

MARYLAND ZOO

NEWS

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THE MARYLAND ZOO OPENS NEW AFRICAN JOURNEY HABITATS

- Lions, giraffes and elephants are back! -

BALTIMORE, MD – The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is proud to announce the official opening of the newly renovated lion, giraffe and elephant habitats in the African Journey section of the Zoo. Maryland Zoo officials, along with Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford, Alonza Williams, Legislative Director to Maryland House Speaker Adrienne A. Jones, and Baltimore Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young, celebrated the completion of the \$20 million renovation this morning with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

As the largest renovation in the Zoo’s 143-year history, the project improved and increased the size of habitats for the Zoo’s African elephants (*Loxodonta Africana*), reticulated giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*) and African lions (*Panthera leo*). Additionally, the changes bring many new views and experiences for zoo guests.

“The richer, more diverse environments will benefit our animals and provide unforgettable experiences for guests of all ages,” said Don Hutchinson, president and CEO of The Maryland Zoo. “Funding provided by the State, private individuals and foundations made this amazing renovation possible. So now with their support, and the support of Zoo members and guests, we will continue our work inspiring and educating people, having them join with us to support the conservation of wildlife and wild places. We want to continue to positively impact the conservation of wildlife for future generations. This is game-changing for your Maryland Zoo and the animals we care for every day.”

Portions of the new area opened in phases earlier in the spring. Lions made their debut in their new habitat in March and the giraffe have been slowly acclimating to their improved habitat since mid-May. This ribbon-cutting and Grand Opening Celebration mark the first time the three habitats and new public pathways will be open to the public.

“These habitats, which provide new space that benefits not only the animals, but also Zoo staff and guests, is the largest renovation project that The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore has done in its history right here in Druid Hill Park,” said Lieutenant Governor Boyd Rutherford. “Beautiful to see, practical to use, these new outdoor habitats for the elephants, lions, and giraffe that reside here have been almost five years in the making. The Hogan Administration is proud to have been a vital part of the next phase of the work of saving animals from extinction.”

The outdoor elephant habitat nearly tripled in size by transforming the former camel ride area and Rock Island penguin exhibit into what is now an open, savanna-like habitat. New features in the Coyle-Hardie Elephant Enrichment Zone increase the elephants’ ability to engage in natural behaviors such as dusting, bathing and mud wallowing, as well as guests ability to view and learn about these amazing animals.

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The giraffe habitat portion of the project improved animal health and safety by leveling the slope of the outdoor yards from the Giraffe House to the Giraffe Feeding Station. Zoo visitors can watch as the giraffe move around the habitat at the BB&T Giraffe Viewing Wall. A very unique feature of the renovation, the T. Rowe Price Giraffe Crossing, provides a passageway for the giraffe to cross over the T. Rowe Price Savanna Trail from their dedicated habitat to the Upper Savanna section of the elephant habitat.

“This will not only give the giraffe additional room to roam, but to eventually share the Upper Savanna with elephants as they would in the wild,” said Hutchinson.

The Middendorf Foundation Elephant Demonstration area, expansive pathways and boardwalks, including the BGE Savanna Overlook, provide guests with numerous immersive experiences. One newly created guest walkway, the African Overlook, forms a cul-de-sac in between the lion and the giraffe habitats, adjacent to the Giraffe Feeding Station. This pathway offers a dramatic impact on the visitor by providing guests with a more intimate viewing experience with an eye-level passage to lions on the left and giraffes on the right.

The lion habitat features a more open feel, a large window, and a training demonstration area where visitors can watch keepers interact with the lions during positive reinforcement training sessions. The lion demonstration window was made possible by the Committee for Kamenetz and Jill Kamenetz in honor of her children, Karson and Dylan.

The Zoo worked with architectural and landscape design firm CLR Design and general contractor The Gilbane Building Company to complete the massive 16-month project. Previously, the Zoo partnered with CLR Design for the award-winning *Penguin Coast*, which opened in 2014.

The areas are now open to the public, and will be the focus for the Grand Opening Celebration on Saturday, June 22 and Sunday, June 23. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day, the Zoo will offer special keeper chats, training demonstrations, education stations, face painting and more.

For updates on the opening celebrations, please visit www.marylandzoo.org and our www.facebook.com/marylandzoo.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo’s varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as the award-winning Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the Children’s Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

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