

MARVIN L. JONES:

# THE GLADYS PORTER ZOO

Brownsville Texas - U.S.A.

The newest zoo in the Americas is scheduled to open 1 July 1971, in the southern-most large city in Texas, Brownsville. The zoo is located about 2½ miles from the International Bridge separating Mexico and the United States. It is named after its patron, Mrs. Gladys Porter, President of the Sams Foundation, which is named after her father, the late Earl C. Sams, life-long partner of J. C. Penney, in the operation of the J. C. Penney store chain. The zoo and the animals to stock it will cost about \$ 5,000,000, which is being supplied by the Foundation. Initially the zoo will be operated by the Valley Zoological Society. There is to be no commercialization, and all exhibits, except the Herpetarium, will be open-air, the animals exhibited around a large ox-bow lake, which is locally called a 'resaca'. It was formed by an old loop of the Rio Grande River. Due to the advantages of climate and vegetation and the presence of available water, the primary emphasis is on geographic settings and the maintenance of rare and endangered animal species. For convenience, logistics and other reasons, the bears are grouped in adjacent moats. The small mammals are grouped because of their special requirements, but are kept behind moats. Four areas will be represented: Tropical Africa, Tropical Asia, Indo-Australia and South America. Each geographical area has been set apart, as much as is feasible, from the rest of the zoo by substantial sight barriers, which are either heavily planted man-made rock or water moats. Public walkways will be twelve feet wide.

Many animals have already arrived at the zoo as construction is being rapidly completed, and as of early January 1971, the following were on the grounds, or nearby in holding areas: 4 Rock Wallabies, 2 Dama Wallabies, 2 Red Kangaroo, 1.2 Douc Langur, 0.2 Pileated Gibbon, 1.1 Lowland Gorilla, 7 Orang Utans (four legally imported from the zoo in Surabaya, two obtained from the Thousand Oaks animal auction of 1969, and a male born in the zoo in September by Cesarean section), 6 Cheetahs, 1.2 registered Siberian Tigers (a pair from Winnipeg stock, one female from Oklahoma City), 1.3 Grevy Zebras, 1.1 Brazilian Tapir, 1.1 Malayan Tapir, 1.1 Woolly Tapir (formerly at San Antonio Zoo); 1.1 White Rhinoceros, 1.0 Bongo, 1.4 Bushbuck, 1.3 Reticulated Giraffe, 1.0 Black Duiker, 2.3 Yellow-backed Duiker, 1.3 Jentink Duiker, 4 Aldabra and 5 Galapagos Tortoises. Also recently arrived are a pair of Pigmy Hippopotamus.

Staffing of the zoo includes Dr Warren Thomas as Director; Dr Don Farst as Assistant Director (both are veterinarians); Mr Tom Hoover, Curator; and Mr Patrick Burchfield, Associate Curator.

It will be interesting to see the progress made at this zoo, located in a very ideal zoo climate (very similar to that of Miami, Florida) and especially in view of the many rare animals already acquired.

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