

WORLD RHINO DAY AT THE ST. LOUIS ZOO

Written by Stephanie Richmond,

The Saint Louis Zoo was proud to hold its first celebration of World Rhino Day in 2012 and looks forward to making this an annual event. The primary goal of the celebration was raising awareness about rhinos with a secondary goal of



fundraising to support rhino conservation in the wild.

The festivities were kicked off with a brownbag presentation, or lunchtime lecture, given a few days prior to World Rhino Day. The lecture talked about the Saint Louis Zoo's black rhino program, the status of rhinos in the wild, and gave an overview of conservation efforts currently underway. This lecture served to educate Zoo staff members and volunteers about the plight of the rhino and left everyone with a parting message of what they could do to help save these magnificent species. The hope was to inspire Zoo staff members and volunteers and then utilize them to help spread the message of rhino conservation to our visitors.

Leading up to World Rhino Day, posts were made



Kati Rain Painting , Photo Credit: Stephanie Richmond

on the Zoo's website and Facebook page, including photos and video of the Zoo's rhinos. In addition to all the festivities planned for the day, fundraising efforts were coordinated with the St. Louis American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) chapter. The Zoo's rhinos got in the spirit of the day by creating 20 Limited Edition paintings. Video of the rhinos painting with their prehensile lips was posted to the Zoo's website and Facebook page. Sales of these paintings will raise at least \$800 for rhino conservation. The paintings were made available for purchase at the brownbag presentation, at an after-hours volunteer lecture, and on the Zoo's website.

On World Rhino Day, visitors to the rhino habitat were met with a multifaceted celebration including: keeper chats, bio-facts, a rhino scout activity, rhino horn craft, a kid's activity sheet, and button and bookmark give-a-ways. As visitors first



Rhino Horn Craft , Photo Credit: Michael Abbene

approached, they passed a kid's craft table to get everyone excited about rhinos and World Rhino Day. At the craft table, staffed by Zoo teen volunteers, kids made paper rhino horns that they could tie onto their noses. They also were given an activity sheet that they could take home, which included a coloring page, a rhino-related word search, a rhino maze, and basic rhino information.

As visitors continued along the trail to the next activity station they were greeted by rhino scout trainers. Here, both kids and adults were encouraged to don a shuka (a colorful shawl worn by Samburu scouts in East Africa) and binoculars as they learned about what it takes to be a rhino scout in Africa. Presented with facts about our Zoo's rhinos, they were tasked



Scout Activity, Photo Credit: Michael Abbene

with identifying the rhino they spotted and learned how scouts play a critical role in protecting and conserving rhinos in Africa.

Visitors then focused their attention on a rhino skull and horn as they learned that rhino horn is not medicine and why it is important to save these amazing animals. Zoo keepers, educators and volunteers staffed this table which was flanked by educational posters (figure 6). One poster, titled “Rhinos of the World,” provided basic information on each of the five living rhino species, information on what the Saint Louis Zoo is doing to help rhinos and what “you” can do to help save them. In addition to the Zoo’s black rhinos being a part of the AZA Black Rhino Species Survival Plan© (SSP), the Saint Louis Zoo’s WildCare Institute’s Center for Conservation in the



World Rhino Day Pin

Photo Credit: Michael Abbene

Horn of Africa supports rhino conservation through the Northern Rangelands Trust in Kenya. This center for conservation was established to provide both in situ and ex situ conservation support for the wildlife of the Horn of Africa (for more information visit: www.stlzoo.org/)

conservation/wildcare-institute). Also, the St. Louis chapter of AAZK sponsors a Bowling for Rhinos event every year in May. The second poster contained information on each of the three black rhinos living at the zoo as well as photos of their daily care and training. Guests also had the opportunity to walk away with a pin featuring our female rhino and calf as well as an educational bookmark. The bookmark contained fun rhino facts, photos of all five species, and the important take home message of what “you” can do for rhinos.

The Saint Louis Zoo’s 2012 World Rhino Day celebration will conclude on October 1st, when the brown bag presentation will be repeated after hours for another group of Zoo docents and volunteers. Planning has already begun for next year. We can’t wait!



World Rhino Day bookmark

Photo Credit: Stephanie Richmond