International animal writer visits Oregon Zoo

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Zoo's Dine & Discover series concludes with a visit by bestselling author Vicki Croke

Vicki Croke has been writing about animals for more than a decade. Author of "The Modern Ark: The Story of Zoos -- Past, Present and Future" and the "Animal Beat" column for The Boston Globe, Croke concludes the Oregon Zoo's Dine & Discover series on Feb. 14.

During "A Valentine Evening With Vicki," Croke presents the story told in her latest book, "The Lady and the Panda." It is the story of Ruth Harkness, a Manhattan socialite who, in 1936, traveled to Tibet to capture the most mysterious animal of the day -- the giant panda.

Animal writer Vicki Croke poses with a giant panda.Â© Oregon ZooCroke spent four years researching the story of Harkness, a woman she says was "forgotten by history," for her bestselling book. The book has received rave reviews and plans are in the works for a screen version starring Nicole Kidman as Harkness. "It's a great story of adventure, romance and conservation," says Croke.

The fascinating story will be complemented by gourmet food from Chef Paul Warner. Warner has chosen a South American theme for the food, because "in the middle of February, we need to bring our minds somewhere warm."

The four-course dinner will include an hors d'oeuvre display of empanadas, chilaquiles, pumpkin tamales and barbacoa de carnero (shredded roasted beef served with tortillas or sopas). Next, guests will be served albÃ³ndigas, a Mexican meatball soup. The main course will be bobÃ³ de camarÃ£o, a Brazilian shrimp and coconut stew over rice. Finally, the dessert will be pavÃª de biscoito maria, a caramel cookie layered torte.

"We like to make food that is interesting and you probably wouldn't find in most American restaurants," says

Warner.

The evening will conclude the Dine & Discover series.

Dine & Discover, presented by The Boeing Company, is a series of three intimate food and wine experiences representing different regions of the world and fascinating animals. Each evening starts with a reception featuring delectable appetizers. The meal is a masterpiece of regional fare created by Warner and is accompanied by a presentation from a zoo staff member or guest speaker on the animals being highlighted.

The cost for each Dine & Discover evening is $75 per person, or $500 per table of eight. Seating is limited to those with reservations. To make reservations, call 503-220-2492 or e-mail terichk@metro.dst.or.us. Guests must be 21 or older.

Net proceeds benefit The Oregon Zoo Foundation's Future for Wildlife program.

Future for Wildlife annually offers grants to support projects that directly contribute to the survival of animal populations in the wild. Projects funded in the past include repairs to the perimeter wall of the Humboldt penguin reserve in Punta San Juan, Peru; development of an environmental education program on Rodrigues, Mauritius; and a survey of endangered turtles in Hainan, China.

International animal writer visits Oregon Zoo by Bend Weekly News Sources