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The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden

From Past to Present

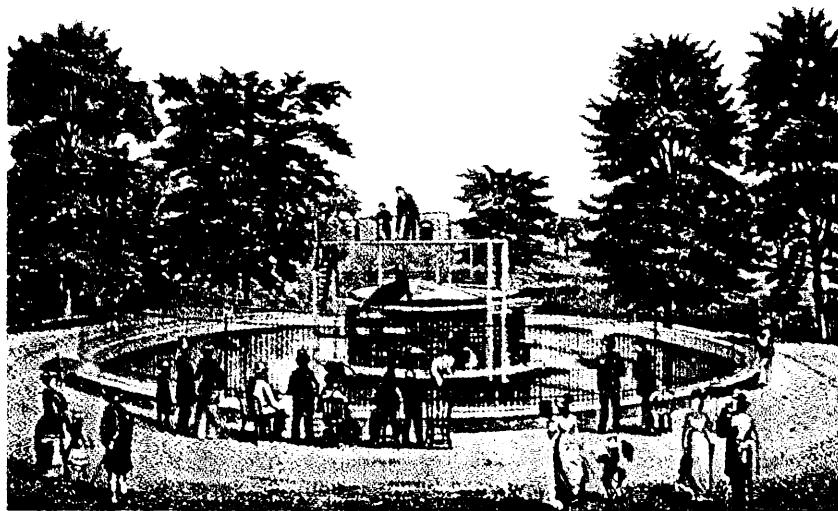
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Sea Lion Pool. In 1878 a baby California sea lion was born, evidently the first to be conceived and born in captivity. The exhibit was built in 1877 and has been rebuilt several times over the years. Today the Walrus Exhibit is located on this site.

In 1877 John Robinson, owner of the Robinson Circus of nearby Terrace Park, lent the Zoo a very rare Indian rhinoceros for a year because it proved to be too heavy to transport by wagon on the rickety bridges and muddy roads of the time. The following year the circus decided to travel by train and so the Zoo lost the female rhino. A pony track was added in 1877 and remained a popular feature with children for many years. In 1878 a pair of giraffes was purchased. The female was called "Daisy" and the male was named "Abe," after Abraham Lincoln. In 19th century zoos both giraffes and rhinos were exceedingly rare. A sea lion pool, sixty feet in diameter, was built near the Clubhouse in 1877. The 1877 Annual Report boasted, "Although they [sea lions] cost nearly a thousand dollars, and the pool as much more, the Society has the satisfaction of knowing that they possess the largest Sea Lion tank and the finest specimens on exhibition in the world." The following year a baby California sea lion was born, evidently the first to be conceived and born in captivity. It lived only three or four months, however. Several different sea lion exhibits have been built and rebuilt on this site over the years. Today it is the location of the walrus exhibit. Several of the Zoo's exhibits have had a similar history of construction, demolition, and reconstruction, while retaining the exhibit's basic identity over time.

Since its beginning, transportation issues have always been important to the Zoo. The Zoo's 1874 Annual Report stated,

"The grounds are more remote from the City than could have been wished, but they are not too far from it." Progress was made when the Mt. Auburn Street Railway lines were extended to within a half mile of the Zoo entrance. According to a local newspaper, in addition to private carriages, "hired rigs, from the most elaborate carriages down to the humble covered express wagons" brought people to the Zoo.

Nineteenth-century German zoological gardens had a tradition of featuring musical concerts. The young Cincinnati Zoo followed this Old World custom of blending art and nature. As at major German zoos, the Cincinnati Zoo's bandstand was located by the Restaurant. Cincinnati was then one of the musical centers of the nation and its German population was especially known for its love of music. In the summer, families came to the Zoo, enjoyed a meal, and listened to evening or Sunday afternoon musical performances. One of the first concert bands at the Zoo was the German Kaiser's band, which visited soon after the opening, "brilliantly uniformed in immaculate white." The Zoo's early music was directed toward both the cultivated tastes of the upper classes and the popular favorites of the working classes. In the fall of 1875 Sunday concerts featured either grand concerts by the Cincinnati Orchestra's Reed Band for the sophisticated or on alternate weekends popular music for the masses, performed by German bands. Later another favorite band was the Currier military band, composed of Civil War regimental band members. Thousands flocked to the Zoo to hear the band's many concerts of patriotic music.



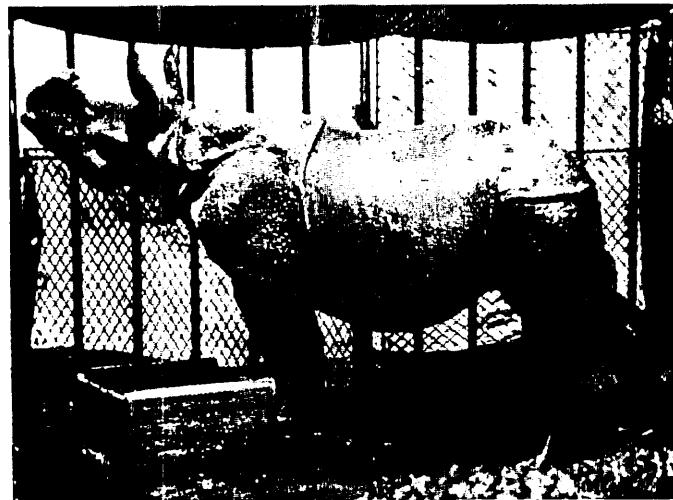
Secretary bird. These unusual long-legged relatives of falcons and hawks feed on snakes and other small prey, which they stamp on with their feet. A pair of the birds was an attraction for many years, especially when they were fed live snakes. The Zoo was one of the first in the country to exhibit this species.

The Animal Collection

The Cincinnati Zoo maintained its position as a leading American zoo in spite of its financial difficulties. In 1916 Dr. R. W. Shufeldt wrote in the *Scientific American Supplement* that the Cincinnati Zoo was probably second in importance only to New York's Bronx Zoo. In the early 1920s the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* called the Cincinnati Zoo one of the finest zoos in the world. In 1920 Heinrich Hagenbeck said the Zoo's animal collection was far superior to any other in the United States because of the outstanding health and condition of its 1600 animals. Superintendent Sol Stephan reported in 1923 that, "At no previous time has the Garden exhibited a more extensive or finer collection."

The rare animal species exhibited included Indian rhinoceros, sable antelope, pygmy hippopotamus, secretary birds, even a manatee. Sol Stephan was especially proud of the Zoo's female Indian rhino, which was acquired from the Maharajah of Nepal via the Hagenbeck firm for \$10,000 in 1923. It was the first Indian rhino imported into the country in fifteen years. Stephan said that rhinos were "... the greatest attraction a zoo can have." He tried unsuccessfully to get a mate for her. Stephan liked deer and claimed that the Zoo had "...the finest collection of these beautiful animals to be found anywhere." In 1916 the Zoo also boasted of having the finest lion, the biggest polar bear, the smallest zebu cattle, the longest python and alligator, and the tamest elephant in the U. S. Its herd of bison was claimed as the largest at a U.S. zoo. By the early 1930s most of the bison in European zoos had apparently come from the Cincinnati Zoo. Animal health care was improved in 1922 when an animal hospital facility was added on the north side of the original Monkey House (now the Reptile House).

New animal species were continually added to the collection. As much as \$18,000 (equivalent to \$350,000 today) was spent annually on new acquisitions. These funds generally came from sales of surplus animals bred at the Zoo. Surplus animals were also traded to other zoos. One newspaper wrote regarding the anticipated sale of two storks: "Two storks, \$75 each--total \$150. Now if you are really in need of a stork and had gone to Sol Stephan, Superintendent of the Zoo, and contracted for the two expected storks in advance last week, you could have gotten them for \$65 apiece. But this week the price is \$75, and not a cent less. Maybe they will be \$95 each next week." You had to be sharp to deal with Sol Stephan!



Indian Rhinoceros. A female was purchased in 1922 from the Maharajah of Nepal, via the Hagenbecks, for \$10,000. It was apparently the first Indian rhino imported into the country in fifteen years.

Animal Collection and Management

General Curator Ed Maruska worked energetically to improve the Zoo's animal management practices: diets were changed, handling practices improved, keepers were retrained, and new staff was hired. One of the new college graduates hired in 1963 was young Bob Lotshaw. Lotshaw has served as General Curator for many years. Veterinary medical care greatly improved under Consulting Veterinarian Dr. Jerry Theobald, who was hired in 1961 and initiated preventive medicine and vaccination programs. Director William Hoff began research programs at the Zoo, working with the University of Cincinnati, the Taft Research Center, and the Cincinnati Department of Public Health.

The family of Board member Oliver M. Gale donated funds in 1963 for a nursery in the Ape House. This facility allowed greatly improved care of young animals neglected by their mothers. The fruits of these improvements in animal management were seen in significant breeding achievements. On March 22, 1964, the first crowned guenon monkey birth in captivity occurred. The Zoo had several black rhinoceros births. By the late 1960s the Zoo's cat collection was considered one of the finest in the world. Fifteen cat species were bred, including the world's first captive birth of sand cats, the western hemisphere's first captive birth of caracals, and births of Persian and snow leopards.

General Curator Ed Maruska led collecting trips to the wilds of southern Mexico and Guatemala in 1965 and 1966. Among the many species collected was a colony of vampire bats. They and their progeny have flourished ever since as popular denizens of the Nocturnal House, feeding on blood provided from local slaughter houses.



Sand Cat. By the late 1960s fifteen cat species were bred at the Zoo, including the first birth of sand cats in captivity in 1969.

The Cincinnati Zoo hosted several hundred professionals from North American zoos in early March 1964 at the Mid-Winter Conference of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA). By the end of the 1960s, zoos throughout the world assumed a much greater involvement in wildlife conservation through captive breeding of wildlife. At that time the Cincinnati Zoo exhibited 17 species listed as rare or threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).



Collecting Trip to Mexico. Left to right, John Kolman and General Curator Ed Maruska hold a rare Morelet's crocodile; artist John Ruthven; a Mexican guide; and keeper Paul Westerbeck, who restrains another crocodile.

Pacific Walrus. A pair of walruses which arrived in 1987 has been among the most popular of the Zoo's animals.

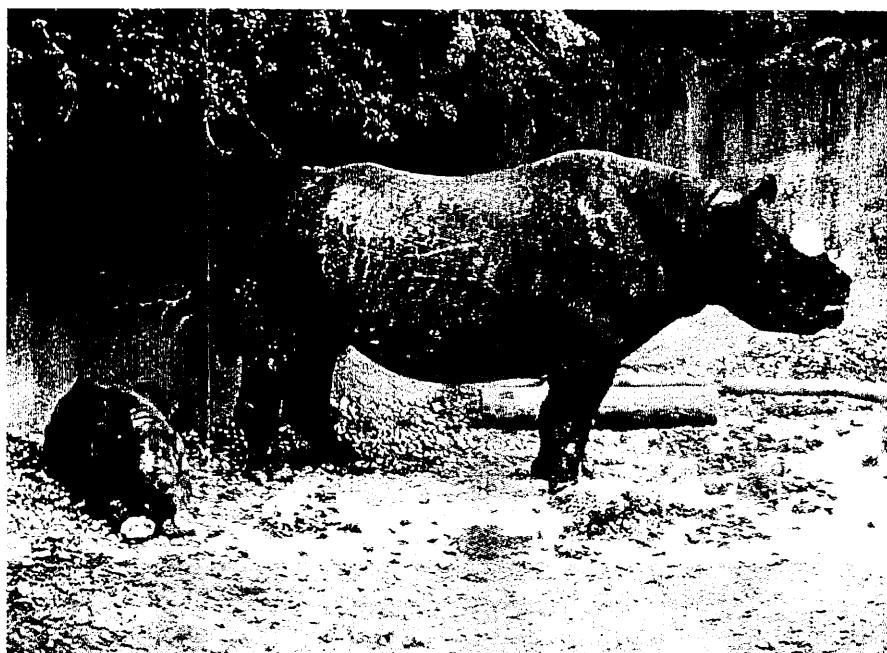
Among the largest and most popular animals the Zoo has ever displayed is a pair of Pacific walruses, "Bruiser" and "Aituk." They arrived in July 1987 for the opening of their new facility, completed by the Zoo's Exhibit Department. The simulated coastal Alaska display is a renovation of the sea lion pool, which has been rebuilt several times since its original construction in 1877. A new exhibit was built in 1987 next to the Red Panda Exhibit for Manchurian cranes, and an African marsh bird display was added as a part of the African Veldt. For the city of Cincinnati's bicentennial year in 1988 a new exhibit, sponsored by Kahn's and Star Bank, was constructed. Here, the Zoo hosted successive visits of a koala from the San Diego Zoo, followed by golden monkeys from China, and, in the fall, a male giant panda belonging to the London Zoological Garden. The panda, "Chia-Chia," was en route from London to a breeding program at the Mexico City's Chapultepec Park Zoo. The profits that the Cincinnati Zoo gained through the record-breaking attendance during the panda's six-week visit went to the Mexican zoo in order to finance the construction of additional panda breeding facilities.

In 1989 the hoofed animal yards called the "Deer Line," near the Vine Street entrance, were overhauled by the Exhibit Department under Allan Sutherland and Earl Wildt. The area had displayed hoofed animals since the Zoo first opened. The renewed exhibit was easily landscaped and renamed "Wildlife Canyon." It features rare hoofed animal species, including wart hogs, babirusa, anoa, and Sumatran rhinoceros. Along with these major projects a multitude of smaller improvements and construction was completed by keepers, gardeners, maintenance, and exhibit staff.



From the Zoo's original construction in 1875 through the 1960s there were only three major periods of renovation: first, at the turn of the century, the building of the Elephant House and the Buffalo Range; second, in the 1930s the Hagenbeck barless exhibits and the Reptile House and new Restaurant; and, third, in the early 1950s the Aquarium, Ape House, and new Carnivora House. In contrast, Director Ed Maruska's entire administration has been a period of continual renovation and improvement. Beyond mere physical change, since the late 1960s every aspect of the Zoo's functions and operations has dramatically improved.

Throughout its recent renovations, much of the Zoo's historic architecture has been carefully preserved. In 1982 the Elephant House, built in 1906, was renewed through funding from the Procter and Gamble Company. In 1987 the Cincinnati Zoo was designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service in recognition of its "...national significance in commemorating the history of the U.S.A." This important designation was based on the unique characteristics of the Zoo's oldest historic buildings: the Reptile House and the Passenger Pigeon Memorial, which were constructed for the Zoo's opening in 1875, as well as the Elephant House, which opened in 1906.



Black rhino and baby. Since the 1960s fifteen black rhino babies have been born at the Cincinnati Zoo, more than any other zoo in the world. Since 1970 black rhino populations have plummeted in the wild because of poaching.

Between the early 1970s and 1993, black rhinoceros populations in Africa dramatically dropped from an estimated 65,000 to only 2,000 because of poaching for the animals' horns. Because of both the drastic plight of the black rhino in the wild and the Cincinnati Zoo's past success in breeding this species, the Zoo has become committed to the captive management of black rhinos and other rhino species.

The Cincinnati Zoo became involved in the Sumatran Rhino Trust, a cooperative program with New York's Bronx Zoo, the San Diego Zoo, the Los Angeles Zoo, and the Indonesian government to rescue the extremely rare Sumatran rhinoceros. Smaller than black rhinos, only 700-900 Sumatran rhinos survive in the dense tropical rain forests of Sumatra. Several of these animals were rescued from a forest which was being lumbered. The Cincinnati Zoo received a female in 1989 and a male two years later. The female rhino, however, died in May 1992. A year later another female rhino was received on loan from the International Wildlife Conservation Park, the new name in 1993 for the New York Zoological Park.



Sumatran Rhinoceros. The Zoo acquired this extremely endangered species of rhino in a cooperative program with the Indonesian government and several other zoos.

Rare and Endangered: The Animal Collection Grows In Diversity

By 1990 the Cincinnati Zoo's animal collection was among the best in the zoo world in diversity and rarity, recalling the outstanding quality of the Zoo in its early decades. Rare species included Pacific walruses, bonobo or pygmy chimpanzees, okapi, shoebill storks, zebra duiker antelopes, douc langur monkeys, Japanese giant salamanders, and Sumatran rhinoceros. Director Ed Maruska accomplished this improvement through trading and selling young born at the Zoo, especially white tigers and lowland gorillas, to other zoos throughout the world. In 1980 the animal collection consisted of 2,000 specimens of 550 vertebrate species, along with almost 10,000 specimens of 123 species of invertebrates, plus 15 colonies of social insects. By 1992 the animal collection grew to over 750 species, including one hundred endangered species.

The Species Survival Program (SSP) of the AAZPA was established in the early 1980s for the inter-zoo management of selected endangered animal species in North American zoos. These species of birds, mammals, and reptiles have a doubtful future in the wild so that captive breeding in zoos may be their only chance of survival. European zoos have established a similar cooperative breeding program. These networks of international cooperative programs have significantly changed the operations and functions of modern zoos. Zoos now closely cooperate in exchanging animals to maintain the long-term genetic and demographic viability of captive populations as wild populations continue to decline.

Okapi. These rare animals are the closest living relatives of giraffes. A female okapi was acquired from Zaire in 1987. It was the first okapi captured from the wild in many years and a valuable new bloodline for okapi populations in zoos.

Rare Species Exhibited since 1987

Sumatran rhinoceros
Okapi
Lord Derby eland
Mhorr's gazelle
Zebra duiker
Pacific walrus
Clouded leopard
Rusty spotted cat
Bonobo chimpanzee
Douc langur
Shoebill stork
Waldrapp ibis
Komodo monitor lizard
Japanese giant salamander

