

Two bontebok, one savanna ***Bontebok join African Savanna exhibit at Woodland Park Zoo***



SEATTLE-In the winter of 2015, Tyrion and Hodor—two male bontebok—embarked on a journey that would take them from San Diego Safari Park to their new home in the north at Woodland Park Zoo. Upon arriving, the bontebok went through a standard 30-day quarantine. Now, spring is coming, and the two male bontebok have joined “house” (back of house, that is) African Savanna, where they have started the lengthy process of integrating into their new home.

“After our two elderly antelope passed away last year, our African Savanna exhibit started to feel a bit empty,” said Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. “Our animal management team worked to identify animals that were available and would fit in with our current collection. In the fall, we received Tyrion and Hodor, as well as two female Grant’s gazelle from San Diego Safari Park. This is the first time we’ve had bontebok at Woodland Park Zoo. We are very excited to display this attractive antelope species and share its story with our community.” That story is one of a species, nearly hunted to extinction, brought back from the brink by the protection of humans.

Tyrion and Hodor were born at San Diego Safari Park in April 2014. The animal management team in San Diego named them after characters from the book series/television show, “Game of Thrones.” “Their names are based on their difference in size when they were young,” said Ramirez. “Hodor was the larger of the two and Tyrion was much smaller; but now that they’re full-grown adults, they are about the same size.” Their namesake still holds true, however, thanks to the stark contrast in their behavior. “Hodor is more confident and likes to explore the exhibit. Sometimes he’ll knock branches and logs around with his horns or even chase the mallards. Tyrion is more timid when he’s on exhibit; he usually chooses to stay near the corral.”

The bontebok are currently living in an off-view corral where they can spend time together interacting and maintaining a bond while they go through the exhibit introduction process individually. “African Savanna is a mixed-species exhibit consisting of zebra, gazelle, giraffe, ostrich, guinea fowl, Egyptian geese and now bontebok,” said Ramirez. “Some of the combinations of animals are more compatible than others so it is imperative that each animal is introduced to the exhibit slowly, methodically and with care. We are currently conducting the bontebok introductions individually to give each of

them the chance to learn the boundaries and terrain of the exhibit while they are calm and relaxed. Once they're comfortable in their new surroundings, we will begin doing their introductions together."

The introduction process could take a while but the zoo is hopeful it can create a mostly harmonious situation among the African Savanna animals that will result in an engaging and dynamic exhibit for guests. In the meantime, guests are encouraged to visit the African Savanna exhibit to see its familiar residents or possibly catch a glimpse of the Grant's gazelle or bontebok during one of their introduction sessions. To learn more about Tyrion and Hodor, the two female Grant's gazelle, and the process of introducing them to their new exhibit, visit the zoo's [blog](#).

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