



### SUCCESSFUL BREEDINGS AT HOUSTON ZOO

Houston Zoo is proud to announce the birth of a healthy female Asian elephant calf on 17 August. Observing via closed circuit cameras, members of the Zoo's volunteer overnight birth watch team saw the first-time mother Shanti's water break shortly before 2 a.m. on 17 August. The watch team had been in place for months, and alerted the elephant management team and veterinarians immediately.

After the off-exhibit birth, the calf was weighed, measured, and given a quick physical examination. Zoo staff then began the reintroduction process between the new mother and baby. While it is not uncommon for first-time elephant mothers to show aggression toward their infants, Shanti's behavior immediately after delivery was encouraging, as she remained calm and showed no signs of agitation or stress.

The breeding of Shanti was conducted under the auspices of the Elephant Species Survival Plan (SSP). The Houston Zoo is one of only four AZA accredited zoos that have bulls and are breeding elephants naturally. Between 38,000 and 50,000 Asian elephants remain in the wild. The main threat to the world's Asian elephant population is the disappearance of their habitat due to human development and agriculture. Poaching for ivory tusks has also reduced worldwide elephant numbers. The Asian Elephant SSP includes about 120 cows and 20 bulls.

Additionally, bird keepers at the Houston Zoo are now raising the only yellow-green grosbeak chicks on record. A member of the cardinal family, there are



yellow-green grosbeak



Micronesian kingfisher

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only eight yellow-green grosbeaks in zoos worldwide, and the Houston Zoo houses the only known female. In late May, bird keepers were excited to discover a clutch of three eggs in their *Tropical Bird House* rainforest nest.

The first chick hatched on 13 June and the second followed the next day. The third egg was infertile. Due to the rarity of yellow-green grosbeaks and past problems with parent-raising, bird keepers made the decision to pull and hand raise the chicks. The parents then reclusively in the rainforest soon after the first hatching, and a third chick hatched on 7 July. All three chicks are thriving in their *Tropical Bird House* exhibit.

The Zoo's Guam Micronesian kingfisher pair living in the *Tropical Bird House* also laid and began to incubate two eggs in late June in an excavated palm long in their exhibit. The first chick hatched on 16 July and was left for the parents to raise, but did not survive. Kingfisher chicks are extremely competitive and aggressive toward each other, so the second egg was pulled from the nest and hatched in the Zoo's incubation facilities to ensure the chick's survival and increase the numbers of the species in captivity. The chick is currently being hand-raised by bird department staff. The Guam subspecies of the Micronesian king-

fisher is extinct in the wild, victims of a bird-eating tree snake that was accidentally imported to the U. S. territory 3,000 miles west of Hawaii. The 73 remaining birds are all housed in U. S. zoos. The Houston Zoo currently houses two breeding pairs of this rare bird. Over the past 14 years, the Zoo has raised at least 12 kingfishers and contributed to the recovery effort by sending Houston-raised birds back to Guam.

### NEW RHINO GREETSS SAN ANTONIO

The San Antonio Zoo is proud to announce the birth of a healthy male black rhino on 15 August. Parents Herbie and Sababu have produced three calves in five years – a remarkable accomplishment given the lengthy gestation period and difficulty breeding this endangered species. Only three black rhinos were born in the United States within the last year Herbie, the infant's sire, has resided at the San Antonio Zoo for five years, on loan from the Sedgewick County Zoo. New mother Sababu came to San Antonio from the Cincinnati Zoo in 1987. The San Antonio Zoo staff is among a prestigious group of zoo professionals that is successfully breeding black rhinos.

### PHOENIX ZOO HATCHES RHINOCEROS HORNBILL



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The Phoenix Zoo is pleased to announce the recent hatching of a rhinoceros hornbill. Rare in the wild and captivity, the rhinoceros hornbill is native to areas of Sumatra, Java and Borneo, where it lives in thick lowland forest. This hatching is a first for the Zoo, whose breeding pair of hornbills has been together since 1994. Mating has been observed often in the past few years; however, it was not until this spring