

BIRTHS & HATCHINGS

This month I have asked Pam Dennis, DVM, PhD, chair of the Animal Health Committee and Epidemiologist at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, to provide an update on the role of the Committee and how its work affects sustainability issues.

RARE RHINO BORN AT THE GREAT PLAINS ZOO

The Great Plains Zoo and Delbridge Museum of Natural History announced the birth of a rare eastern black rhino calf.

The Zoo's 13-year-old eastern black rhino Imara recently gave birth to her second calf, a male weighing 92 pounds. After a 15-month gestation, rhinos give birth to a single calf. A black rhino calf typically weighs between 80-to-100 pounds.

"Black rhinos are on the brink of extinction, so this is a very important birth, not only for the Zoo, but for the survival of the entire eastern black rhino population," said Elizabeth A. Whealy, president and CEO of the Great Plains Zoo. "Our Zoo plays a crucial role in maintaining the captive breeding population."

Eastern black rhinos are critically endangered, with fewer than 4,000 surviving in the wild. During the last century, the black rhino has suffered the most drastic decline in total numbers for all rhino species. In 1970, there were an estimated 65,000 black rhinos in Africa – but by 1993 there were only 2,300 surviving in the wild. That's more than a 95 percent reduction.

Rhinos really don't have any natural predators; humans are the only threat to the rhino. Poachers seek their horns because of the price they fetch on the black market. Rhino horn is worth about three-times its weight in gold. These days, well-organized gangs poach rhinos even from protected reserves, sometimes using tranquilizer guns and helicopters. Many cultures believe the horn has medicinal properties, but it does not.

Rhino horn is composed of keratin, the same substance that makes up human fingernails and hair.

The Great Plains Zoo is a key breeder contributing to the success of eastern black rhinos; it now has three of only 68 eastern black rhinos in captivity in Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos in the U.S. Imara and her mate Jubba were one of 15 pairs recommended to breed in 2009-2010. The Zoo's calf was one of four born this year.

The Rare Rhinos of Africa exhibit building's night-time quarters include a

comfortable birthing space, and an area for the Zoo's animal care staff to observe the birth. A camera system was also installed in the facility, allowing zookeepers to monitor the new family remotely. Family structure dictates male and female rhinos do not live together after a calf is born, so the exhibit includes spacious indoor and outdoor areas for the father as well.

SNOW LEOPARDS BORN AT GRANBY ZOO

The Granby Zoo announced the important births of two female snow leopards on 11 May 2010, following the Species Survival Plan® (SSP) recommendations. Snowflake, a five-year-old female, is the mother and Makulu, a six-year-old male, is the father.

The cubs' debuts in life were carefully monitored with a video camera placed in the den. Snowflake was born at the Assiniboine Park Zoo (Canada) and arrived at Granby in 2006, while Makulu, born and hand-raised at Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure, came to Granby in late 2005. Worldwide, there are approximately 600 snow leopards in captivity, from which around 150 are housed in North American Zoos. Like many large felid species, snow leopards are listed on Appendix 1 of CITES. It is estimated that between 3,500 and 7,000 of these cats roam free in the wild, with the largest populations being in China and Mongolia.

GIRAFFE BIRTH AT THE NASHVILLE ZOO

Margarita, one of Nashville Zoo's Masai giraffes gave birth to a female calf in early November – marking a new milestone for the Zoo's breeding program.

Nashville Zoo's 1.5 acre Giraffe Savannah opened in April 2006 thanks to generous contributions from philanthropist Mrs. Maggi Margaret Turner for whom Margarita is named.

Read Between the lines...

Breeders identify zebras by the motives of the stripes.

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The giraffe habitat was also funded by the Vandewater family and hundreds of supporters who contributed to the Zoo's "Stick Your Neck Out" campaign. Margarita, Savannah and Congo came from zoos in Texas and California to participate in the Masai Giraffe Species Survival Plan® (SSP).

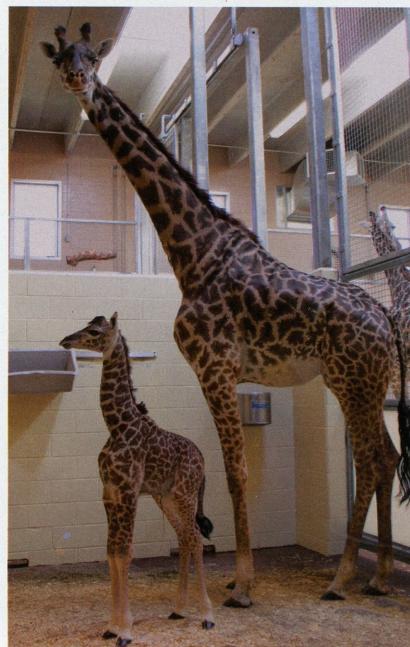
Masai giraffes are one of nine different sub-species and are known for their oak-leaf shaped spot pattern. They are native to the savannas of Kenya and Tanzania.

SIGNIFICANT BIRD HATCHINGS AND MAMMAL BIRTHS AT THE TAUTPHAUZ PARK ZOO

The Tautphaus Park Zoo, in Idaho Falls, Idaho, had three silvery-cheeked hornbill chicks hatch this year. This was a first time hatching for the Zoo. The parents did a fantastic job and all three chicks fledged successfully. Two other notable hatchings were a green-naped pheasant pigeon and a green woodhoopoe; both of which are also a first time hatchings for the Zoo. The Tautphaus Park Zoo also had a snow leopard born. "Last spring, the snow leopard Species Survival Plan® (SSP) recommended a new male be brought in to pair with our five-year old female. They've proven to be a very compatible pair and we're thrilled with the new cub." said Beth Rich, Zoo superintendent. The Zoo is particularly happy with the snow leopard birth since their last birth was in 2005.



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