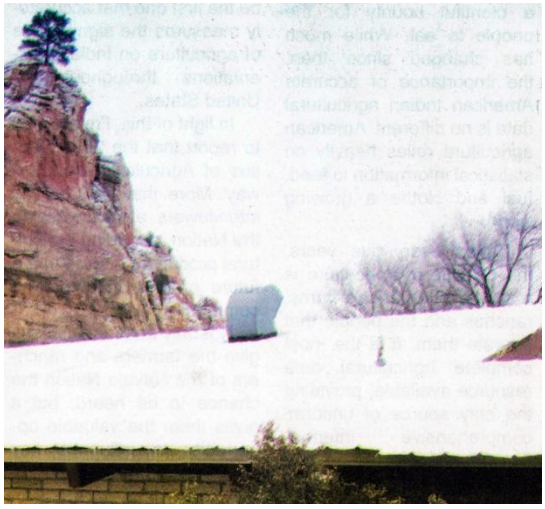
Division of Natural Resources
"Land, Water, Power and Quality of Life"

Thanks to many hands, new roof at Window Rock Zoo

Vol V, No. 4
January 2008



By Matthew Holdgate, Curator
Navajo Nation Zoo

The Navajo Nation Zoological and Botanical Park provides more than just a "sanctuary for nature and the spirit." It is also a part of the community, a place where imagination can run wild and the senses can explore a new and exciting world.

Come and stare into the unblinking eyes of a cougar. Smell the native vegetation and the musk of foxes and skunks. Hear… the drip, drip, drip of a leaky roof?

Thanks to the dedicated staff of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, this will no longer be the case. A new metal roof will now greet the Park's 25-30,000 annual visitors, ensuring our guests are kept warm and dry while visiting the Zoo's indoor exhibits.

Department representatives from Research & Management, Administration, and the Navajo Natural Heritage Program joined Zoo staff on several weekdays and weekends in November.

Volunteers stripped shingles, installed insulation, gathered garbage, fastened felt, treaded with tar, and finally topped with tin. Every individual had a special skill to contribute, whether it was roofing experience, tool use (including the ability to convert a grinding wheel into a hole cutter), tireless determination, or the grilling of a mean chicken sandwich.

The new roof is the third project in a series of seven “home improvement” items being addressed by Zoos staff.

In October, the rear perimeter fence of the Zoo was raised from 6’ to 8’ to comply with the Animal Welfare Act.

In November, a grant was submitted to the NDOT FET Commission for the paving of the Zoo parking lot and access road.

Future improvements include developing easy access for strollers and wheelchairs. This will include paving Zoo trails and the construction of a new, handicap-accessible restroom. A prairie dog management plan has also been drafted to address rodent populations on Zoo grounds.

Finally, the Zoo conference room will be remodeled into a “Kid’s Corner” – an interactive area specifically designed to educate and entertain “cubs, colts, and tadpoles” – the Zoo’s younger visitors.

The Zoo staff would like to thank the following members of the Department for their assistance on the roofing project: Mike West, David Mikesic, Edison Emerson, Marna Begay, Pam Kyselka, Ron Malecki and Dondi Begay. Najam Tariq from Water Resources was crucial in providing a trailer and driver to deliver the roof to the Zoo.

Thanks are also due to “Friends of the Zoo” Rosemary and Dan Giles of Nakai Construction, who traveled from Heber City, UT, to serve as consultants on the project.