Misplaced priorities at the L.A. Zoo, Los Angeles Daily News, February 6, 2009

A. Michael Noll
OpEds · 2009
Original: http://www.dailynews.com/editorial/ci_11639676
Archived copy, Internet Archive snapshot 2009-02-14

Visiting Los Angeles, I decided to experience the Los Angeles Zoo last weekend - and was quite disappointed.

The lone elephant, Billy, looked dejected, and I learned that the L.A. Zoo has had a sad history with its elephants. The solution could be an exhibit of mounted elephants, such as in a natural history museum, with videos and other educational materials - but no live animals.

The L.A. Zoo should concentrate on just a few live animals, such as its giraffes and orangutans. Snakes and alligators hardly move and should be eliminated. Educational exhibits and videos would be far better.

Since many people seem to visit the L.A. Zoo just to roam the grounds and snack on hot dogs and sweets, perhaps nicer food operations would make sense.

The plants and grounds are impressive and well-maintained. But the educational and preservation missions seem lost.

At the other end of Griffith Park, the Observatory does a great job at education and in preservation of the galaxy.

I learned of the chimpanzee that mysteriously escapes and of another chimp that was bitten by a rattlesnake and allowed to die. The health care provided to some of the animals at the L.A. Zoo seems substandard. The water in the sea lion exhibit appeared cloudy and dirty. Again, educational materials - and not live animals - would make more sense.

Perhaps this is what happens when a city and not a private institution runs a zoo. Civil servants and

Decades ago, I met the director of the Washington Zoo. His top priorities were the health of the animals and educating the public. The top priority of the L.A. Zoo seems to be selling food and stuffed animal toys.

A. Michael Noll is professor emeritus at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California and a former staff member to the White House science adviser.

Archival reading copy rendered from the Internet Archive snapshot of the page above, for the A. Michael Noll collection at bre.art, with the author's permission. Text is the author's; this layout is not the original publication's.