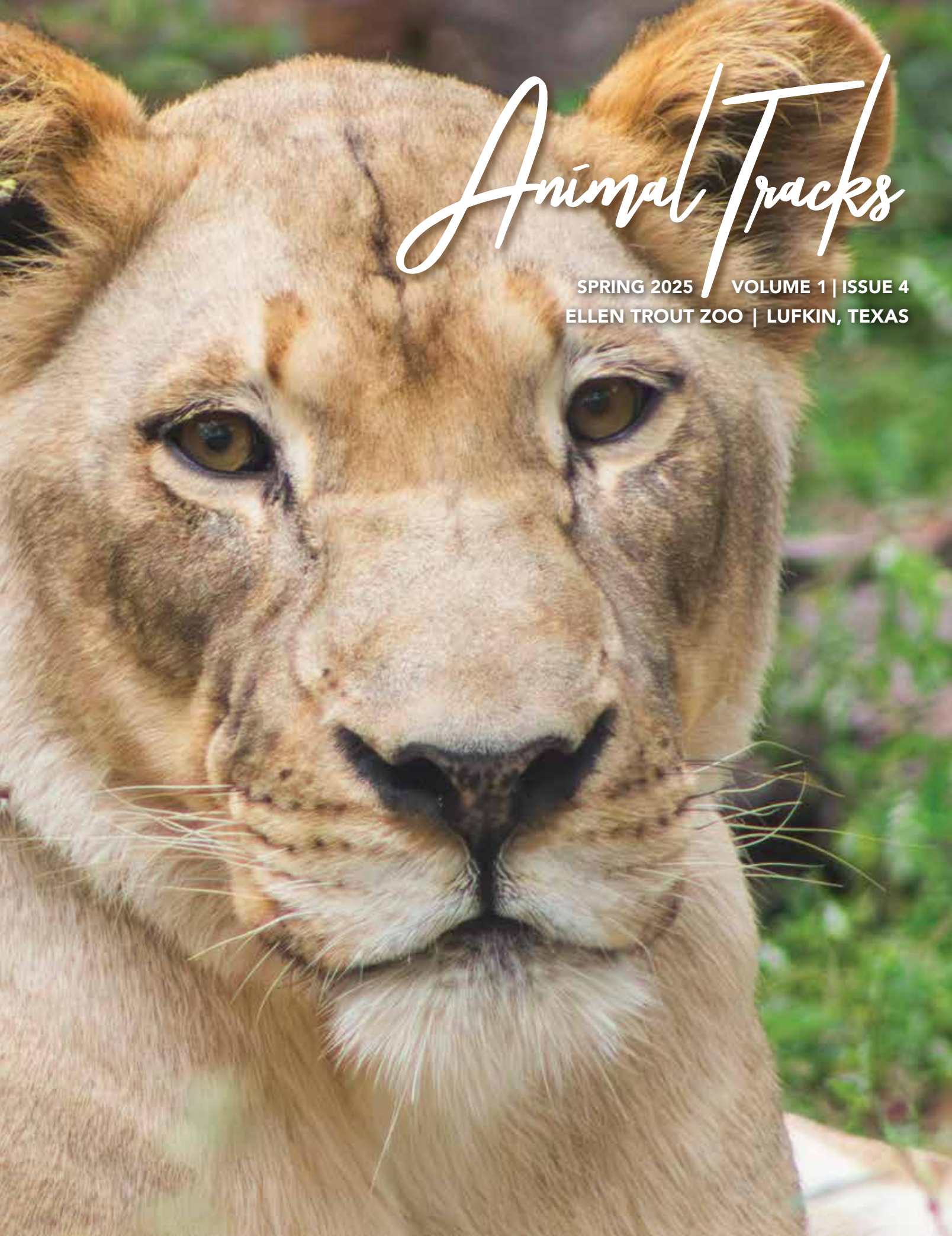




Animal Tracks

SPRING 2025 | VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 4
ELLEN TROUT ZOO | LUFKIN, TEXAS



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spring 2025

MARCH

22 Raiders of
the Lost Zoo,
10AM - 4PM

APRIL

05 Zoo Brew,
6:30 - 9:30PM

19 Behind the Scenes
Tour, 8:30AM
Tiger, Giraffe, Hippo, &
White Rhino levels only

26 Earth Day at the Zoo



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Animal Tracks STAFF

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Rebecca West

CONTRIBUTORS
Crissy Garrett
Heather Hatton
Gary Stallard
Karina Sotelo

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Grace Bally
Crissy Garrett
Jonathan Gerland
Melissa Hernandez
Jackalyn Jaimes
Katrina Linn
Jomaira Nolasco
Leonard Peterson
Hannah Saale
Dedric Smiley
Gary Stallard

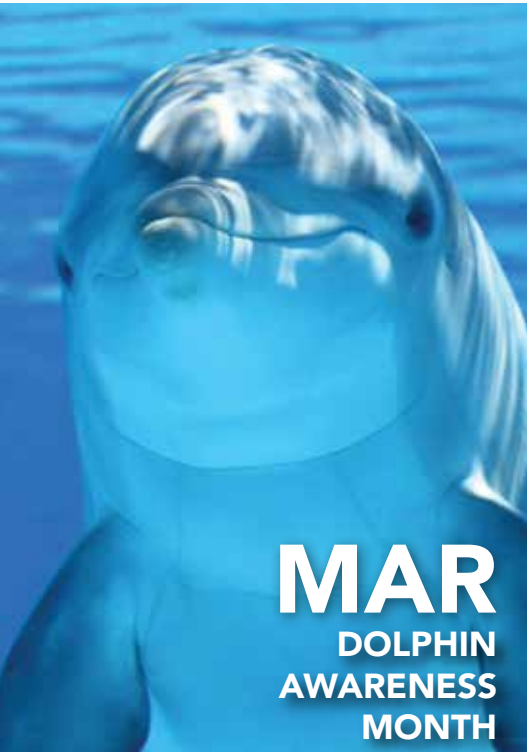
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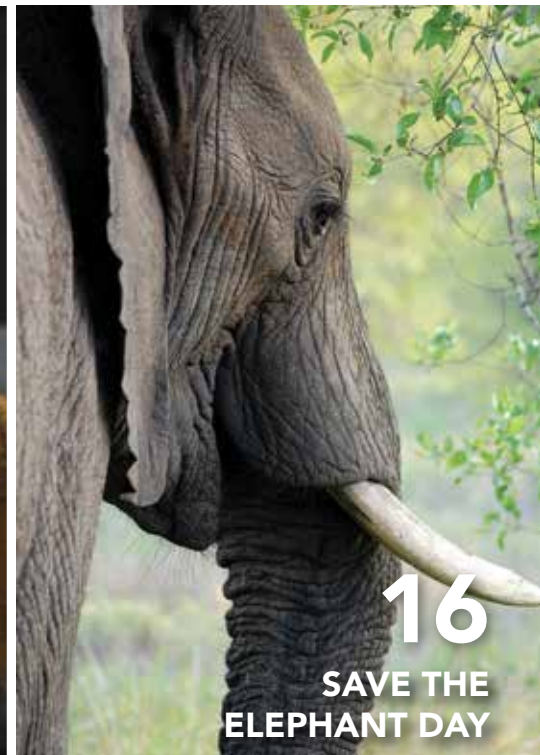
ANIMAL & WILDLIFE



MARCH



CONSERVATION DAYS



APRIL





MAY
NATIONAL
DUCKLING
MONTH



1
SAVE THE
RHINO DAY

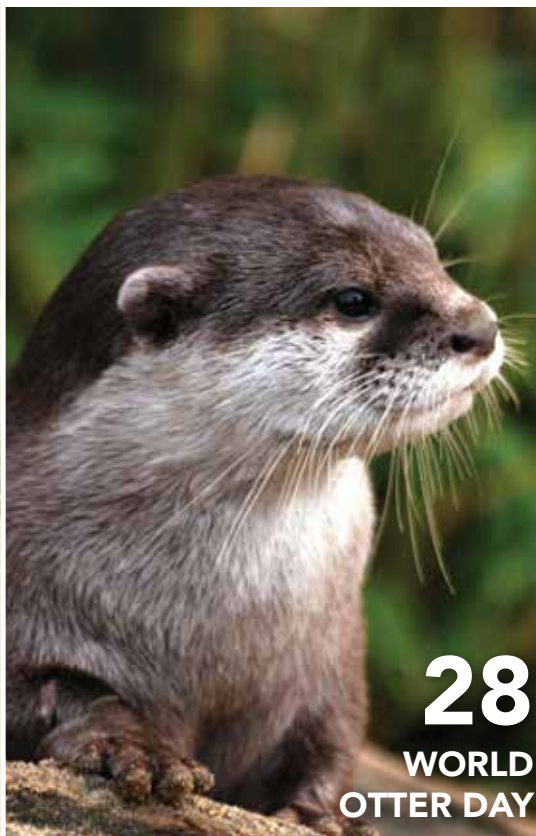


3
WORLD
KOALA DAY

MAY



20
WORLD
BEE DAY



28
WORLD
OTTER DAY



31
WORLD
PARROT DAY

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MASAI GIRAFFE SUPERPOWERS

Masai giraffes are some of the coolest animals on Earth! These tall, spotted giants roam the African Savannah, turning heads with their incredible height and unique abilities. But did you know that Masai giraffes have “superpowers” that make them truly one-of-a-kind?

SUPERPOWER №1: TOWERING HEIGHT

Masai giraffes are the tallest land animals in the world. They can grow up to 18 feet tall, which is about the height of a two-story house! Their long legs and necks allow them to reach the tallest trees for food. While other animals can only dream of snacking on treetop leaves, Masai giraffes munch away without competition.

SUPERPOWER №2: INCREDIBLE SPOTS

Every Masai giraffe has its own unique spot pattern, like a fingerprint! Their spots aren't just for looks—they help giraffes blend into their environment, acting like camouflage. This superpower protects them from predators like lions and hyenas, who might not notice them hiding among the trees and shadows.

SUPERPOWER №3: A SUPER-LONG TONGUE

A Masai giraffe's tongue is like a superhero gadget! It can grow up to 20 inches long, making it perfect for grabbing leaves from trees. Their tongues are also dark purple, which protects them from sunburn while they eat for hours under the blazing African sun.

SUPERPOWER №4: A BIG HEART

Giraffes have enormous hearts—literally! A Masai giraffe's heart can weigh up to 25 pounds. That's as heavy as a small dog! This powerful heart pumps blood all the way up their long necks to their brains. Without this super-strong heart, giraffes wouldn't be able to stand tall.





SUPERPOWER №5: AMAZING VISION

Masai giraffes have excellent eyesight, like having built-in binoculars. They can see predators from far away, giving them plenty of time to escape. Their height gives them a great view of the Savannah, so they act as lookout towers for other animals, like zebras and antelopes.

SUPERPOWER №6: FAST AND GRACEFUL

Even though they're tall and look a little awkward, Masai giraffes are super-fast runners. They can sprint up to 35 miles per hour when they need to escape danger. Their long legs help them take giant steps, making running look almost effortless.

SUPERPOWER №7: HELPING THE SAVANNAH

Masai giraffes are like nature's gardeners. By eating leaves from trees, they help shape the environment, making room for new growth. They also spread seeds through their poop, helping new plants grow across the Savannah. This superpower keeps the ecosystem balanced and healthy for other animals.

WHY DO WE NEED TO PROTECT THESE SUPERHEROES?

Even with all their superpowers, Masai giraffes face big challenges. Habitat loss, poaching, and climate change are putting their lives at risk. Their population has been declining, which is why it's so important to protect them and their homes.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You don't need superpowers to help Masai giraffes! Supporting conservation groups, spreading awareness about giraffes, and learning more about them are all great ways to make a difference. Every little action helps these gentle giants continue to thrive. 🦒



**FIND THE
GIRAFFES!**

Ten giraffes are hidden in this issue. Can you find them all?



A TALE OF TWO BIRDS



Africa is home to a variety of hornbill species, each with unique characteristics that make them stand out. Among the most intriguing are the Abyssinian ground hornbill and the yellow-billed hornbill. Though they share the same family, these two birds have distinct lifestyles, behaviors, and appearances that capture the wonder of the natural world and make them fascinating to people of all ages.

The Abyssinian ground hornbill is a strikingly large bird, often considered one of the giants of the hornbill family. Native to the grasslands and savannas of sub-Saharan Africa, this species is unmistakable with its jet-black feathers, bright red throat, and piercing eyes. The males boast vivid red patches on their throats and faces, while the females add a splash of blue to their appearance. Unlike most hornbills, which prefer life in the trees, Abyssinian ground hornbills spend their time on the ground. With their long legs and purposeful stride, they traverse open landscapes in search of food. Their diet is as bold as their appearance, consisting of insects, snakes, small mammals, and even amphibians. Using their powerful, curved bills, they can tackle tough prey, including cracking the shells of small tortoises.

In contrast, the yellow-billed hornbill is a smaller, more colorful bird with a playful personality. Often referred to as the “flying banana” because of its bright yellow, curved bill, this hornbill is a common sight in southern Africa’s dry regions. Its behavior is as lively as its appearance, with quick movements, curious head tilts, and a tendency to interact energetically with its surroundings. Yellow-billed hornbills spend much of their time in trees, foraging for fruits, insects, and small animals. They are often seen following large mammals, like elephants and zebras, taking advantage of the insects stirred up by their movement. Their cheerful chirps and whistles create a vibrant soundtrack in the savanna, making them a joy to observe.

Both species exhibit fascinating nesting behaviors that highlight their adaptability. Abyssinian ground hornbills nest in hollowed-out trees or rock crevices, where they raise their chicks with great care. These birds reproduce slowly, with pairs raising only one chick every two to three years, which makes their survival heavily dependent on stable environments. Yellow-billed hornbills, on the other hand, use a unique strategy to protect their eggs and young. After laying her eggs in a tree cavity, the female seals herself inside with a mix of mud and droppings, leaving only a small slit for the male to deliver food. This ingenious method keeps predators at bay until the chicks are strong enough to fledge.

Despite their differences, Abyssinian ground hornbills and yellow-billed hornbills play critical roles in their ecosystems. The ground hornbill helps control populations

of small animals and insects, while the yellow-billed hornbill acts as a seed disperser, aiding in the growth of new plants. Both species are also deeply rooted in African culture. Ground hornbills, with their booming, drum-like calls that carry for miles, are often associated with rain and storms in folklore. Meanwhile, the bright and animated yellow-billed hornbill symbolizes joy and vitality in many traditional stories.

Unfortunately, both species face challenges from habitat loss, human activity, and climate change. Abyssinian ground hornbills, with their need for large territories and slow breeding rates, are particularly vulnerable. Conservation efforts, such as creating artificial nesting sites and protecting their habitats, are crucial to ensuring their survival. Yellow-billed hornbills, though more adaptable, are not immune to the effects of changing climates, which can disrupt their food supply and nesting habits.

Whether you admire the regal stride of the Abyssinian ground hornbill or the lively antics of the yellow-billed hornbill, these birds are more than just remarkable creatures; they are essential to Africa's ecosystems and a reminder of the continent's incredible biodiversity. Their unique traits and behaviors inspire curiosity and wonder, making them a joy to learn about and a species worth protecting for future generations. 🦜

*Left: Zazu, the yellow-billed hornbill.
Right: Callie, the Abyssinian ground hornbill.*

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WILDER MEDICINE

WITH DR. STORMY PERRY



When most people think of veterinary medicine, they think of taking their pet dog or cat to the clinic to get checked out by the doctor and get annual vaccines. Zoo animals need check ups too, though you can't as easily bring a tiger into the vet office. How do zoo vets make sure their animals are happy and healthy? The answer lies in specialized care and a combination of knowledge, innovation, and patience.

Zoo medicine has evolved over the decades. In the past, if an animal was sick, they would be sedated and attended to by the staff veterinarian or a contract veterinarian. Other than times of sickness, these animals would not get regular health care. Now zoos are taking a preventative approach to medicine, much like companion animal medicine. This includes regular physical exams, monitoring changes in bloodwork, imaging such as x-rays and ultrasound, and regular vaccinations. This allows our animals to live longer and healthier lives, and gives us more insight into the unique nature of these exotic animals.

For these exams, many animals would have to be fully sedated and put under anesthesia to safely perform the necessary tests. Sedation/anesthesia does come with its risks and requires various resources and time to complete. Then the question became: "How can we monitor our animals' health safely without sedation?" This is where operant conditioning

(training) comes in. Did you know you can pull blood from a lion while they are wide awake? Or take an x-ray of a giraffe hoof while they are happily munching on browse? It is an intensive process that is very rewarding for the caregivers and the animals themselves!

Before we can start training, we have to know what behavior we want that animal to learn. It is not as simple as asking the rhino to present his leg for blood draw (though wouldn't that be great!). One of the most basic behaviors that we start animals with is a simple target/station. This is where the animal will either stand in a specific spot you want them (station) or to touch a target (targeting). These are the fundamentals for training as it allows you to move the animals where you need them to be before starting with the more specific behaviors. This way we can station an animal over a scale to get a weight, or station them along a fence line to allow administration of medications. Once we get the basics, then we can move on to more specific behaviors, such as allowing blood draws or taking x-rays.

How do we get the animals to participate in these behaviors? Positive reinforcement! This is a training technique in which the animal receives a reward for properly displaying the behavior. The reward varies between animals but can include a food item, favorite toy, and vocal praise. All of our animals can choose whether or not they want to participate in training on any given day, but most animals enjoy training!

Not only is this a way to provide high quality health care to our animals without the need for sedation, it is also enriching to the animals. Enrichment is an important aspect of animal care that stimulates the animals' mind and allows them to display natural behaviors. You may have even seen enrichment activities as you visit the zoo! We will continue to develop new training techniques and enrichment ideas to make sure our animals have the highest quality of care. 🦒

Left: Swing keeper Lexie target trains with Luna.

Above right: Primary keeper Grace inspects Jazi's teeth.

Below right: Primary keeper Grace works with Axelle on her target training.





UNIQUE ANIMALS OF AFRICA



Africa is a continent teeming with extraordinary wildlife, home to some of the most unique and fascinating creatures on Earth. From the shadowy depths of dense rainforests to the vast savannas and even the depths of the ocean, Africa's ecosystems are as diverse as the species they support. Here's a more detailed exploration of some notable African animals. The Ellen Trout Zoo is proud to be able to call our zoo home for several of these species (noted with an **ETZ**).

African Lion (*Panthera leo*):

The African lion, often called the "king of the jungle," reigns over the savannas and grasslands of sub-Saharan Africa. Living in prides led by dominant males, these majestic cats are social hunters that work together to take down large prey such as zebras and wildebeests. Their iconic roars can be heard up to five miles away, serving as territorial warnings or calls to their pride. **ETZ**



African Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*):

Found across forests, savannas, and rocky habitats in Africa, the African crested porcupine is the largest porcupine species in the world. Covered in long, sharp quills, it uses these as a formidable defense against predators. When threatened, it rattles its quills as a warning and can even charge backward to drive them into attackers. **ETZ**

De Brazza's Monkey (*Cercopithecus neglectus*):

This shy, medium-sized monkey lives in the dense forests of Central and East Africa. Known for its striking white beard and orange crown, De Brazza's monkey is a master of camouflage, often staying silent and still to avoid detection. It forages on fruits, seeds, and insects, making it an essential seed disperser in its ecosystem. ETZ

Okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*):

Found in the dense rainforests of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the okapi is a solitary and elusive mammal, often referred to as the “forest giraffe.” Its dark brown body and zebra-like striped legs provide excellent camouflage in its jungle habitat. With a prehensile tongue up to 18 inches long, it skillfully plucks leaves, fruits, and fungi, playing an important role in maintaining the forest’s vegetation.

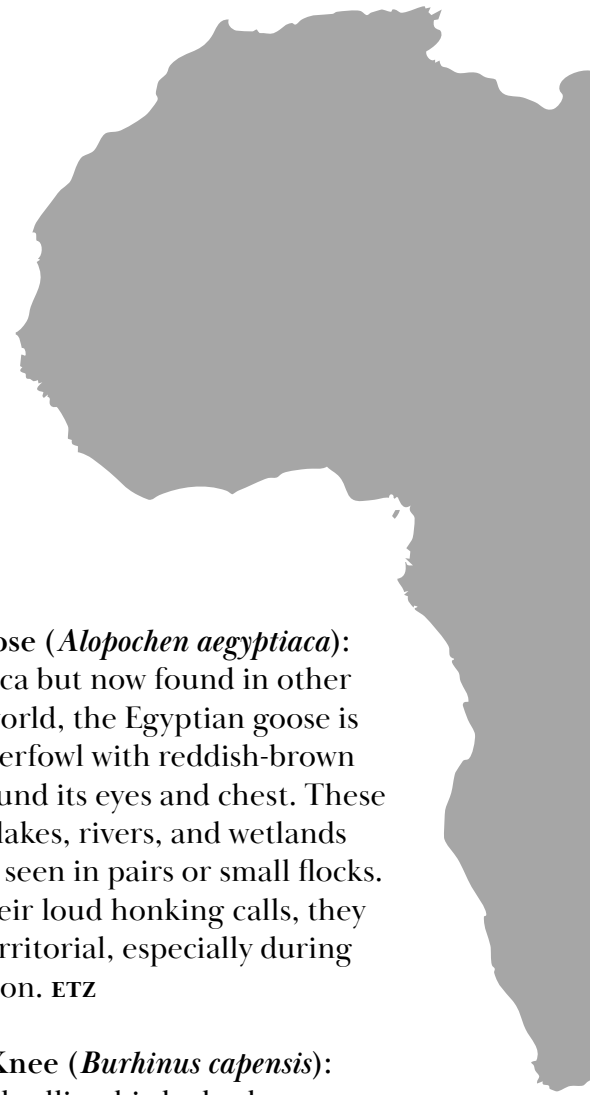
Pangolin (Family: *Manidae*):

These nocturnal, scale-covered mammals inhabit grasslands and forests across Africa. Known for their unique defense mechanism of rolling into an armored ball, pangolins are expert insectivores, using their long, sticky tongues to feast on ants and termites. Despite their tough exterior, they are critically endangered due to poaching for their scales and meat.

African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*):

Native to the savannas and woodlands of sub-Saharan Africa, African wild dogs are highly social and cooperative pack hunters. Their mottled coats, featuring a unique mix of black, white, and tan, provide effective camouflage. They play a crucial role as apex predators, maintaining the balance of their ecosystems.





Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*):

Native to Africa but now found in other parts of the world, the Egyptian goose is a striking waterfowl with reddish-brown markings around its eyes and chest. These birds inhabit lakes, rivers, and wetlands and are often seen in pairs or small flocks. Known for their loud honking calls, they are fiercely territorial, especially during breeding season. ETZ

Cape Thick-Knee (*Burhinus capensis*):

This ground-dwelling bird, also known as the spotted thick-knee, resides in grasslands and semi-arid regions across southern Africa. With its large yellow eyes and camouflaged plumage, it's well-adapted to nocturnal activity. The Cape thick-knee feeds primarily on insects and small invertebrates, often relying on its keen vision to hunt under moonlight. ETZ

West African Black Crowned Crane (*Balearica pavonina pavonina*):

Known for its elegant stature and golden feather crown, this crane inhabits wetlands and savannas of West Africa. It performs intricate courtship dances, complete with leaps, bows, and wing flutters. Feeding on seeds, insects, and small amphibians, the West African black crowned crane plays a crucial role in maintaining the balance of its ecosystem. ETZ



Shoebill (*Balaeniceps rex*):
Inhabiting the wetlands of East-Central Africa, including Uganda and Zambia, the shoebill is a large, prehistoric-looking bird with a massive shoe-shaped bill. It hunts with patience and precision, often catching fish, frogs, and even baby crocodiles. Its eerie “bill-clattering” is a signature sound in its swampy home.

Secretary Bird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*):
This long-legged bird of prey roams the grasslands and savannas of sub-Saharan Africa. Its elegant appearance, complete with a feathered crest, belies its fierce hunting style. The secretary bird stomps its prey, including venomous snakes, with powerful kicks, making it a vital predator in its ecosystem.

Ostrich (*Struthio camelus*):
Found in Africa’s savannas and semi-arid regions, the ostrich is the world’s largest bird, standing up to nine feet tall. Though flightless, it is an exceptional runner, capable of reaching speeds of 45 mph. Its massive eggs and keen eyesight are iconic features of this remarkable species.





Did You Know?

African elephants can “hear” with their feet! They pick up low-frequency vibrations, such as distant thunder or calls from other elephants, through the ground. Specialized cells in their feet send these vibrations to their brains, allowing them to communicate and sense danger from miles away. It’s like having built-in seismic sensors!



Coelacanth (*Latimeria chalumnae*):

Residing in the deep waters off East Africa, the coelacanth is a rare and ancient fish thought to have gone extinct until its rediscovery in 1938. With lobed fins resembling limbs, it provides a living link to evolutionary history and remains a marvel of marine biology.

Panther Chameleon (*Furcifer pardalis*):

Native to Madagascar, the panther chameleon is a dazzling reptile known for its vibrant, color-changing skin. It uses this ability for communication and camouflage, while its independently rotating eyes and extendable tongue make it a highly skilled hunter of insects.



Goliath Frog (*Conraua goliath*):

The largest frog in the world, the goliath frog inhabits fast-flowing rivers in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Weighing up to seven pounds, it uses its strength to leap great distances and construct stone nests for its eggs. Despite its size, it is endangered due to habitat loss and over-harvesting.

Madagascar Tree Boa

(*Sanzinia madagascariensis*):

A non-venomous constrictor endemic to Madagascar, the Madagascar tree boa spends much of its time in trees and shrubs. It preys on birds, small mammals, and reptiles, ambushing them with precision. With iridescent scales that shimmer under sunlight, this boa is both beautiful and an important predator in its habitat.

ETZ

Day Geckos (*Phelsuma spp.*):

These vibrant, jewel-toned lizards are native to Madagascar and surrounding regions. Unlike most geckos, day geckos are diurnal, actively basking and hunting insects in the sunlight. Their sticky toe pads allow them to climb smooth surfaces effortlessly, while their bold colors and territorial behaviors make them captivating creatures to observe. ETZ

Dwarf Crocodile (*Osteolaemus tetraspis*):

The dwarf crocodile, the smallest of all crocodilian species, inhabits forested wetlands and slow-moving rivers in West and Central Africa. These nocturnal reptiles are expert ambush predators, feeding on fish, crustaceans, and small mammals. Despite their size, they are well-armored with tough scales and powerful jaws, making them formidable hunters in their watery domains. ETZ

These remarkable animals embody the incredible biodiversity of Africa, each playing a vital role in its respective ecosystem. However, many of these species face growing threats from habitat destruction, poaching, and climate change. Protecting these unique creatures is not just an ecological responsibility but also a commitment to preserving the beauty and wonder of our natural world for generations to come. 



HIPPOPOTAMUS

facts

HABITAT

They are semi-aquatic, spending much of their time submerged in water to stay cool. They prefer slow-moving or stagnant waters, like rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

Hippos are social animals, often living in groups of 10-30 called

PODS



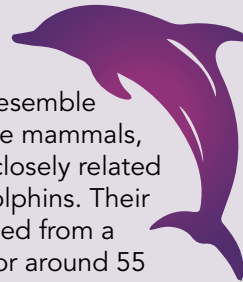
WHERE ARE THEY?

Hippos are found in the wild in sub-Saharan Africa, primarily in countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Uganda.

DIET



While they might resemble pigs or other large mammals, hippos are more closely related to whales and dolphins. Their ancestors diverged from a common ancestor around 55 million years ago.



SAY WHAT?

Hippos are quite vocal and can produce a variety of sounds, including grunts, bellows, and roars.

VU

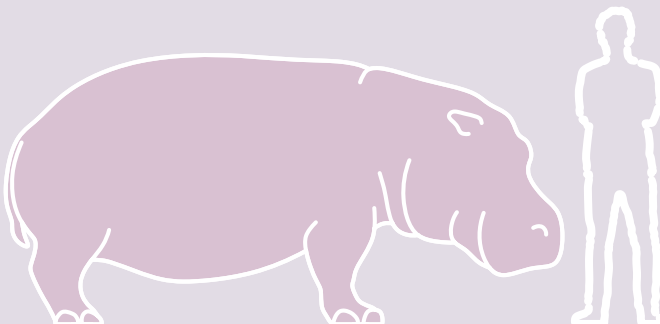
Hippos are listed as "Vulnerable" due to habitat loss, poaching for their ivory tusks, and conflicts with humans. Despite their vulnerability, they are still relatively widespread in certain parts of Africa, especially in protected national parks and reserves.

Hippos are highly adapted to life in the water. Their eyes, ears, and nostrils are located on the top of their heads, allowing them to see, hear, and breathe while most of their body is submerged. This is known as a water profile.



They have a special valve in their nose and ears that closes when they dive underwater, which helps them stay submerged longer.

SIZE



LENGTH: Hippos are massive, with adult males measuring between 10½ to 16½ feet in length.

WEIGHT: They are one of the heaviest land animals, with males typically weighing between 3,300 to 4,000 lbs, though exceptionally large males can weigh up to 6,600 lbs. Females are generally smaller, weighing around 2,800 to 3,300 lbs.

SHOULDER HEIGHT: Adult hippos typically stand about 4 to 5.2 feet tall at the shoulder when on land.

Meet JAZI & NAKILI

Hippos have been a visitor favorite at Ellen Trout Zoo since the very beginning, and these two sassy girls are no exception.

Nakili, our oldest of the two hippos, will be 26 years old on March 21. At just two years old, she moved to Lufkin from Disney Animal Kingdom in Florida. In 2003, Nakili gave birth to a baby girl named Mara who went on to live at the Topeka Zoo, LA Zoo, and currently resides at the Honolulu Zoo. Nakili is Grandma to Tank at Topeka Zoo and Rosie at Disney Animal Kingdom.

Jazi, our youngest, was born July 7, 2003 at the San Diego Zoo and moved to Lufkin in May of 2007. She was introduced to her bestie, Nakili, in August after the standard month-long quarantine, and the two have been inseparable ever since.

Any day of the week you can find our two girls making laps or taking naps. If it's a warm day, they can be seen lounging on the edge of the pool, or maybe even taking a nap underwater. They enjoy watching visitors come by their exhibit window, and can occasionally be observed showing off their water ballet skills. They spend time making laps in the pool, which people often mistake for swimming, but they are really just walking or running along the bottom, and occasionally pushing off. This gives the illusion of swimming. In the cooler months they love to munch on fallen leaves and take naps on their sandy beach, soaking up the sun light.

By far one of their favorite past times is participating in feeding labs where they get to help teach 2nd graders about animal dentition while enjoying all the tasty lettuce snacks, since they are herbivores. Some of their other favorite non-snack enrichment consists of getting new logs to chew on, playing with their boomer ball, and drinking water from the water hose while their keeper is cleaning the barn.

Crissy Garrett
COLLECTIONS MANAGER

To prevent dehydration and sunburn, hippos secrete a natural sunblock-like substance from their skin. This secretion is often referred to as "hippo sweat," though it's actually a combination of red and orange oils that protect their skin from the sun, insects, and bacterial infections.

Hippos have large, sharp incisors and canines that are not used for feeding but for defense and fighting. Their canine tusks can grow up to 20" long.



TAWERET

The goddess Taweret, whom the Egyptians believed to be the holder of fertility and rejuvenation, is portrayed as a hippo. Her fierceness is represented as that of a mother protecting her young from harm, a character trait the hippo also possesses.

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African Safari Silhouette

BY HEATHER HATTON, MUSEUM OF EAST TEXAS

Materials

Pink,
orange,
yellow and
black paper

Sharpie
Scissors
Glue stick

SCAN QR CODE
FOR ANIMAL
SILHOUETTES



Instructions

Tear strips of pink, orange and yellow paper 3"-4" wide and about 11" long.

Layer strips on black paper to make the sky. You decide how many layers of each color you want to do. After you like the way it looks, glue it down. Hint: smooth out any lumps of glue BEFORE pressing down the paper. This will keep things nice and flat!

Trim the sides of the paper so all the layers are even.

Cut out silhouettes from the bottom of this page and glue them down. (You can also draw the animals if you'd like.)

Add trees and bushes using a sharpie marker.

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‘FOR THE GREATER GOOD’

For 20 years, Bwana was one of the Ellen Trout Zoo’s most popular dudes. The massive Southern White Rhinoceros always drew a crowd.

Kids loved to pretend they were watching a real, live dinosaur. Adults marveled at his size and sheer presence. A little shy at times, Bwana often would play “peek-a-boo” through and around the shrubs in his enclosure. Children would squeal when they found his handsome face staring back at them. After Halloween, visitors might catch Bwana chomping and stomping on donated pumpkins.

But as beloved as Bwana was for simply being on-hand to watch in action, his legacy extends into an area far more important. It’s an endeavor interim Ellen Trout Zoo director Robert Jackson calls “The Greater Good.”

* * *

At present, only two Northern White Rhinos exist in the world. Illegal poaching has been the No. 1 killer of those magnificent animals. Poachers slay the animal for its horn, which holds mythical properties. Some cultures that believe in its medicinal value, while others consider possession of a rhino horn a status symbol.

“The horn itself unfortunately is worth more per ounce than gold,” Jackson said. “And all it is, is hair. It’s made out of keratin – the same material human hair and nails are made of. But you get into the made-up myths, and people run with them.”

With extinction on the verge, rhinos became a priority in the Association of Zoos and Aquarium’s “Survival Species Program” (SSP). Jackson said Rhinos from all over the country are looked at genetically; scientists want to set up a plan for the best genetic diversity for a 100-year breeding plan. That way, Jackson said, they don’t breed brothers and sisters together, or closely related animals. They want to keep it as diverse as possible while making every effort to propagate the species in a healthy manner.

That’s where Bwana’s importance came in to play.

* * *

The San Diego Zoo has been named one of the best zoos in the entire world, claiming the title of “most visited.” Spanning more than 100 acres, the zoo is home to more than 12,000 animals of more than 680 species and subspecies.





RHINO BWANA THE LATEST TO ADD TO ELLEN TROUT ZOO CONSERVATION LEGACY

BY **GARY STALLARD**

Most of those creatures are available for public viewing. However, one of the zoo's most valuable features is its "Frozen Zoo," known as "the largest and most diverse collection of its kind in the world," according to the official website. The Frozen Zoo contains "more than 10,000 living cell cultures, oocytes, sperm and embryos" representing nearly 1,000 taxa, including one extinct species." In short, the Frozen Zoo may be the very last chance to stave off extinction for numerous species, including the rhinos.

In 2018, conservationists from the San Diego Zoo contacted the members of Ellen Trout Zoo to set up a session with Bwana. The goal? Extracting semen from the big guy in hopes of using it later through artificial insemination.

Gordon Henley, who recently retired as the Director of Ellen Trout Zoo after more than 45 years of service, was part of the process of setting up Bwana's special session.

"San Diego has been working to develop artificial insemination techniques for rhinos, and they're very ambitious with their programs," Henley said. "They're trying hard to save the Northern White Rhino."

Henley said the scientists with the San Diego Zoo are working to develop technology by which they can retrieve DNA from the Northern White Rhino, place it in an egg cell and deposit it into a White Rhino in an effort to create a "baby." Obtaining the technology for such an endeavor has been a big part of San Diego's conservation program, and the group was looking for the best specimen possible.

Enter Bwana. "They definitely wanted to work with Bwana, just because his species is highly under-represented in the genes of the rhino population," Henley said. "He was a very desirable animal for sure."

* * *

Wait. How does a tiny zoo in the middle of East Texas suddenly play such an important role in a worldwide cause? There was nothing "suddenly" about it. Since its opening more than 50 years ago, the Ellen Trout Zoo has been a major player in the area of wildlife conservation. Some of ETZ's most notable accomplishments include helping breed the endangered Louisiana Pine Snake (America's rarest snake), assisting the Memphis Zoo in producing offspring using in vitro fertilization. The Ellen Trout Zoo even teamed up with the Cincinnati Zoo to assist in jaguar



Above: Staff from all three zoos confer and monitor Bwana's vitals.

breeding.

"We know these programs are working," Henley said. "We play a role in housing genetic material and being contributors to those programs."

So Bwana wasn't just another handsome face?

"Our animals aren't just here for viewing," Henley laughed. "They're here to represent their species in the wild and to contribute to science. They're here to inspire and motivate our guests to want to learn more and help preserve them."

Yes, Bwana and his fellow residents are here to educate as much as to entertain. Henley cited the zoo's emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) events because so much of what goes on inside a zoo generally falls under one of those categories. Area schools frequently make scheduled trips to participate in the learning.

"We have engineering in our Zoo Safari," Henley said. "Kids will come into that program and then go look at exhibits and design them while building models. They'll study what type of

structure is necessary to contain a lion, or what kind of glass won't break. There are so many things involved in zoo exhibit design. It's a great opportunity to get kids involved not just in zoology, but in other subjects such as science or math."

Jackson noted that with all the excitement surrounding the animal displays, the average zoo visitor doesn't get to see what's happening behind the scenes.

"You have the Species Survival Plan, which is our model, our playbook," Jackson said. "But then there are people who have to come up with the plans and stay involved with them. You have a 'PMP' (Population Management Plan), you have geneticists looking at the DNA, you have 'stud book' keepers keeping track of all the animals at the individual zoo levels and all around the country. You've got a corporate office where people work on all of this stuff to plan for hundreds of animals.

"There's a ton of work going into it, and it all trickles down into this little book, this little pack-

et, that lets us know where all the animals are and which ones are allowed to breed this year or who's on hold. You try to get your core information out to the public to teach them some of this."

In other words, the more we know, the more we can all do our part.

* * *

So what about Bwana's big day with the San Diego Zoo staff? Such an important event would need everything to go as perfectly as possible.

Jackson said staff from the San Diego Zoo, along with members of the Dallas and Houston zoos, met with the staff of the Ellen Trout Zoo. They'd flown in all their equipment to Houston and driven to Lufkin from there. Inside the Ellen Trout Zoo, the specialists set up a mobile lab in the rhino/giraffe barn. Jackson said the specialists had every piece of equipment one would find in a clinical lab, only this lab was more portable out of necessity. Now, it was time for the big guy. A rhino isn't just going to volunteer a semen sample, so Bwana needed sedation. Jackson described the scene:

"Now, you have to realize Bwana weighs between 4,000 and 4,500 pounds," Jackson said. "We got him sedated, and right before he went down, he was getting pretty sleepy, but he was still standing straight up. We went in with two mattresses just like you or I would sleep on. We walked up beside him, and when he finally decided to lie down, we had four or five people on each side to give him a gentle nudge, and we lay him down on those mattresses."

Once Bwana was settled and comfortable, the veterinarians and lab technicians moved in and set up to prep Bwana and collect specimens. They analyzed the specimen samples through a microscope, looking for anything a scientist would in a human sample: quality, quantity, motility, etc. Once they found the samples they wanted, they had liquid nitrogen on hand with the solution for freezing.

"It was so efficient," Jackson marveled. "You could tell they'd done this so many times. They



Top: Bwana and staff during the procedure.

Middle: Bwana's samples are reviewed under a microscope.

Below: Medical equipment used during the procedure.

had their system, and before you knew it, they were finished. They packed everything up and started the process to wake Bwana.”

Bwana’s samples now wait in San Diego’s Frozen Zoo for the right time to use them. Jackson said that while Bwana’s donations are still waiting, the scientists have been able to use samples from other male rhinos, and they’ve experienced success with the birth of some baby rhino calves.

“It’s a proven system that works,” Jackson said. “They’ve done this with other hoof-stock animals such as some antelope species. This is a great way to potentially expand opportunities to save this species.”

It’s also far more cost-effective, Jackson said.

“It’s a whole lot cheaper to fly a sample around the country for artificial insemination than it is to move a rhino,” he laughed.

All that work in collecting and moving samples increases the potential for more rhino births, Jackson said, and it goes a long way in ensuring the species’ population survives and expands.

“There’s also been a case in which a male rhino’s samples were collected in the Frozen Zoo and the male passed away,” Jackson said. “The zoo still was able to use the samples to artificially inseminate the female and have calves born. Even after the passing of the male, he was able to sire some offspring and benefit his species.”

Because of all of this, Bwana will leave a legacy.

Sadly, Ellen Trout Zoo fans won’t have the opportunity to congratulate Bwana on his pending first Father’s Day. As part of the nation-wide SSP breeding program, Bwana has moved to San Diego, where his popularity obviously followed him: He currently lives with six beautiful female rhinos.

“As much as we all loved Bwana, we know it’s a great move for him,” Jackson said.

Not that Jackson or the other members of the Ellen Trout Zoo were attached or anything. No way.

Right?

That’s where the human element always comes in to play, Jackson said.

“People come here every day to work with these animals,” Jackson said. “They do it because they have a significant passion for this. They care about the animals, and they care about conservation. They put their hearts, minds, and souls into this job, and it



shows.

“It’s just like if you have a dog or a cat and you lose that pet, it feels the same. When we see them go, it’s a prime example of ‘sweet sorrow.’ You know it’s for the greater good, but you just hate to see them go. We work and train with these animals, and you get to know their personalities very, very well.”

Jackson said Bwana’s moods could alternate between a 4,000-pound puppy when content to a 4,000-pound tank when agitated.

With Bwana, there was a lot more puppy

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"I've got a picture of me hugging him around his neck," Jackson said. "He would come up and tuck his head against you and want ear scratches and neck rubs."

"The human element is so important in all of this, because without us all working together, it can't happen."

Such was the trust established between Bwana and his Ellen Trout Zoo friends that when the day came for him to leave, the big guy made the event about as easy as one could ever hope when transporting a 4,000-pound animal.

"We have to train all our animals and teach them such things as going inside a shipping crate," Jackson said. "We have to train them to know it's a safe space."

Jackson related some of the horror stories he's heard regarding trying to place a rhino in a crate.

"I've spoken to other zoo members, and I've heard about how when you lead a rhino into the crate and you shut those doors, if the animal's not happy, it will completely dismantle a steel crate," Jackson laughed. "You're definitely not

shipping a rhino that day."

But Bwana trusted his people, who Jackson said worked with him every single day to keep him comfortable and calm.

"Bwana was kind of funny when he first entered the crate that day," Jackson said. "He tried going forward a little, and he was like, 'Hmm. Can't go forward.' Then he tried backing up, and you could see him thinking about it, like, 'Well, can't go backward either.' So he just relaxed and chilled out, and one of the main guys from the group said that was one of the best and fastest experiences he's ever had with shipping a rhino."

Yes, Bwana has left Lufkin, but he also left a lasting legacy, both through his interactions with his fans and through his contributions to conservation. Henley said there are current plans to bring in a new kid in town: Another rhino he hopes will be just as popular as Bwana.

Jackson spoke of Bwana's departure as if describing a relative's leaving home. He said Bwana left town knowing he was a loved guy.

"He got lots of treats that day, let me tell you," Jackson laughed. 🦋



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THE FUTURE OF ELEPHANTS IN ZOOS

CONSERVATION, ETHICS, AND INNOVATION

Elephants, the majestic giants of the animal kingdom, have long been a cornerstone of zoos around the world. Their sheer size, intelligence, and social complexity make them fascinating to observe, and zoos provide a unique opportunity for people to connect with these incredible animals. As societal attitudes toward animal welfare evolve, so too does the role of zoos in housing elephants.

CONSERVATION: A CRITICAL ROLE FOR ZOOS

Elephants face an array of threats in the wild, including habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, and poaching. The Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*) is listed as endangered, while the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) is categorized as vulnerable. Zoos play a critical role in elephant conservation through breeding programs, research, and public education.

Modern zoos participate in global initiatives such as Species Survival Plans (SSPs) and the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP). These programs aim to maintain genetically diverse and demographically stable populations of elephants in human care. In addition to sustaining captive populations, zoos contribute significantly to field conservation efforts by funding anti-poaching

initiatives, supporting habitat restoration projects, and conducting research that directly benefits wild elephant populations.

Zoos also serve as centers for raising public awareness about the challenges elephants face in the wild. By providing visitors with the opportunity to see elephants up close, zoos inspire empathy and motivate individuals to support conservation initiatives. This connection between people and wildlife is crucial in fostering a global commitment to protecting these iconic animals.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF ELEPHANTS

While zoos have made great strides in improving the care of elephants, the ethical implications of keeping such complex animals in captivity remain a topic of discussion. Critics often point to the difficulties in replicating the vast ranges and intricate social structures that elephants experience in the wild. However, many modern zoos are addressing these concerns by prioritizing the physical, emotional, and social well-being of their elephants.

Innovative enclosure designs now focus on providing elephants with larger, more naturalistic habitats that encourage natural behaviors like foraging, bathing, and socializing. These environments are complemented by enrichment programs



that stimulate the elephants' minds and bodies, ensuring they remain active and engaged. Social grouping is another key focus, with zoos carefully managing herd dynamics to reflect the strong familial bonds observed in the wild.

Far from being static institutions, zoos are evolving to meet the needs of elephants more effectively than ever before. By adopting cutting-edge practices and learning from ongoing research, they are demonstrating their commitment to providing the highest standards of care.

INNOVATIONS IN ELEPHANT CARE

Zoos are at the forefront of innovation when it comes to elephant care. Large-scale habitats like those at the San Diego Zoo Safari Park and the North Carolina Zoo offer expansive spaces that mimic the elephants' natural environments. These state-of-the-art facilities provide opportunities for elephants to roam, graze, and interact as they would in the wild.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in elephant management. Wearable devices, such as GPS trackers and health monitors, allow zookeepers to gather real-time data on an elephant's activity levels, stress indicators, and overall health. This information helps caretakers tailor care plans to the specific needs of each individual.

Zoos are also collaborating on a global scale to improve elephant care. Through shared databases and expertise, institutions work together to refine best practices and ensure that elephants receive consistent, high-quality care. In cases

where a facility lacks the resources to meet the needs of its elephants, zoos often arrange transfers to larger, better-equipped facilities.

ZOOS AS CONSERVATION HUBS

While sanctuaries are often seen as an alternative to zoos, they serve different but complementary purposes. Sanctuaries provide specialized care for elephants that cannot be released into the wild, such as those rescued from circuses or substandard facilities. Zoos, on the other hand, have the capacity to reach millions of visitors each year, making them powerful platforms for education and advocacy.

The revenue generated by zoos fund vital conservation projects that protect elephants in their natural habitats. This dual role—caring for elephants in human care while supporting wild populations—positions zoos as essential players in the fight to save these animals from extinction.

The future of elephants in zoos is one of continuous improvement and adaptation. By embracing innovation, prioritizing animal welfare, and fostering public engagement, zoos are evolving to meet the needs of elephants while making significant contributions to conservation. Whether through expansive habitats, ground-breaking technology, or educational outreach, zoos provide a vital link between people and the natural world. As stewards of both captive and wild populations, zoos have a critical role to play in ensuring that elephants thrive for generations to come. 



EAST TEXAS SAFARI

EXPLORE THE WILD SIDE OF YOUR OWN BACKYARD

BY KARINA SOTELO, VISIT LUFKIN

When you think of a safari, images of Africa's sweeping savannas and iconic wildlife might come to mind. But did you know you can find that same spirit of adventure right here in East Texas? Between the towering pines, hidden trails, and unique animal encounters, there's a world of safari-style exploration waiting just beyond your doorstep. Here's how to embark on your very own "East Texas Safari."

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Serenity Among the Pines: Why It Feels Like Africa

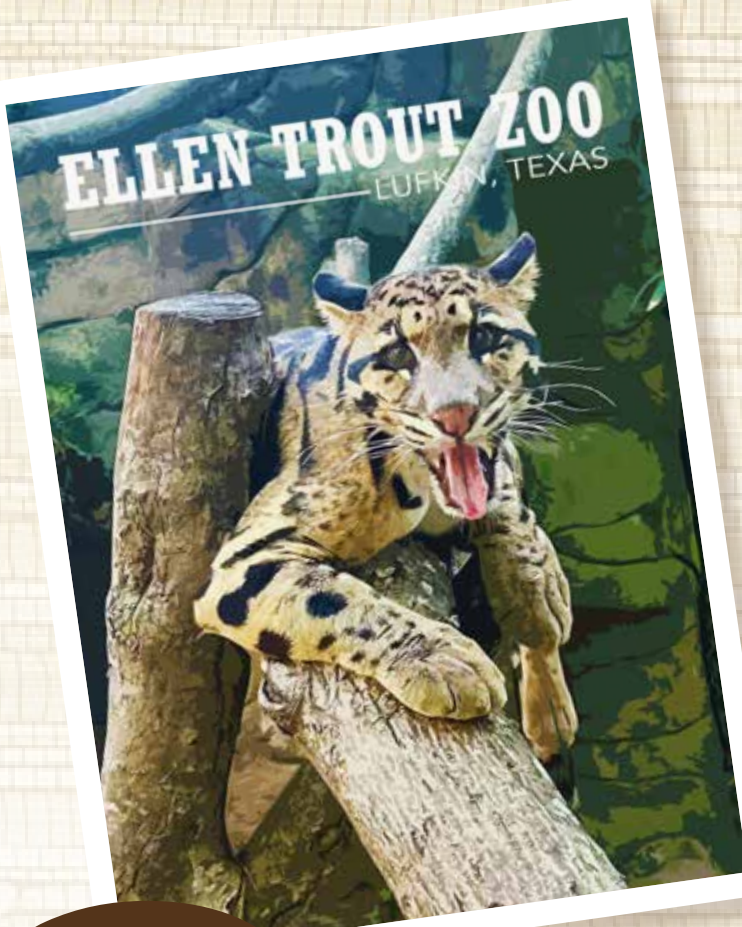
While you won't spot lions lounging under acacia trees, Angelina National Forest does share a similar sense of vastness and unspoiled beauty. The tall pines rustle in the breeze, and sunlight filters through, creating a magical, almost savanna-like glow.



WHAT TO DO

PICNIC WITH A VIEW: Spread a blanket by one of the many tranquil lakes or under a towering pine for a peaceful break from your trek.

SAFARI PHOTO SHOOT: Capture the serene landscape in early morning light or golden-hour evenings. Bring a zoom lens in case you spot white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, or other local wildlife.



TIPS FOR YOUR EAST TEXAS SAFARI

////// DRESS THE PART: //

Neutral, earthy tones not only enhance your safari photos but also help you blend into natural surroundings.

////// STAY HYDRATED: //

Whether you're on foot in a forest or strolling the zoo, bring plenty of water—East Texas can feel as warm as the Sahara on certain days!

////// PLAN YOUR PHOTO SHOOTS: //

Mornings and late afternoons have the best lighting. You'll capture those dramatic "safari silhouettes" and vivid landscapes that bring photos to life.

////// RESPECT WILDLIFE: //

Whether you're photographing deer in a national forest or giraffes at the zoo, keep a respectful distance and follow guidelines for everyone's safety.

2

A Glimpse of Africa at Home: Why It Feels Like Africa

From graceful giraffes to the famous "Hippoquarium," the Ellen Trout Zoo transports visitors to distant habitats around the globe—no passport required. This is your chance to see creatures with roots in Africa and beyond.

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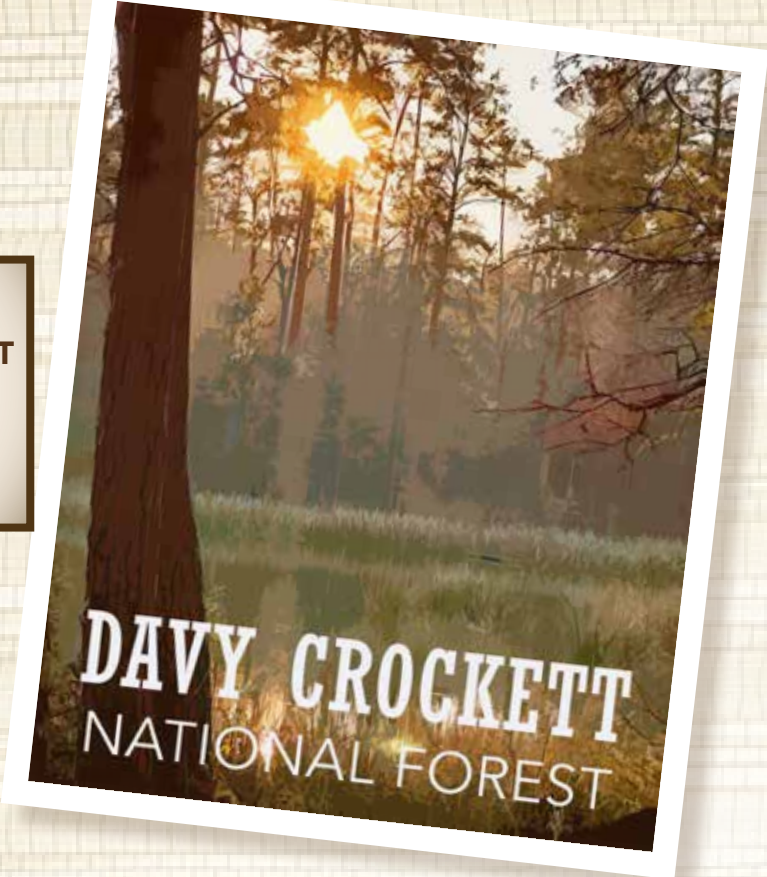
EDUCATIONAL ENCOUNTERS: Learn about conservation efforts—both in Africa and here at home. The zoo staff often share insights that reveal just how interconnected our world really is.

WHAT TO DO

3

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Adventure in Scenic Terrain: Why It Feels Like Africa

Davy Crockett National Forest may be more managed than “untamed,” but it still offers an incredible variety of landscapes—much like the diverse biomes of the African continent. You can wander through dense woods, stroll across open meadows, and perhaps spot a fox or hear the distant call of an owl, all without needing a machete!

WHAT TO DO

GUIDED HIKES: For a more in-depth experience, plan a ranger-led hike—just remember to call ahead and check for availability. A knowledgeable guide can highlight hidden trails and point out fascinating wildlife signs, making your East Texas safari feel extra special.

CAMPING UNDER THE STARS: There’s nothing like a night under an East Texas sky. Pitch a tent and let the chorus of crickets and hooting owls lull you to sleep—a serene twist on the sounds of the Serengeti.



Embracing an “African safari” mindset in East Texas adds a sense of excitement and wonder to your local adventures. The towering pines become your savanna trees, the woodland trails your hidden paths, and each wildlife encounter your own taste of the wild. So gather your gear, charge your camera, and set out to discover a safari in your very own backyard! And when you’re ready for more tips or planning help—don’t forget to

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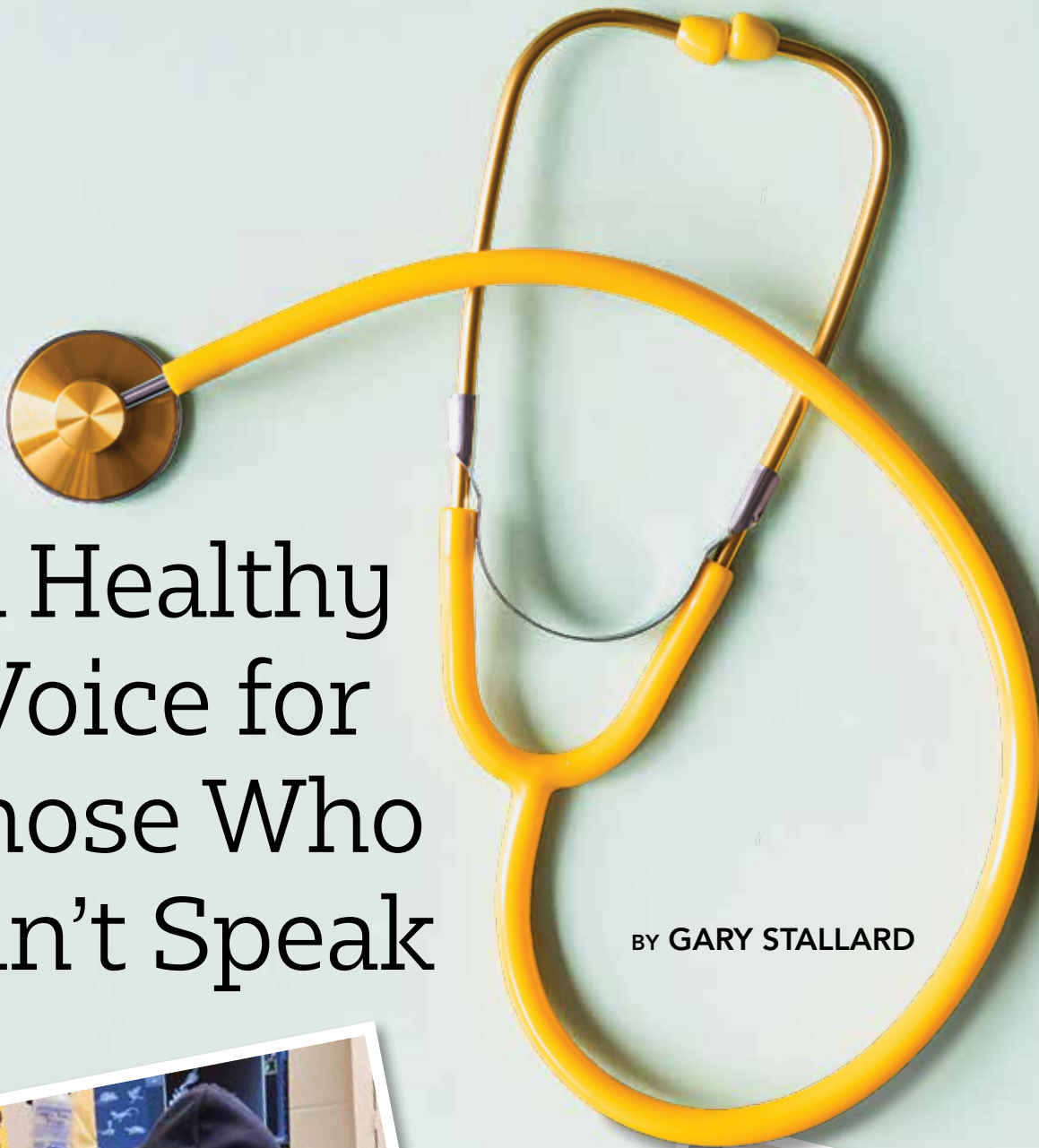
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A Healthy Voice for Those Who Can't Speak

BY GARY STALLARD



"So, what do you want to be when you grow up?"

Stormy Perry was able to answer the age-old childhood question at a very young age. Growing up in Oklahoma, she said she visited her grandparents' farm frequently, and that's where she first developed her love for animals. At first, she spent time around dogs and cows, and those were enough to fan the flames for a kid seemingly too young to think so far ahead.

A little later, she moved to the Houston area, where she attended a school function that would solidify her life goals.

"I visited Texas A&M University's College of Veterinary Medicine's Open House," Perry said. "I got to go through all their stuff, and it was over for me."

The new veterinarian at Ellen Trout Zoo in Lufkin began her quest with relatively modest goals. Early in her veterinary education, she had in mind "more of a mixed animal practice."

"Honestly, I was thinking more like small, rural America. Dogs, cats, stuff like that," Perry said.

However, while in veterinarian school at Oklahoma State University, she joined something called "The Exotic Club," where she was exposed to different species.

"I kind of fell in love with the exotics and zoo med, just because it's so interesting," Perry said. "As vets, we already have to know so much about different species, but this is even more so. There's always more opportunities to learn as even more stuff is being developed and discovered."

She received an early sign that exotic animals might be her calling when, as a kindergartner, she was present when a man visited her class and brought along a collection of snakes. While many children harbor at least a little fear of the reptiles, five-year old Stormy was genuinely enthralled – especially after her first close encounter with a very large beast.

"They put this giant, albino Burmese python around my five-year old neck, and I absolutely



loved it," Perry laughed.

Following her 2014 high school graduation from the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics in Oklahoma City, Perry went on to Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma for her undergraduate work. There, she worked for three years on her undergraduate degree. She enrolled in a program titled "The Three Plus One Program," where her first year of veterinarian school counted toward her last year of her undergraduate degree. Eventually, she would complete her Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology before earning her DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) from Oklahoma State in 2021.

After that, Perry performed several internships. During one of those, an exotic internship in Indiana, Perry said she was "on call" for any potential animal emergencies.

"One of my first calls brought me in for a Fennec fox," Perry said. "I knew people could own exotic animals, but seeing that up-close and then treating that animal – people typically think of exotic pets as snakes, lizards, stuff like that. This person owned a Fennec fox, and I loved it."

Asking a veterinarian to name a favorite animal is akin to asking a parent to pick a favorite child, but Perry said she can't help but hold a certain affinity for one particular species.

"Wolves," Perry laughed. "I've always loved wolves. When I was a kid, I'd already taken a lik-



ing to wolves just because I thought they were cool animals and really pretty. My aunt and dad took me to a wolf reserve down in the Conroe area, and we got to walk the wolves, and they came up to us. They licked me. That was that.

“Before I started vet school, I did an internship at a wolf park in Indiana, where I spent an entire summer working with wolves, coyotes, foxes and bison. General husbandry, medical care, habitat maintenance – that was a great summer.”

At the Ellen Trout Zoo, Perry said she hasn’t been there long enough to form personal relationships with all the animals, but she does have a unique relationship with at least one already.

“I actually have a Louisiana Pine Snake in my office I take care of, so she’s probably my favorite right now,” Perry said. “A lot of people don’t think snakes actually have personality, but they really do.”

Her goals for the residents of the Ellen Trout Zoo are far-reaching rather than the temporary health care outsiders might expect.

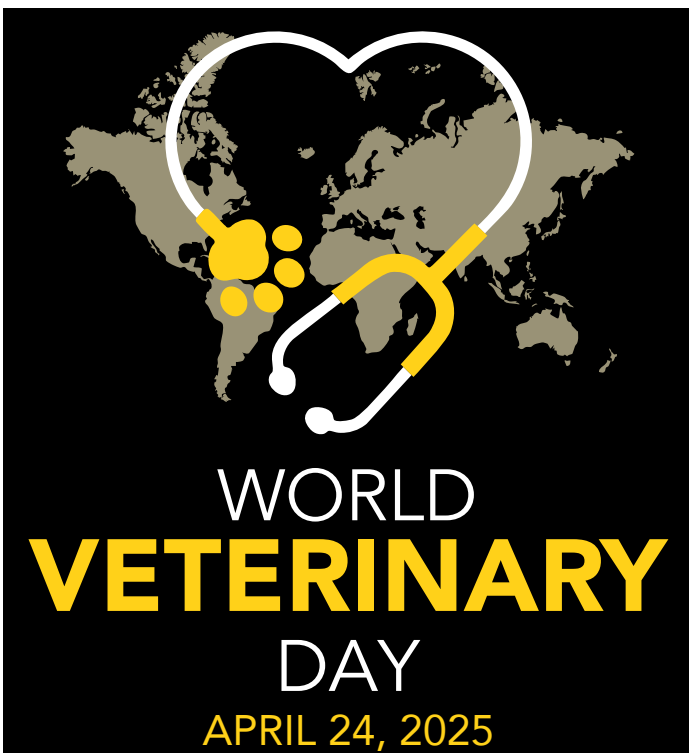
“Some of the goals definitely include having a good preventative health program,” Perry said. “That’s what zoos are going toward nowadays. That includes training, and we’re going a long way toward developing that. The keepers here are very interested in the training.

“We can train lions to give blood, train giraffes to take x-rays of their hooves – it’s so interesting, and so important to get our animals to a point where they voluntarily participate in their own health care.”

An entire career stemming from childhood encounters on a farm, propelled by support from mom Mitzi and dad David. Stormy Perry’s path seems to have been paved a long, long time ago.

“I always loved animals, and that was the biggest thing for me,” Perry said. “Some of other jobs I thought about as a kid were things like animal trainer, stuff like that. I knew I wanted to be around animals.

“But knowing I could possibly help animals that can’t speak for themselves really resonated with me. It all started with a love of animals, but as I grew older and more mature, I realized I wanted to speak for those who can’t speak.” 🐾





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THE THRILL OF THE BIG FIVE

No safari is complete without the excitement of spotting the Big Five: lions, elephants, leopards, rhinos, and buffalo. Whether it's the heart-pounding moment of locking eyes with a lion basking under the African sun or marveling at the sheer size of an elephant strolling through the bush, each encounter is unforgettable. But don't forget the "Little Five" too—quirky creatures like the antlion

and rhino beetle that add a touch of whimsy to your safari checklist.

MORE THAN JUST WILDLIFE

While the animals are the stars of the show, a safari is also about the landscapes. From the golden plains of the Serengeti to the lush wetlands of the Okavango Delta, Africa's natural beauty will leave you breathless. And then there's the sky—an endless expanse that turns every sunrise and sunset into a masterpiece. For stargazers, the African night sky, unpolluted by city lights, offers a glittering view of the Milky Way that feels like pure magic.

THE FUN OF SAFARI LIVING

Forget about boring hotel rooms—a safari is all about unique accommodations. Stay in luxurious tented camps where you'll fall asleep to the distant roar of lions, or cozy up in a treehouse lodge surrounded by wildlife. Meals are an adventure, too,





with bush breakfasts served under the open sky and candlelit dinners that turn the savanna into your dining room. And the best part? The stories you'll collect. Every safari-goer has a tale of a curious monkey raid, a stubborn herd of elephants blocking the road, or the one that got away—like that elusive leopard.

MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR

Safaris are the ultimate family adventure. Kids are endlessly fascinated by nature's playground, and the thrill of seeing a giraffe or zebra in the wild beats any theme park ride. Many lodges offer family-friendly activities, like animal tracking or crafting with local guides, making it a fun and educational experience for all ages.

THE UNEXPECTED SURPRISES

On a safari, you learn to expect the unexpected. A lioness teaching her cubs to hunt, a cheeky baboon stealing fruit, or even a sudden downpour that turns

the landscape into a sparkling oasis—these moments add layers of wonder to your adventure. You'll laugh, gasp, and maybe even tear up at the sheer beauty of it all.

WHY WAIT?

Whether you're a thrill-seeker, a nature lover, or someone who simply needs a break from the ordinary, a safari offers something for everyone. It's not just a trip; it's a chance to rediscover the joy of exploration, connect with the wild, and create stories that will last a lifetime.

So, pack your binoculars and sense of adventure—it's time to answer the call of the wild. Your safari awaits!

Interested in a safari adventure or traveling to fun and unique places? Contact Rebecca with FOETZ at (936) 633-0394 or friendsofetz@ellentroutroutzoo.com to learn more about the exciting travel opportunities coming up. 🦒





FROM
FLIP-FLOPS

— *to* —

FANTASTIC
ART



Ocean Sole is a remarkable African brand that has taken a unique approach to addressing environmental challenges while promoting art, culture, and community empowerment. Based in Kenya, Ocean Sole transforms discarded flip-flops into vibrant sculptures of animals, showcasing creativity and sustainability in action. The brand's mission is not only to clean up the oceans and waterways but also to inspire global conversations about environmental conservation.

THE PROBLEM: FLIP-FLOP POLLUTION

Flip-flops are among the most commonly used footwear worldwide, especially in coastal and tropical regions. Unfortunately, due to their affordability and short lifespan, millions of these sandals end up in landfills, waterways, and oceans. As they break down into microplastics, they pose a serious threat to marine life and ecosystems. Kenya's coastal areas, in particular, have struggled with the influx of flip-flop waste washed ashore by ocean currents.

THE SOLUTION: ART FROM WASTE

Ocean Sole was founded in 2006 by Julie Church, a marine conservationist who was inspired by local communities repurposing flip-flops into children's toys. What began as a small-scale initiative has evolved into a global brand. Ocean Sole collects discarded flip-flops from beaches and waterways, cleans them, and transforms them into stunning works of art.

The process begins with the collection and sorting of flip-flops gathered from cleanup efforts along coastlines and waterways. Once collected, the flip-flops are thoroughly washed and sanitized. Skilled artisans then carve and assemble the flip-

flops into colorful sculptures of animals, including elephants, giraffes, turtles, and more. Multiple layers of flip-flops are often glued together to create vibrant patterns, and the pieces are hand-finished to ensure durability and aesthetic appeal.

THE IMPACT

Ocean Sole's work has a far-reaching impact across several dimensions. Environmentally, the organization collects over one million flip-flops annually, significantly reducing plastic pollution. These cleanup initiatives help protect marine ecosystems and reduce microplastic contamination, benefiting both wildlife and human communities.

Socially, Ocean Sole reinvests 10% of its revenue

into beach cleanup efforts, educational programs, and community projects. By raising awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution, the organization inspires individuals and organizations to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

Culturally, the sculptures created by Ocean Sole celebrate Africa's rich biodiversity. From life-sized elephants to intricate marine animals, each piece tells a story of conservation and creativity, bridging the gap between environmental activism and art.

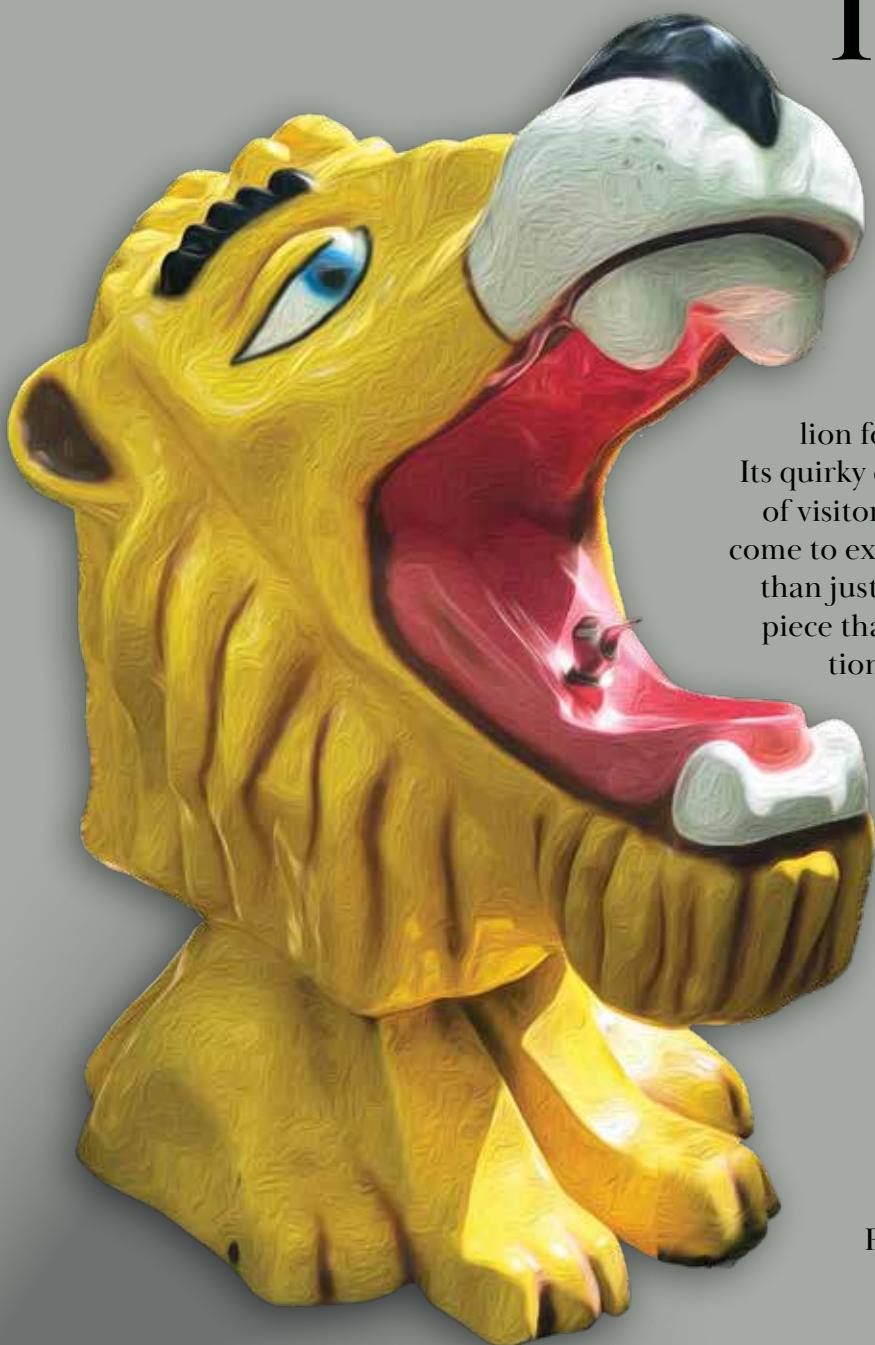
Ocean Sole's sculptures range from

small decorative items to massive installations. Their life-sized elephant sculptures, for instance, highlight the majesty of Africa's wildlife and serve as powerful symbols of conservation. Marine animal installations, such as whales, turtles, and dolphins, emphasize the urgent need to protect ocean habitats. The Friends of Ellen Trout Zoo Gift Shop is proud to be a local Ocean Sole retailer with many different sculptures available for purchase. Each piece sold serves as both a work of art and a call to action, encouraging guests to rethink waste and embrace environmentally friendly practices. 



DRINKING

with the King of the Jungle



The fiberglass lion water fountain is a delightful mix of practicality and playful charm, capturing the hearts of visitors young and old for over three decades. Far from being an ordinary water fountain, this whimsical piece of art takes the form of a majestic lion, standing proud and regal, with water flowing invitingly from its mouth. It offers a chance for children and adults alike to “drink from the king of the jungle,” turning an everyday moment into a magical experience.

Originally installed more than 30 years ago, the lion fountain has become an iconic symbol of the zoo. Its quirky design has earned it a special place in the hearts of visitors, creating countless memories for families who come to explore the zoo’s attractions. The fountain is more than just a source of refreshment—it’s a nostalgic centerpiece that ties together the zoo’s mission to blend education, conservation, and community joy. In 2014, this

beloved fixture underwent a much-needed restoration, allowing the lion to regain its roaring charm. The cleaning and repairs ensured that future generations could continue to enjoy its playful allure. The restoration efforts, supported by Friends of the Ellen Trout Zoo, highlighted the community’s dedication to preserving this small but significant piece of the zoo’s character.

Nestled among the zoo’s many exhibits, the lion water fountain offers a lighthearted break during a day of discovery. Visitors can cool off under the Texas sun, enjoy a refreshing drink, and snap a photo with the king of hydration. For many, a visit to the zoo is incomplete without stopping by this delightful landmark. 

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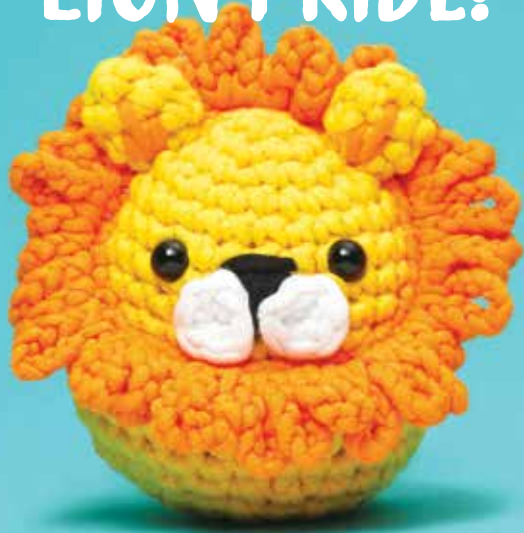
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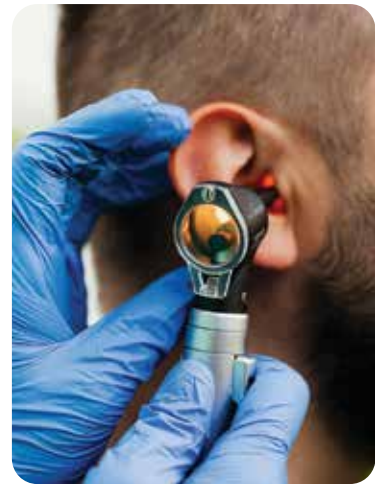
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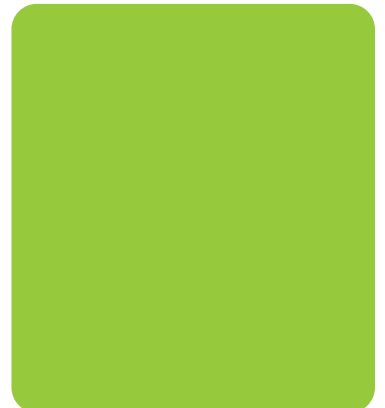


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