



# ELEPHANT RELOCATION

## Questions and Answers — April 15, 2015 For External Distribution

### DEPARTURE AND ROAD TRIP

**1. When did Bamboo and Chai leave Woodland Park Zoo? Why wasn't there any advanced notice?**

The truck with Bamboo and Chai left the zoo's grounds Wednesday, April 15, 6:15 p.m. PST for Oklahoma City Zoo. We had hoped to let our zoo family and community know at least a few days in advance, including a final weekend, to see our elephants. Unfortunately, state and federal legal disputes complicated an advance notice. Once we received the clearance, we needed to move the elephants in a timely manner while weather conditions were favorable and the transport consultant was available.

**2. How do you move an elephant?**

A lot of planning and details went into ensuring a safe transport. Bamboo and Chai are being transported in individual, custom-made elephant-sized crates on a large flatbed truck driven by one of the nation's expert animal movers who specializes in moving elephants. A total of three elephant experts, two veterinarians and three staff with the transport consultant are accompanying the truck.

**3. How did you get the elephants in the crate?**

The elephants entered the travel crates on their own. For the past two months, the keepers gave the elephants access to a crate. These sessions were done daily to make it a part of their routine. Keepers offered positive reinforcement with food rewards, especially favorite treats, and verbal praise.

**4. How long is the road trip to Oklahoma City?**

It will take about 35 to 40 hours on the 2,000 mile journey to Oklahoma City. The trip will be straight through except for short pull-overs every few hours to make sure the elephants are doing well and to provide food and change water; the elephants will have continuous access to water during the trip, not just at stops. The truck is equipped with a 65-gallon water tank, which will be refilled as needed along the way. Staff also will be able to observe the elephants via wireless cameras. Our staff also has a contact list of zoo veterinarians and elephant care teams along the route pre-arranged to respond in the event of an emergency.

**5. What was packed for the elephants on their journey?**

- 200 pounds of pellets
- 660 pounds of hay
- Four cases of watermelon
- One case of cantaloupe
- One case of honeydew melon
- Two ball toys
- Five bags of wood shavings for the crates
- Feed tubs

### ARRIVAL AND NEXT STEPS

**6. What happens when Bamboo and Chai arrive at their new home?**

The elephants will be immediately unloaded from the travel crates into the barn when they arrive at Oklahoma City Zoo. They will be in quarantine for 30 days, which is standard procedure for any new animal at the zoo. During the quarantine period, the elephants will have access to two stalls inside the barn and one exhibit outdoor yard, and will have visual, auditory and olfactory contact with the other elephants.

**7. Will Woodland Park Zoo's elephant staff help take care of Bamboo and Chai when they first arrive?**

Our staff will spend as much time as necessary at OKC Zoo to help Bamboo and Chai transition to their new home and settle into their new surroundings. However, it's important for the elephant staff at OKC Zoo to step in and become their new keepers by taking over daily care, providing a variety of enrichment items and favorite toys to help keep the elephants stimulated and comfortable in a new environment, and help Bamboo and Chai become familiar with their new keepers.

**8. How long will it take to fully socialize Bamboo and Chai with the herd?**

The staff at Oklahoma City Zoo is very experienced with introductions and will gradually socialize Bamboo and Chai with the Oklahoma City Zoo elephants. Introductions will begin in the barn where the elephants can see, smell and touch one another through protective barriers. Introductions are done in incremental steps and their staff will take cues from the animals. It is a process that can be immediate or take months.

**9. Will we receive updates on how Bamboo and Chai are doing?**

Yes, we have a lifelong investment in Bamboo and Chai and truly care about their well-being. Our staff and the OKC Zoo staff are colleagues and have well-established professional relationships. We will be in regular consultation with the elephant management and veterinary teams about their progress.

**10. How do you know if Bamboo and Chai will get along with their new herdmates? What happens if they don't?**

We went through a very thoughtful deliberation in evaluating a new home for our elephants, as we do for any of our animals. We carefully assessed the herd and staff at OKC Zoo and are confident in their socialization plan and their passion, expertise and professionalism. They are enthusiastically anticipating the arrival of Chai and Bamboo, and we are optimistic that they will be compatible with this herd and social grouping. Our goal is to move Bamboo and Chai only once to a permanent home. In the unlikely event that our elephants do not integrate well, we will work closely with OKC Zoo to find a solution.

**11. Is there any financial transaction involved for this move? Will Woodland Park Zoo continue to own Bamboo and Chai?**

Other than transportation costs, there is no financial transaction between our zoos in making this relocation happen. For the long term, Woodland Park Zoo will continue to own Bamboo and Chai and be in regular consultation with OKC Zoo when it comes to their welfare, like we do with all of our animals.

## **OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO AND NEW FAMILY**

**12. How many elephants does Oklahoma City Zoo have?**

Oklahoma City Zoo currently has an Asian [elephant family](#) of four females and a male, ranging in ages from 2 months old to 47 years old: female Asha, 20; female Chandra, 18, sister of Asha; female Malee, 4, the daughter of Asha; female Achara, born December 2014, the daughter of Asha and Rex; and sole male Rex, 47, the father of Achara.

**13. What kind of elephant exhibit does Oklahoma City Zoo have?**

Oklahoma City Zoo opened its new Elephant Habitat in March 2011. The state-of-the-art exhibit spans 9.5 acres, with 3.95 acres available for the elephants, and includes three spacious outdoor yards, a waterfall, and a technologically-advanced barn with amenities including views into the barn from a raised boardwalk. The Elephant Barn is 12,636 square feet with about 2,000 square feet of support space (mechanical rooms, keeper work space, second floor office), and features eight separate stalls with different configuration opportunities plus a community stall with sand substrate. Other barn highlights include a radiant floor heating system, raised office with 360° view of interior, ambient lighting through windows and skylights and hydraulic-operated animal gates.

To accommodate Asian elephants' love of swimming, all three yards were designed with pools and giant shade structures. The largest of the yards, 2.6 acres, features a 12-foot deep, 214,000-gallon pool plus a waterfall and stream. A pavilion seats 400+ for elephant fans to observe presentations

demonstrating natural elephant behaviors including daily routines such as baths, foot care and training sessions.

#### **14. Isn't Oklahoma Zoo in a cold climate?**

The average annual temperature of Oklahoma City is 60.2°F, which is 8° higher than Seattle's average annual temperature. The average temperature of the coldest month in Oklahoma City is 37°F compared to Seattle's average coldest month temperature of 40.6°F. In compliance with the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' standards, elephants are kept in the barn when temperatures drop below 40°F but have outdoor access if conditions are safe.

The barn and outdoor habitats are rich with multiple enrichment-based components to help keep the elephants physically and mentally stimulated including: puzzle feeders, scent enrichment, hay nets, zip line for hanging toys, timed feeders, rotation variation among the habitats. The top enrichment activity at OKC Zoo is the calves! Nothing is more enriching in their environment than the social dynamics. The babies never allow the rest of the herd to have a dull moment—they are always moving and playing, giving the opportunity for constant locomotion and mental stimulation.

When it's hot, the outdoor yards offer plenty of shade structures and water features. The elephants create mud wallows and have sand for sunscreen and natural coolant just like in the wild. The state-of-the-art barn is climate controlled and includes fans plus large openings with shutters that can open for air flow; the floors in the barn are heated and some indoor areas have sand substrate.

#### **15. Why are you moving your elephants to another zoo and not a sanctuary? Don't the sanctuaries offer more space and multiple elephants?**

In the wild, elephants live in multi-generational herds; this dynamic is very rewarding for female Asian elephants. Bamboo and Chai will help round out the elephant family at Oklahoma City Zoo—a multi-generational herd of elephants that includes a baby female, a 4-year-old female, two young adult females and a middle-aged male. This is a very natural social grouping for elephants. Unfortunately, the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) cannot provide for their social welfare in this natural way as they only have older animals and the facility does not meet our minimum criteria for the welfare of Bamboo and Chai. PAWS currently has only one female Asian elephant remaining, which is not a natural social grouping for elephants, and is struggling with an active tuberculosis (TB) infection. As a consequence of the TB infection at PAWS, Woodland Park Zoo's elephants would be required to be socially isolated from, not integrated with, other Asian elephants. These circumstances alone—active TB infection in the herd and social isolation instead of herd integration—are not in the best interest of Bamboo's and Chai's welfare.

Other factors that also weigh against the Performing Animal Welfare Society facility are that it does not have a yard or barns available today for Bamboo and Chai. Although this facility has said they would be willing to raise the money and build a new enclosure for our elephants that could take years, and given Bamboo's age, we can't afford to delay moving our elephants when there are other options with existing space and availability. Even if a new yard were available, should the TB issues in the current Performing Animal Welfare Society herd prove resistant to resolution, Chai and Bamboo would have no herd in which to integrate, and should Bamboo die before such an integration, Chai would be alone. These are unacceptable risks in planning for the long-term health and welfare of these animals.

### **DECISION**

#### **16. Why is Woodland Park Zoo phasing out its on-site elephant program?**

We are phasing out our on-site elephant program because we remain committed to putting the welfare of our elephants first. After several months of working to implement the recommendations of the Elephant Task Force, we have found that adding to the herd of our two aging elephants is not realistic in the foreseeable future. It is in the best interest of Bamboo and Chai to live in a larger, multi-generational herd in a healthy environment.

#### **17. Is this decision to phase out Woodland Park Zoo's on-site elephant program prompted by pressure from activists?**

No. We came to this decision because of the status of our current herd. Studies by North American elephant population management experts predicted a population decline. Each year we review the

zoo's animal programs, which include physical and behavioral health and care. During this annual review, we make decisions to continue, phase out or introduce new animals. Since the March 2014 zoo Board of Directors decision to move forward with the Elephant Task Force recommendations to acquire more elephants, zoo staff has worked hard to locate additional Asian elephants. In November 2014, the Board concluded we could not have a larger herd here in a reasonable timeframe and so we made the difficult decision to relocate Chai and Bamboo.

**18. What efforts have been made to provide the public an opportunity to provide input on this decision?**

We have been engaged in a very public dialogue about the future of our elephant program since early 2013 when the Woodland Park Zoo Society Board chartered a citizen's Elephant Task Force to provide input on this. This Task Force made recommendations to the Board in late 2013. Throughout 2014 we have had input from citizens at our Board meetings, via written comments, and through special sessions for public comment held in January and March 2015. In addition we have been in regular communication in writing and in person with numerous elected officials, zoo members and zoo guests.

**19. What is the Elephant Task Force?**

The [Elephant Task Force](#) was a panel of local community representatives and internationally-distinguished scientists and animal care professionals commissioned by the zoo's Board of Directors in 2013 to conduct a critical and thorough external review of the zoo's elephant program. Its recommendations were completed in October 2013.

## MISSION

**20. Will the zoo continue its commitment to elephant welfare and conservation without elephants on site?**

We will continue our commitment to supporting our elephant conservation partners in Borneo and Tanzania. Further, we will continue to play a key role on the 96 Elephants campaign, named for the number of African elephants currently gunned down each day by poachers. We are committed to this crucial conservation campaign and are partnering with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium on securing ivory ban legislation in Washington state.

The U.S. is one of the largest importers of ivory. An estimated 35,000 African elephants were slaughtered by poachers in 2012 alone due largely to the demand of elephant ivory. Elephants are facing extreme pressure in the wild, particularly from conflicts with humans in Asia. The World Wildlife Fund estimates only 25,600-32,750 Asian elephants remain in their 13 range countries in South Asia and Southeastern Asia. Strong and effective programs on grounds and through digital communications that draw attention to this crisis will be even more critical than ever before.

## FUTURE

**21. What will happen to the elephant exhibit now that the elephants have moved?**

In the fall of 2015, we will begin conducting a thorough assessment of the exhibit, its operations and programming. We look forward to engaging zoo guests for ideas on future design and animal species to be on exhibit. Most likely the focus will be on threatened species native to tropical Asia, although no decisions have been made.

**22. Will elephants return to Woodland Park Zoo in the future?**

We will continue to be involved in elephant conservation in Asia and Africa, but we can't predict what the future holds for bringing elephants back here. We encourage everyone to join our efforts in helping to ensure that elephants and their habitats exist into the future.

## INFORMATION

A dedicated email and phone line are set up to collect comments and questions: please refer them to [elephants@zoo.org](mailto:elephants@zoo.org) or 206.545.2070. For more information, visit our webpage at [www.zoo.org/elephantnews](http://www.zoo.org/elephantnews).