



# A Crash of Cute

## Rhino Calves at the Park

By Peggy Scott  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Photos by Ken Bohn  
SDZG PHOTOGRAPHER

Even before its public opening in May 1972, the Safari Park had a special relationship with the rhinoceros. These magnificent creatures are both the Park's iconic symbol and one of its greatest conservation success stories. The saga that began with the arrival of a herd of southern white rhinos in 1971 unfolded into an epic tale with many chapters, and more are yet to be written.

Since those early days, the Park has been home to four types of rhinos: southern white, northern white, greater one-horned, and

East African black. Our vital research and reproductive work has garnered the best of results—175 calves have been born! Each expressive, chubby little face—like those of the three greater one-horned calves born at the Safari Park last year—serves as a beacon of hope for the future.

### A Cause for "Celebration"

Parvesh was born on February 25, 2014. From the beginning, this little guy kept his own schedule—as did his mother, Alta. Keepers knew the 10-year-old rhino was due to

give birth, but she hadn't shown any signs of labor. So the call received early that morning by Peter Jones, a Park lead keeper, was a bit of a surprise. "If Alta had shown any of the signs she had with her first calf, we would have started a 24-hour watch," Peter says. The calf continues to thrive, gaining the expected 100 pounds per month, and can be seen—all 600-plus pounds of him—in the Asian Plains habitat with his mother and the rest of his crash. The calf's name means "lord of celebration" in Hindi, and as Randy Rieches, Henshaw cura-

tor of mammals at the Park, points out, Parvesh's arrival was certainly notable. "With rhino poaching being rampant in every country where rhinos are found, each and every birth that we have in zoos and parks is a major accomplishment and a safety net for the rhinos in their native habitat."

### Late-Blooming Beauty

When petite Petunia was born on August 1, 2014, her small size (128 pounds) concerned her keepers, as did the difficulty her mother, Tanaya, was having producing milk. Mom and daughter were kept in the maternity corral for the first month of Petunia's life, under the watchful eye of their caretakers. Happily, with the help of medication to increase Tanaya's milk production, Petunia blossomed, and the pair joined the other rhinos in the 40-acre Asian Plains exhibit.

Caravan Safari guide Elise Newman reports that spunky little Petunia romps around her habitat, making sure her mother is never too far away. Still dainty by rhino standards, Petunia gets a helping hand—or feet—from Tanaya when enjoying the mud wallow. "She sits on top of Tanaya's feet to keep her head above water," Elise says. A girl's best friend is her mom!

### Thank You For Being A Friend

First-time mother Kaya spent her Thanksgiving Day (November 27, 2014) giving birth. Even though she dutifully nursed and cared for her newborn for two weeks, the calf failed to gain weight properly and was brought to the Safari Park's Animal Care Center to be hand-raised. The male calf, named Chutti (which means "holiday" in Hindi—a nod to his birthday), received extra nutrition in the form of five, three-bottle feedings per day, and he was soon gaining three to four pounds a day!



Opposite page: Little Petunia is her mother Tanaya's "mini-me." Above: Ankole calf Moo Moo Kitty and rhino calf Chutti are partners in mischief. Bottom: Parvesh's name means "lord of celebration," and the little rhino seems to know he's something pretty special.

Since Chutti, who keeper Sandy Craig calls "a sweetie," is being raised in a nursery setting, it is important for him to get daily exercise and have companionship. He has been paired with a one-year-old female Ankole calf, affectionately named Moo Moo Kitty by keepers, who was also born to a first-time mother that couldn't properly care for her calf. Keepers hand-raised and recently weaned the Ankole, and they felt she would make the perfect companion for

the little rhino since both are social animals. "She is curious and has a lot of confidence," Sandy says, adding that Chutti "likes his personal space, and Moo Moo Kitty is learning to respect that."

The playful pair can usually be seen at the Animal Care Center nursery corral. "They are funny together," Sandy says. "And part of their day is about 'how am I going to get into some trouble?'" Sounds like a lot of "kids" we know—two- and four-legged! ■