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Painted Dog Expert Dr. Greg Rasmussen Provides Fodder for Science-Meets-Improv Show “IMPROVology” on Friday, March 9

Animal Expert to Share Stories, Then Improv Comedians Take Over

(Santa Barbara, CA, February 22, 2018) – Dr. Greg Rasmussen, who has spent more than thirty years in southern Africa studying and working to save highly endangered painted dogs, is the guest animal expert appearing at the next IMPROVology show presented by the Santa Barbara Zoo. His stories and knowledge provide the fodder for on-the-spot comedy improvisation by members of L.A.’s Impro Theatre Company. Audience participation, musical accompaniment, snacks, and beer and wine are all part of the fun.

IMPROVology featuring Dr. Greg Rasmussen is held Friday, March 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the Zoo’s Discovery Pavilion. The doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, and \$12 for Santa Barbara Zoo Members. Buy at the door or online at www.sbzoo.org. More information at 962-5339. General admission seating, early arrival suggested; latecomers may be relegated to standing room only.

The host of this show is Impro member and IMPROVology regular Brian Lohmann (at right), taking over for usual emcee Dean Noble. Company members Kelly Holden Bashar, Stephen Kearin, Jo McGinley, and Floyd van Buskirk are featured.



In this improvisational version of “This is Your Life,” Dr. Rasmussen recounts the highlights of his painted dog research and conservation efforts. The Impro Theatre comedians take their cues from his talk, and may ask for volunteers from the audience.

“Finally, a show that reveals the dog-eat-dog world of improv comedy,” says Lohmann. “We no longer care that the world is going to the dogs, as long as they’re socially advanced African painted dogs.”

Musical accompaniment is provided by Santa Barbara-based pianist Konrad Kono and bassist Michael Schindlinger, an expert in the languages of wild parrots who took part in an IMPROVology show and is now part of the IMPROVology “band” (of two).

Painted dogs are facing extinction, and are the most endangered carnivore in Africa. Only four countries are recognized as having stronghold populations (Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Botswana and South Africa). Their Latin name (*Lycan pictus*) means “painted wolf,” referring to their irregular, mottled coat, which features patches of red, black, brown, white, and yellow fur. Each animal has its own unique coat pattern. They are a highly social species, living in packs and cooperating on everything from hunting to raising their young.

The name “painted dog” was recently adapted to differentiate this species from domestic dogs and wolves; it has been called tricolored dog, African wild dog, painted hunting dog, spotted dog, and ornate wolf, among others.

Dr. Greg Rasmussen is a British Wildlife conservation biologist who has studied the African Painted Dog (also known as “Wild Dog”) for over thirty years working in the Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. He is the founder of Painted Dog Conservation, and is currently the head of Painted Dog Research Trust in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe where he help sustain his research through the involvement of young Zimbabweans (www.painteddogresearch.org).

In 2003, while tracking a rhino, he survived a light plane crash which left him severely injured and alone in the African bush, enduring extreme temperatures and exposure to predators while he waited for help. Eventually rescued, he almost lost his feet but doctors saved them. He is three inches shorter now. The story of his survival is featured in an episode of “I Shouldn't Be Alive,” a documentary series broadcast on the Discovery Channel.

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*Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the **Santa Barbara Zoo** is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](http://www.aaz.org) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Asian elephant, California condor, Channel Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*

The Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$18 for adults, \$13 for seniors aged 65+, \$10 for children 2-12, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$8 weekdays and \$11 on Saturdays and Sundays. Visit www.sbzoo.org.