

# ZOO NOOZ®

SAN DIEGO ZOO GLOBAL

NOVEMBER 2016

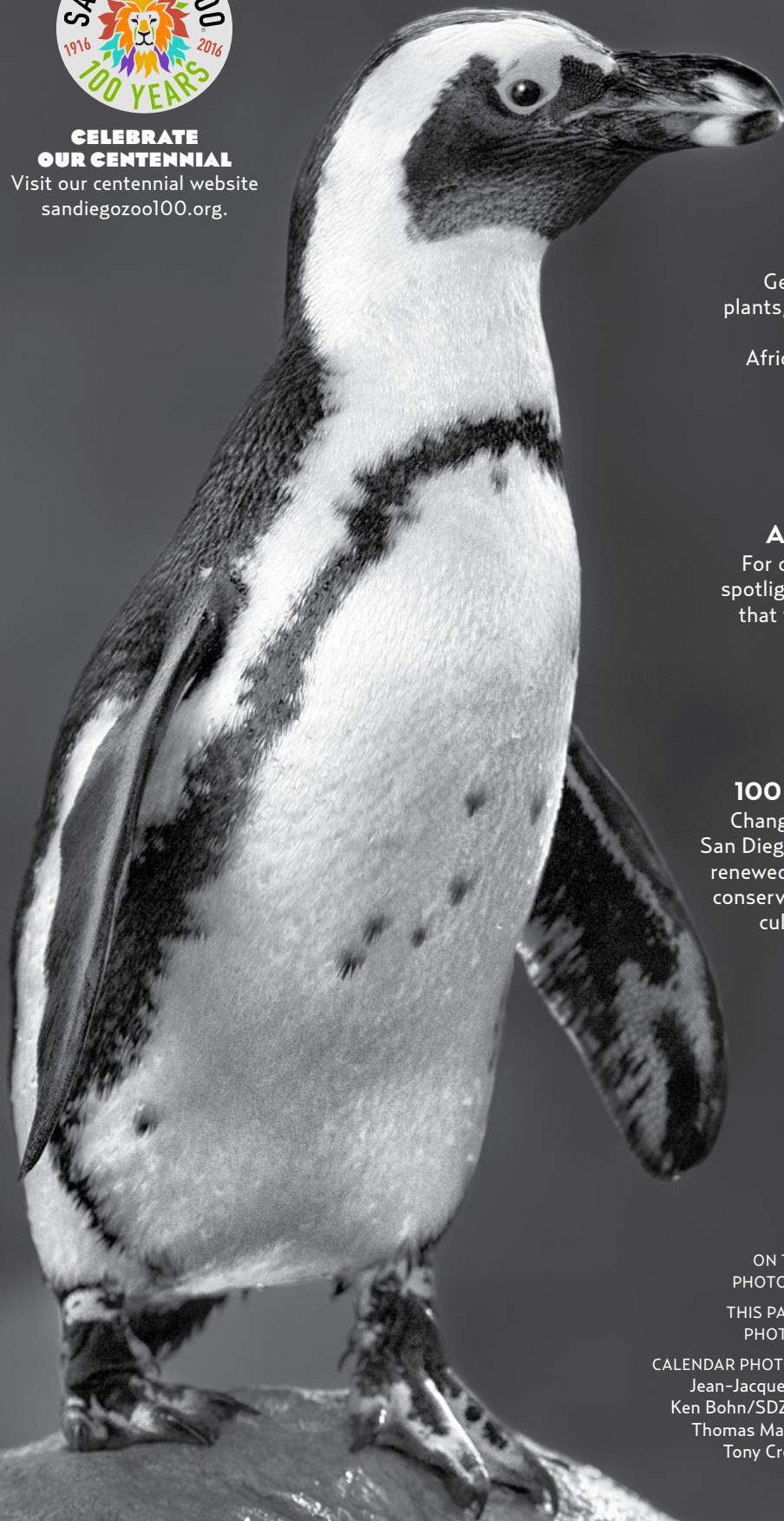


AFRICA ROCKS!  
2017 Calendar Issue  
+ 100 Years of History



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## Cover Story

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### Rock Stars

Get ready to rock with the animals, plants, and habitats of the San Diego Zoo's newest exhibit: Conrad Prebys Africa Rocks, opening in summer 2017.

BY KAREN E. WORLEY

## 2017 Calendar

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### Amazing Animals of Africa

For our 2017 calendar, we're shining the spotlight on some of the fascinating species that will be moving into their new homes in Conrad Prebys Africa Rocks.

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### 100 Years of the San Diego Zoo

Change was the operative word during the San Diego Zoo's ninth and tenth decades, with a renewed and reinvigorated commitment to the conservation of animals, plants, and habitats, culminating in today's vision to lead the fight against extinction.

BY KAREN E. WORLEY

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ON THE COVER: *Gelada Theropithecus gelada*  
PHOTO CREDIT: Jez Bennett/NIS/Minden Pictures

THIS PAGE: African penguin *Spheniscus demersus*  
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# 100 YEARS OF THE SAN



Vision, 1997-2006, and End Extinction, 2007-2016

**T**he Zoological Society of San Diego's ninth decade started with a Wild Animal Park (now Safari Park) milestone: its 25th anniversary. As part of the celebrations, the Park opened Heart of Africa, a series of exhibits that added a new dimension to the grounds. The walking journey through forest and thorn scrub to see animals like eland, warthogs, hornbills, bat-eared foxes, okapi, and secretary birds expanded opportunities to experience African wildlife.

## SUCCESS IN BLACK AND WHITE

The Zoo had dedicated years to re-searching giant panda reproduction and behavior. In 1999, a long-anticipated event happened: the Zoo welcomed a tiny bear that was a big deal. Shi Shi had refused to breed naturally, but researchers had determined how to artificially inseminate Bai Yun with Shi Shi's sperm. In July, the giant panda team thought Bai Yun might be pregnant, but they weren't sure, because it was difficult then to pinpoint pregnancy in pandas.

They had been on "birth watch" 24/7 for a couple of weeks, when on July 29, it became clear that Bai Yun was in labor. The word spread, and giant panda team members hurried to the Giant Panda Research Station to observe via remote camera. It was standing room only; the tension was palpable. Then they saw Bai Yun scoop up a tiny, white, squirming baby—and everyone cheered. The Zoo had its first giant panda cub.

The research staff learned a great deal from observations of Bai Yun before, during, and after the birth. Video was recorded inside the den every day, which the staff used to take behavior



data. Two weeks after the birth, live video from the den was shown on the Zoo's website: the launch of Panda Cam. Following Chinese tradition, the cub was named at 100 days old: Hua Mei, meaning "China USA" to honor the important collaboration between the two countries to save pandas.

Over the years, Bai Yun has been dubbed a "supermom," raising six cubs: Hua Mei was followed by Mei Sheng, Su Lin, Zhen Zhen, Yun Zi, and Xiao Liwu. As a result of collaborative research on reproduction, behavior, and nutrition, a giant panda baby boom also took place in China's breeding centers. There are more than 300 giant pandas in breeding

centers today—a population with enough genetic diversity to keep the panda species viable for the next 100 years.

## A LARGE COMMITMENT

In 2002, a herd of African elephants in Swaziland found themselves constrained by agriculture and human habitation, and they were eating themselves out of house and home—as well as destroying the habitat for other species. The Kingdom of Swaziland decided they had to cull the herd or find somewhere else they could go. The San Diego Zoo and the Lowry Park Zoo joined forces to bring the nine-elephant herd to the United States. The move was highly controversial and contested, resulting in conflict and criticism from opposition groups. However, with elephants disappearing in the wild as the result of rampant poaching, the zoos wanted to see this herd survive.

The elephants' specialized crates were loaded onto a jumbo cargo plane and flown to the US. Seven of the elephants came to the Wild Animal Park, and a happy result was the birth of the herd's first calf, Vus'musi, in February



**The elephants** from Swaziland settled right in. **Above:** Hua Mei, the Zoo's first panda cub, was big news.

# DIEGO ZOO

BY KAREN E. WORLEY  
MANAGING EDITOR

PHOTOS BY SDZC

2004. Since then, 10 more calves have been born. The project received the prestigious Edward H. Bean Award in 2014 from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), for contributions to the breeding and care of elephants.

## LOOKING AHEAD

At the start of the new millennium, the Zoological Society opened two new facilities in Escondido that extended the commitment to animal care and conservation. In 2001, the state-of-the-art Paul Harter Veterinary Medical Center opened, with innovative facilities, equipment, and technology. In 2004, the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research opened, providing laboratories and research facilities, space for the Frozen Zoo®, and classrooms for students of many ages.

Work was growing in scope on the conservation front. One group of endangered species that our researchers had been working with was the Caribbean rock iguanas, helping to pioneer strategies for headstarting juveniles—giving them a chance to grow large enough to fend off predators before release. There was celebration in 2001, when CRES had their first successful hatching of the critically endangered Anegada iguana.

The San Diego Zoo Hawaiian Bird Conservation Program had also been at work for many years to breed, hatch, and raise endangered species. One was Kauai's puaiohi thrush, which was clinging to survival, with no more than 300 left. Dedicated efforts during the 2000s led to 350 puaiohi chicks hatching, making it possible to release the species back to its native habitat. Another species was the alala (Hawaiian crow), which was

considered extinct in the wild in 2002. The San Diego Zoo partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Hawaii Division of Forestry and Wildlife to save the species. During this decade, the alala population reached a new high of 114 birds.

## END EXTINCTION

The Zoological Society's 10th decade has seen the continued expansion of conservation efforts around the world. Long-standing projects like the California Condor Recovery Program continued to be in the forefront. In 2007, a new phase began releasing juvenile condors in Baja California, Mexico, a part of their historic range. From only 22 condors left in the early 1980s, there are now more than 400, and more than half of those are flying in the wild, reproducing and raising chicks.

## RAIN FOREST OUTREACH

The Zoological Society had been conducting conservation research in other countries for many years, but no formal facilities had yet been established outside the US. In 2005, the first field research station was established in Cameroon's Ebo Forest in Central Africa. Work there focuses on studies of the biodiversity—which includes a recently identified subspecies of gorilla—as well as finding ways to protect the wildlife from illegal poaching. The team includes local people, and researchers work with the communities to produce income while preserving the forest's species.

In 2011, the Zoological Society expanded its commitment to rain forest conservation by taking on the manage-



The release of condors in Baja began a new phase of the California Condor Recovery Program.

ment of the Cocha Cashu Biological Station, a conservation and research station located in the Manu National Park in Peru. Recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, this park is protected as a biosphere preserve. At Cocha Cashu, our staff and visiting researchers and students study rain forest animal and plant species, as well as the ecology of this pristine ecosystem.

## EXHIBIT INNOVATIONS

New animal habitats during this decade included the Zoo's Harry and Grace Steele Elephant Odyssey in 2009, which highlights extinct animals once found in Southern California, alongside their living counterparts now found in other parts of the world. The Zoo's elephant herd, made up of aging individuals, moved into this new home, and the Conrad Prebys Elephant Care Center provides expert care for each elephant.

The Conrad Prebys Australian Outback opened in 2012, with the Zoo's colony of 24 koalas. At one time, koalas were managed largely in indoor areas with controlled temperatures and humidity. However, after learning about these marsupials over the years, it was determined that it was better for the animals' welfare to remain outdoors 24/7. Australian Outback achieved that, as well as providing an interesting environment for guests and a variety of Australian animals, including Tasmanian devils.

The Park saw big changes during this time, as well. In 2007, a new tram



**San Diego Zoo** has the largest koala colony outside of Australia. **Below:** The Park's Rhino Rescue Center hopes to help save rhinos from extinction.

tour replaced the fondly remembered but outdated—and frequently broken-down—monorail, providing new views and more reliable access as visitors traveled out to see the animals in the field exhibits. In 2014, the Park's tigers moved into a spectacular new home: the Tull Family Tiger Trail, a representation of the Sumatran tiger's native habitat, with lush vegetation, tall trees, running streams, and deep pools. The cats' new territory gave them many behavioral opportunities, wowed visitors, and garnered the Park the Best New Exhibit Award from AZA.

### A NEW DIRECTION

Given the considerable, and still-growing, commitment to conservation, the organization felt it was time to assess the mission and future direction. After extensive study and deliberation, in 2010 the organization undertook the largest rebranding project in its history. The Zoological Society of San Diego became San Diego Zoo Global. CRES became the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research. And the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park became the San Diego Zoo Safari Park. The following year, the San Diego Zoo Global Wildlife Conservancy was established, allowing people anywhere in the world to join us and help save species. Then in 2013, in keeping with these bold and sweeping changes, San Diego Zoo Global established its current vision: "We will

lead the fight against extinction," which has created a unifying purpose for all parts of the organization.

### RALLYING FOR RHINOS

It has become starkly clear that a number of species are

facing an extinction crisis—including the rhinoceros, which has long been an important and celebrated part of San Diego Zoo Global. One rhino in particular came to symbolize the urgency in saving these species: Nola, the northern white rhino at the Safari Park, one of only four left of her kind. Her death in 2015 sparked a wave of awareness about the plight of rhinos that spread around the globe, and also galvanized San Diego Zoo Global's resolve to try to save northern white rhinos through innovative reproductive technologies.

While saying goodbye to Nola was heartbreaking, her legacy lives on in San Diego Zoo Global's Frozen Zoo®. Samples with her DNA were added to samples from 11 other northern white rhinos already in the Frozen Zoo®. The ICR teams—along with collaborators at Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla and at the Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Medicine in Berlin—are working to develop assisted reproductive technology



for rhinos. Thanks to a generous donation from Nikita Kahn, at the end of 2015 San Diego Zoo Global opened the Nikita Kahn Rhino Rescue Center at the Safari Park, and brought six southern white rhinos to be part of the initiative. The rhino's reproductive system is complex, and there is much to learn, but it is possible that some of these rhinos could eventually serve as surrogates to carry northern white rhino calves. It's a project that will be developing well into the first decade of San Diego Zoo Global's next 100 years.

### ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

The San Diego Zoo has come a long way from that group of cages along Park Boulevard in 1916. San Diego Zoo Global now comprises three leading facilities: the San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research. In the late 1920s, Belle Benchley worked with 30 employees; now there are nearly 3,000. While Dr. Harry felt fortunate to care for a few animals without a home in the 1930s, San Diego Zoo Global now has more than 140 field projects in 80 countries to protect and save species. Dr. Harry dedicated the San Diego Zoo to the children of San Diego—and we now dedicate San Diego Zoo Global to the children of the world. What began with one man and one lion has become the combined voices and dedication of millions on behalf of species everywhere.

As San Diego Zoo Global concludes its centennial celebration, the stage is set for the next 100 years. We are dedicated to saving species from extinction, igniting a passion for wildlife, and providing a sanctuary and refuge for animals and for people. The challenges facing wildlife today are unprecedented. But with the help and support of volunteers, members, partners, and the worldwide community, San Diego Zoo Global stands ready to "roar forward" and create a future where people and wildlife can live and thrive together. ■