

## **Expedition Tanzania Frequently Asked Questions**

We have put together a few responses to frequently asked questions to help with the conversation about the construction of Expedition Tanzania and the pending moves for the Zoo's resident elephants. These are very complicated situations, with many different issues involved. If you would like additional background, we encourage you to call and talk about these matters with Zoo staff - we are always happy to discuss our animal management practices, and share our elephant expertise with those who might have questions.

### ***A bit of background***

As a zoo accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), we meet or exceed very high standards set for animal welfare. In early 2005, AZA indicated an urgent need for all zoos managing elephants to make a future commitment to the captive breeding program by adding space, resources, and animals to existing zoo habitats.

The number of elephants in accredited zoos was, and still is, extremely limited. We made a commitment to meet the new standards and to help increase the population for the long term survival of elephants in zoos.

In 2005 we decided to build a new elephant habitat for up to 6 adult elephants and to work with other accredited zoos to provide for the future of elephants in Tucson and throughout the United States. At the time, AZA's recommendations and plans included breeding Shaba - either by bringing in a bull or through artificial insemination.

We moved forward, with the community's support, to build a state-of-the-art 7-acre Zoo expansion called *Expedition Tanzania*. Six years later, construction is nearly complete. We continue to be passionate about our commitment to the care and conservation of elephants because we believe it is important to have elephants for our community in the future.

### ***Will Shaba be a breeding animal, as planned in 2005?***

No. Shaba became too old to become a first time mother (research demonstrated older first time mothers her age had unsuccessful pregnancies and Zoo staff chose not to take that risk). However, our commitment to the Species Survival Program for elephants remains the same.

### ***When will your new exhibit be complete?***

Construction on *Expedition Tanzania* will be complete in January, and we hope to open in March, 2012.

### ***Are we receiving new elephants in Tucson?***

Yes. With the completion of *Expedition Tanzania*, we will acquire additional African Elephants. In cooperation with AZA and the African Elephant Species Survival Plan, we are working with our colleagues at San Diego Zoo Safari Park to plan for the future of elephants in Tucson. Owing to the successful elephant breeding program in San Diego, their herd is large enough to be split – allowing for additional potential breeding and conservation efforts in the future – right here in Tucson.

### ***Why are we bringing more elephants here?***

The need to increase the herd size in Tucson to at least 3 elephants, preferably more, remains a priority. AZA standards require a minimum of 3 elephants because they are social animals and we

recognize the importance of keeping them in larger groups when it's possible. We agree that larger herds provide additional opportunities for elephants.

***How many animals will you be receiving?***

The current plan is for Tucson to receive 2 female African elephants and their offspring and 1 male African elephant. The exact animals will be determined when *Expedition Tanzania* is closer to completion.

***Are Connie and Shaba staying here?***

No. A collaborative agreement between the San Diego Zoo and Reid Park Zoo has been made to move both Connie, the Asian elephant, and Shaba, the African, to San Diego Zoo's state-of-the-art Elephant Odyssey habitat. This \$40 million exhibit was built to cater to the needs of older Asian elephants with accommodations and staffing to address age-related issues. We feel these special accommodations and ability to integrate with a larger herd is a wonderful opportunity for both animals, particularly for Connie as she is elderly.

***If it's an Asian elephant facility, how can Shaba go there too?***

Elephant Odyssey currently houses a single African elephant, named Tembo. San Diego Zoo, like the Reid Park Zoo, is moving toward the AZA goal of housing Asian and African elephant species separately. We anticipate that Connie will gravitate toward the Asian elephants, and we expect Shaba and Tembo will get along well. This provides both Connie and Shaba with a spacious exhibit, a larger herd, and the opportunity to meet animals of their own species. It also provides possibilities for Shaba and Tembo to move together to an all African herd in the future, if they are ready.

***Won't the move be stressful on Connie and Shaba?***

We have worked with San Diego Zoo and Safari Park over the past several years to adjust the way we train and interact with elephants to closely mirror the training and husbandry techniques utilized in San Diego. We use the same words, the same routine, and the same positive rewards so that when the moves happen, they will be as stress free as possible and provide for a smoother transition for all elephants involved.

We will also be sending two of Connie and Shaba's long-time keepers with them when they move to San Diego until they get settled in. Similarly, keepers from the Safari Park will help with the arrival of the new herd in Tucson. The elephants will have familiar voices and loving support from the human members of their "herd" as they make the move. Our Keepers have already spent time in San Diego getting to know the staff and the exhibit.

***Didn't you say in 2005 that you wanted both Connie and Shaba to stay in Tucson?***

Yes. When pressed by animal rights activists to send both Connie and Shaba to a "sanctuary," one of the many concerns we had was the fact that Africans and Asians are always separated in sanctuaries. Although we were assured that this was standard operating procedure and that they would be "fine," we did not feel this was the best option for either elephant at the time.

Although several years ago we did intend to keep long term residents Connie and Shaba, new information and new opportunities for both animals have become available. In 2005, we still planned to breed Shaba and Elephant Odyssey in San Diego had not been built yet so it was not a possibility. Our goal is always to provide the best possible care for the animals and make the most responsible decisions for their future based on current circumstances and available information. Connie and Shaba will be moving to an exhibit which provides an amazing opportunity for both of them –we could not have predicted this several years ago.

***Why can't the two elephants stay in Tucson?***

AZA standards continue to evolve, and now include increased attention to providing Asian and African elephants with separate habitats as new herds are formed. Two important reasons for this change in policy are newly understood behavioral differences and potential disease transmission between the two species. Standards state that new herds should be single species, not mixed. Particularly because Reid Park Zoo will be a breeding facility, we can not bring African elephants here while Connie is here. Because San Diego Zoo is not a breeding facility, we can take the additional time to move Connie and Shaba together while providing for same species options for both Shaba and Tembo.

***Why not just keep Connie and Shaba?***

We cannot keep just two elephants. Not only do AZA standards state that a minimum of 3 elephants are required, but remember that Connie is an elderly elephant. If we keep just Connie and Shaba in Tucson, what would happen to Shaba when Connie dies? Because animal moves can take years to plan, that would mean Shaba could be alone for an extended period of time. That would not be acceptable.

Keeping just Connie and Shaba would also not provide for a future of elephants in Tucson, or meet our commitment to AZA's Species Survival Plan. Many visitors comment that they "grew up" with Connie and Shaba. We want to make sure the next generation of Tucsonans has the privilege of growing up with elephants as well.

***Why not just keep Connie and Shaba in their old exhibit AND get the new herd for the new exhibit?***

Connie and Shaba deserve better. We have always said that they need more space, and more elephants to interact with. Sending them to fellow zoo experts in San Diego meets all of our goals for them, as well as for Reid Park Zoo.

***Why not send Connie and Shaba to a "sanctuary" together?***

At a sanctuary, Connie and Shaba would not stay together. They separate Asian and African elephants. Even if they were willing to build a separate area just for Connie and Shaba, there are many other reasons a sanctuary is not an option including:

- Lack of accreditation to match AZA standards
- Unsure financial security
- Lack of transparency
- No breeding or conservation efforts

***Won't your staff be sad to see Connie and Shaba go?***

Yes! These were very difficult decisions for the Zoo team to make. Our emotions often became part of the conversation. Although moving the elephants was a very difficult decision to make, we believe that the facility in San Diego provides the best environment for Connie and a wonderful opportunity for both Connie and Shaba to have more space, a bigger herd, and the opportunity to interact with animals of their own species. We are excited for them both to have this new opportunity to join herds and meet new elephants. We plan to visit often, and we look forward to providing our community with updates about their new adventure.

***Don't you make a lot of money from elephants?***

No. Elephants are expensive animals to provide whole-life care for. Elephants require many Zoo resources, from excellent nutrition to top notch veterinary expertise. Dedicated keeper time is higher for elephants than any other animal under our care. But it is worth it. Tucson is a wonderful

environment for elephants and this community's commitment to providing for the future conservation of the species is commendable. We do not buy or sell elephants. No money is exchanged for moving elephants from here to San Diego or vice versa. Rather, we work together to consider the collective group of elephants and work collaboratively to benefit the entire population.

***Why and how are the elephants trained?***

Training is used to facilitate routine elephant management and care, and to promote exercise. Training enriches elephants' lives by providing physical and mental stimulation that promotes individual well-being.

We have used "protected contact" to manage elephants since 1994. There is always a barrier between the keepers and the elephants which allows the elephant to walk away whenever it wants to. We use only positive rewards, and there is no tolerance for abusive interaction. We do not even use the word "no" with the elephants!

***Why is it important to have elephants in zoos?***

Zoo conservation and research programs, which support elephants in the wild and in zoos, increase our knowledge about elephants and strengthen their numbers. The 140 million people who visit AZA accredited zoo facilities annually personally connect with, and learn, about elephants and other animals. This personal experience is what prompts zoo visitors to continue to care about conservation.

A 2005 poll by Harris Interactive shows that 95% of the public believes that seeing elephants and rhinos in real life helps people appreciate them more and encourages people to learn more about them. We agree!

***What makes Reid Park Zoo staff elephant experts?***

Reid Park Zoo has been professionally caring for elephants since 1966. We have staff members with decades of experience who have been professionally trained to work with elephants. We partner with leading elephant experts from around the country and are supported by a pool of staff members from accredited institutions who also work tirelessly to provide whole-life care for elephants. Staff members attend and lead training workshops and participate in conferences to stay up to date with the latest in elephant care.

The elephant program continues to evolve. We contribute to the future for elephants, and lead the way with positive progressive animal management plans. We care for elephants every hour, every day. It is our work, our responsibility, and our privilege. Nobody cares more about elephants and their welfare than we do.

***What happens next?***

Once the new herd is settled in Tucson, Reid Park Zoo will continue working with partnering institutions to decide the best course for elephant breeding and management throughout the region. Reid Park Zoo will remain committed to the future of progressive elephant care. Over time we anticipate making additional adjustments and working in new directions with our colleagues. Our goals will remain the same, but the science of elephant care is constantly evolving – and we want to help lead the way. Our promise is to always provide the best possible care for the elephants in our collection and to work with our colleagues to make sure the elephant population continues to thrive in the United States.

***Why do AZA standards and accreditation matter?***

We are committed to the best care for both Connie and Shaba, as well as progressive elephant care, management, and conservation in partnership with other zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). We know we can trust our accredited partners because they meet the same rigorous standards we do.

AZA elephant standards were developed over years, in cooperation with animal welfare advocates, field researchers, and zoo elephant experts. AZA continually reviews and updates its standards to incorporate best management practices supported by new research. They are the nation's highest standards for elephant care, and we believe in holding ourselves to those standards, and exceeding them when possible.

Many animal species the Zoo maintains are managed through AZA partnerships. Losing accreditation would affect much of our collection, and would threaten our credibility with our accredited colleagues. Maintaining accreditation is essential to the future of Reid Park Zoo as a leading, quality zoological facility.

***What will the new exhibit be like?***

The new exhibit will be 7-acres with more than 3-acres dedicated to elephant space. It will have a variety of surfaces for the elephants to experience including sand and dirt, a mud wallow, grass, and a shallow stream for wading –even a pool deep enough for swimming!

The state-of-the-art Elephant Care Facility provides “family suites” for our growing herd with sand substrate, heated concrete, and air conditioning. Both the exhibit and the Elephant Care Facility are being built with the safety of the animals and the keepers in mind.

Expedition Tanzania will provide Zoo guests with an exciting opportunity to see these animals in a beautiful environment. Additionally, educational exhibits and displays will provide hands-on learning opportunities to engage guests of all ages.

***I still have questions. Who can I call?***

We understand that there are many issues and questions regarding elephants and Expedition Tanzania. We encourage you to call Zoo Administration at 791-3204 for any additional information.