had reached eighteen, and St. Louis began sending viable breeding groups of the animals back out to the cooperating zoos.

"Don't think this is just a zoo problem," director Charles H. Hoessle says. "The population of the black rhino in the wild is fragmented into many tiny, isolated groups; and if bloodlines aren't to degenerate the animals will have to be managed just as they are in the world's zoos. The work with Speke's gazelles at St. Louis has been a valuable lesson in genetic management that will be shared with wildlife managers around the world."

The link between zoo professionals and wildlife managers is becoming more and more vital. Zoos have the ability to take blood samples, to observe animals closely, to collect all sorts of biomedical information unavailable to people working in the field. And with the determined optimism of his profession, Hoessle adds, "It's going to make a difference." □