

NOTES ON THE BIRTH OF A WHITE RHINOCEROS.

Diceros (Ceratotherium) simum simum
at THE SAN ANTONIO ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

By:

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A White Rhinoceros, Diceros (Ceratotherium) simum simum, was born on the morning of August 28, 1972, sometime between 6:50 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. at the San Antonio Zoo. This is believed to be the first White Rhinoceros born in the United States.

The little male was estimated to weigh between 70 to 80 pounds at birth and, although quite wobbly, was able to get around very well and follow his mother, never leaving her side. The adult female was extremely protective from the moment of birth and has remained that way even to the present, although never really becoming aggressive toward the keepers.

FACILITIES:

Upon arrival in San Antonio, the pair was housed in a specially constructed enclosure measuring 102 ft. wide and 94 ft. deep, which contained a pool of approximately 120 sq. ft., into which they could walk. The front of the enclosure is moated, as you will note in the film; and a heated winter shelter is provided. The shelter is split into two rooms of approximately 300 sq. ft., each room having access to both the exhibit enclosure and a holding pen in the event of a birth. There are two other pens available as emergency facilities if they are needed. We have found it necessary to utilize them during the period from the birth of the baby until the present due to additional construction in the main enclosure.

PARENTS:

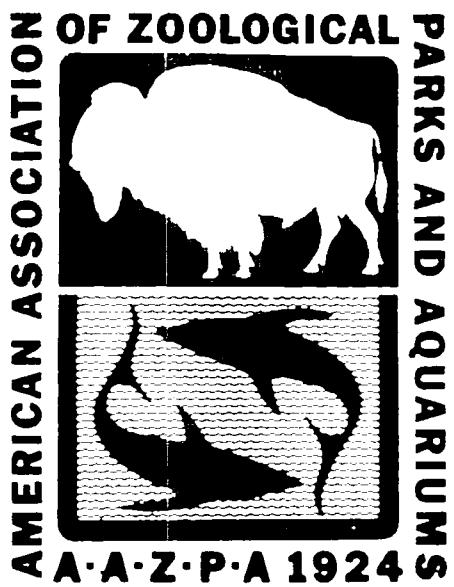
Fred (male) and Gertrude (female) are estimated to have been born about 1965 or 1966, were captured in South Africa, and were shipped to Germany in 1968, where they were kept at the Gelsenkirken Zoo for about three years. They arrived together at the San Antonio Zoo October 5, 1970. A young female about 14 months of age, also captured in South Africa, was shipped direct and arrived at the Zoo on February 13, 1971, and was subsequently put with the adult pair. Mating was observed in the adult pair on February 17, 1971, - four and five months after arrival. Any other matings were not observed. These dates would indicate a gestation of 528 to 558 days and correspond to a

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period given by Morris and Jarvis. (International Zoo Yearbook, Volume I). Their observation was 548 days.

The youngster attempted to nurse from the mother after about an hour, but was unable to do so due to the mother moving away from it. This continued for several hours, and it was determined that we should make an effort to milk the female in order to have the milk analyzed and be prepared in the event that a substitute was necessary. We were able to strip a very small quantity of colostrum from her udder; and as these events took place, we found ourselves experimenting with trying to put the baby in a position for nursing - it worked and, once attached, the baby nursed for a considerable period. From then on it was not necessary for us to help in the feeding.

The film I have to show you was taken by me partly on the day of birth and, then again, in March, 1973, at approximately 6 months of age, to give you an idea of how the baby has progressed.



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