

# EXHIBITS

## AFRICA EXHIBIT SET TO OPEN AT BLANK PARK ZOO

Blank Park Zoo in Des Moines, Iowa, opened phase one of the first major expansion of the Zoo since 2001 in early May. The exhibit name, *Jaama Kwa Africa*, means 'your connection to Africa' and Zoo officials hope visitors will connect to not only the animals and the cultures of Africa but also to the immediate conservation needs that many animals, especially the rhinoceros, face. According to the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), there are less than 5,000 black rhinos left in the wild.

"The highlight of the exhibit is the *Prairie Meadows Rhino Savanna*," said Mark Vukovich, CEO. "Not only will you be able to see rhinos, you'll learn why they are highly endangered and how you can help protect them. We want to raise awareness about this because it's possible that within our lifetime these animals will be extinct in the wild."

The three-acre, \$4.5 million exhibit features an indoor area for rhino viewing during cooler seasons. In addition to the rhinos, the exhibit is home to eland, spurred tortoise, ostrich and kori bustards, one of the largest birds that can fly.

"Without the help of many generous donors we would not have been able to come this far with this exhibit, and we would like to thank Prairie Meadows, Principal Financial Group and DuPont Pioneer for their help in this part of our expansion efforts," said Vukovich.

The past few years have brought about a number of changes to the Zoo. In 2011, the *David Kruidenier Australia Adventure* opened. Last year, the *Hub Harbor* seal and sea lion pool opened and features daily animal demonstrations, stroller accessible observation deck and underwater viewing.

In the *Africa* exhibit, construction continues on the Principal Pavilion, an educational and viewing area that

will give a new view to the giraffe exhibit. In other areas of the Zoo, construction is continuing on a new holding and winter viewing building for the penguins and Aldabra tortoises, and construction will soon to begin on a Bactrian camel exhibit that will be located just north of the Zoo in Blank Park.

## CONRAD PREBYS AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK EXHIBIT OPENS AT SAN DIEGO

The San Diego Zoo in San Diego, Calif., opened its *Conrad Prebys Australian Outback* exhibit following a smoke ceremony conducted by the Yugambeh-language people of the Gold Coast in Australia supporting the DreamWorld Wildlife

Foundation in Australia and now the San Diego Zoo. Rick Gulley, chairman of the board for San Diego Zoo Global, was honored by the Aboriginal tribe with honorary face paint. The Australia Consulate General, Karen Lanyon, also spoke at the opening event for the exhibit.

The *Australian Outback* offers habitats for the Zoo's Queensland koalas, parma wallabies, two wombat species and 23 species of Australian birds. The Zoo started plans to expand and diversify the koala area in 2009 and spent \$7.4 million to create the new habitat for Australian animals.

The entrance of the exhibit, off of the Zoo's Front Street, features Aboriginal-inspired totem poles depicting Australian animals including a koala, kangaroo and kookaburra. Just beyond the totems are three aviaries and exhibits for wombats and wallabies. On the other side of Front Street, at the center of the three-acre exhibit, is the Queenslander house, reminiscent of the architectural style of houses in Queensland, Australia. The building has large windows, allowing guest to watch keepers as they prepare food for the koalas, look into the large, walk-in cooler that keeps the eucalyptus fresh and peek into a classroom where students of all ages can learn about animals from "down under."

From the deck that wraps around the Queenslander house, guests will have great views of the koalas perched at eye level as they eat or sleep - koalas can sleep up to 22 hours a day. There are ten individual enclosures for the male koalas and two larger enclosures for female koalas with their joeys (babies). The San Diego Zoo is home to 21 Queensland koalas ranging in age from eight months to 17 years old.

The San Diego Zoo has the largest breeding colony of Queensland koalas outside of Australia. Researchers at the San Diego Zoo and the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research are



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studying koala populations both at the Zoo and in the wild to better understand the species' complex ecology and mating behaviors.

Koalas are native to southeastern and eastern Australia and rely on eucalyptus forests for food and protection, as they live in the trees and eat only eucalyptus leaves. Koalas are sedentary animals that sleep a lot while digesting their food. Being on the ground puts koalas at a disadvantage because predators can catch them easily; instead, they live in trees, seated in the fork of branches where they can chew leaves and nap all they want without feeling threatened. Unfortunately, due to habitat fragmentation, many koalas lose their lives moving from one patch of forest to another.

There are more than 700 different kinds of eucalyptus trees, and koalas prefer the leaves of about 40 varieties. At the San Diego Zoo, koalas are offered fresh branches from several eucalyptus species each day. These picky eaters can then select what they want, as their taste often changes from day to day. The Zoo's koalas eat 1 to 1.5 pounds of leaves each day.

The other marsupials on exhibit in *Australian Outback* are hairy-nosed and Australian naked-nosed wombats and Parma wallabies.

Wombats have wide, strong feet with large claws that make them masters at digging burrows with tunnels that can reach lengths of 650 feet. They use their rodent-like teeth and strong jaws to grip and tear food such as grasses, roots,

shoots, tubers and even tree bark. They are often seen grazing at night, when their coloration helps them blend in.

Parma wallabies are members of the kangaroo family that are mainly nocturnal, usually sheltering in thick scrub during the day. They are largely solitary creatures, although groups of a few may come together for feeding or around a watering hole in the dry season.

The *Conrad Prebys Australian Outback* also features 4,000 square feet of aviaries for 23 species of Australian birds including the kookaburra, fawn-breasted bowerbird, palm cockatoo, Gouldian finch, and scarlet-chested parrot.

The fawn-breasted bowerbird is found in northern Australia and New Guinea. The males of this species are known for their skills in constructing intricate structures, called bowers, to attract females. Brightly colored Gouldian finches are found in the tropical and coastal areas of north and northwestern Australia, and males and females share the responsibility of in-

cubating eggs in the nest. The palm cockatoo is one of the largest cockatoo species, with a powerful bill that it uses to eat hard nuts and seeds that other species have difficulty managing. One distinctive characteristic of this bird is the drumming sound it makes – males carefully selects a stick and uses their feet to beat the stick against a hollow log to make a reverberating sound. This sound is used to attract females during breeding season. ■

