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UM FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTS
ACCURATE WILDLIFE MOVIES

By Gary Turback

MISSOULA--

Many animals will be on screen at the 1983 International Wildlife Film Festival (IWFF), scheduled at the University of Montana Feb. 25-27. But you won't see Bambi, flute-playing raccoons, pudgy bears named Gentle Ben or dancing gorillas. Instead, you will see grizzly bears gulping berries and catching salmon, bats plucking frogs from their ponds at night and desert moles swimming in sand.

Festival film showings, panels and workshops are open to the public. A \$2 donation will be requested each evening for film showings. Other activities are free.

The festival features the best wildlife films made during the previous year. Last year, winning films came from India, England, Canada and the United States.

The IWFF, started six years ago, was the first of its kind in the world. Three other organizations, including the Audubon Society, have since instituted similar festivals.

The festival is the brainchild of Charles Jonkel, a UM research professor and grizzly bear biologist. The university student chapter of the Wildlife Society sponsors the festival, and student volunteers do most of the legwork. Jonkel is faculty adviser.

Several years ago, Jonkel became disturbed by wildlife films that depicted

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nature inaccurately or gave animals human characteristics.

"Much of what Walt Disney did was pretty poor," Jonkel says. "The film's narrator often included things about mamas and papas and babies all living happily in the woods and all going to town together to get their groceries. When you do this with real animals on film, people tend to believe it and end up misinformed about wildlife."

Jonkel says the goal of the festival is to put "gentle pressure" on wildlife filmmakers to examine the quality and ethics of their work. The program does this by various means, including workshops and panels.

These sessions deal with such questions as: Is it ethical to film animals in controlled situations? Can a filmmaker ethically introduce a fly into a spider's web in order to capture the result on film? If that technique is permissible with spiders and flies, how about offering a rabbit to a weasel or a moose to wolves to kill?

At the 1983 IWFF in Missoula Feb. 25-27, you won't see backflipping pandas or counting giraffes, but you will see the best wildlife films of 1982.

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