

# Air: Brookfield Zoo Bison, Spring 1985

FRIEDMAN

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Mike Greer

## BROOKFIELD ZOO'S NEWBORN

**T**he past several months have brought several exciting additions to Brookfield Zoo. The births of twin polar bears and golden lion tamarins, Humboldt's penguins, a black rhino, and a gorilla make 1985 already a banner year. These youngsters not only entrance all who see them, but are valued additions to populations of these endangered and threatened species.

All births at the Zoo are exciting, but a baby black rhinoceros is particularly special. On January 18, 1985, Brook, our 14-year-old female black rhino continued a Brookfield Zoo tradition by delivering Shima, the fourth baby rhino in the Zoo's fifty-year history. The baby weighed about 60 pounds. Mary, one of the Zoo's first rhinos, gave birth in 1941 to the first black rhino born in North America.



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Still the most abundant of the five species of rhino (the others being the White, Indian, Sumatran, and Javan), the black rhino is, nevertheless, severely endangered. In just the past ten years the population has declined to only 8000 to 9000 animals. Much of this decline is due to poaching. Animals are killed to obtain the horn, which is mistakenly believed by some cultures to have aphrodisiac or medicinal qualities and is prized by Yemenites as dagger handles.



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Zoos, recognizing the precarious state of the black rhino in the wild, are taking positive steps to ensure a captive population survives. At the center of these efforts is the American Association of Zoological Parks & Aquariums' (AAZPA) Species Survival Plan for the black rhino of which Ann Petric, Assistant Curator of Mammals at Brookfield Zoo, is an elected member. This group is coordinating breeding efforts throughout North America by determining which animals should be bred in order to maximize genetic diversity, by collecting and disseminating data on housing, breeding, and caring for these difficult animals, and by coordinating efforts to increase the size of the captive population. Only 65 black rhinos currently reside in North America. By importing additional animals from other zoos and the wild and, most importantly, by improving our success in breeding and rearing captive animals, the population will improve genetically and be of sufficient size to maintain this genetic diversity. Rearing of the young has been particularly troublesome. Of the last 23 rhinos born only 12 have survived. Reintroducing animals to their natural environment is our ultimate goal.

Brook and Shima have been doing exceptionally well together. Shima is very playful and a joy to watch as she cavorts about their indoor enclosure. As the weather warms, they will be let out in the large outdoor yard. Given her abundant energy, this should be quite a treat. Over the long term, Shima is a valuable addition to the world's captive population. When mature, she will be paired with a carefully selected male here or in another zoo.

*Sanford Friedman  
Chairman of Mammal Department  
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**Black rhinoceros Brook with baby Shima and polar bear Trisha with one of her twin cubs (page 3). Golden lion tamarin with baby (top) and western lowland gorilla Alpha with her newborn, Jabari (left).**



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