



AFRICAN ELEPHANT CROSSING

CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

African Elephant Crossing

Meet the Animals

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's three female elephants are ready to welcome newcomers Willy and Shenga into the herd at their new home, African Elephant Crossing. So who's who in the exhibit, and what other native African animals are joining them?



Jo

Date of Birth: 1967

Birthplace: Mozambique

Weight: 8,065 pounds

The matriarch of the herd, Jo is a very confident elephant who doesn't get rattled easily. As the oldest of the Zoo's elephants, and the largest of the females, she's also the best at learning new behaviors from her keepers. She came to Cleveland with Moshi in 1997 from the Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon.

Martika

Date of Birth: 1985

Birthplace: Zimbabwe

Weight: 8,045 pounds

Martika is the most playful of the herd, spending time interacting with both Moshi and Jo throughout the day. She enjoys splashing water around and making bubbly noises with her trunk when her keepers give her a bath. She's known to tuck hay and other treats between her trunk and tusks to save them for later. Martika came to Cleveland in 1997 from the Erie Zoo in Pennsylvania.





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Moshi

Date of Birth: 1976

Birthplace: Cape Provenca, Africa

Weight: 7,745 pounds

The most independent member of the herd, Moshi is the most cooperative elephant in daily training sessions. Her keepers also say Moshi is the best painter of the trio. When given a paintbrush, some colors and a canvas, Moshi takes the most time making each stroke and has the most varied approach to art. Moshi came to Cleveland with Jo in 1997 from Wildlife Safari in Winston, Oregon.

Willy

Date of Birth: 1979

Birthplace: Zimbabwe

Weight: 13,000 pounds

Not much is known about Willy before he came to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. The folks at Disney say he is a laid-back giant who gets along well with other elephants, especially females. He has one tusk, and will certainly be the largest animal ever on exhibit at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. At 11-feet tall at the shoulder and 13,000 pounds, it's easy to see why. He will be the first adult male elephant in Cleveland since 1962.



Shenga

Date of Birth: 1982

Birthplace: Zimbabwe

Weight: Approximately 7,900 pounds

Shenga comes to Cleveland from Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo in Nebraska. Her Omaha keepers describe her as smart and social, a big reason they wanted her to find a new home with a herd after her sole exhibit mate passed away last year.



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Meerkat

Suricata suricatta

Range: Deserts in southern Africa

The meerkat is a social mongoose that lives in family groups called mobs. Meerkats are built to survive in a warm and dusty environment. They have dark patches around their eyes to help block out some of the sun's glare. A membrane near their eyes helps protect their sight when they dig. Family members share sentry duty to protect the group from predators while the others forage for food, including scorpions and snakes. They are excellent diggers and construct elaborate burrows to sleep in at night.

Naked mole rat

Heterocephalus glaber

Range: Deserts of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia in Africa

Naked mole rats are eusocial, or hive, animals - a rare trait for mammals. They live underground in colonies of around 75-80 individuals. A queen runs the colony and is the only female allowed to mate and produce offspring. Workers take care of the queen and her offspring, forage for food and dig the tunnels. Soldiers protect the colony, threatening any invaders with a display of teeth snapping and loud noises. Naked mole rats have very poor eyesight and rely heavily on their other senses. Their ears help them hear low-frequency sound waves that travel through soil. They have strong teeth that make it easy to dig through dirt and chew hard objects.



African rock python

Python sebae

Range: Grasslands and savanna near water south of the Sahara Desert in Africa

The African rock python is one of the world's largest non-venomous snakes. Adults can reach up to 20 feet in length, and are capable of taking down and eating prey much larger than themselves. Females lay up to 100 eggs at a time.



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Animals of the Aviary

Birds: Kenya crested guineafowl, green woodhoopoe, Lady Ross's turaco, black-cheeked lovebirds, Taveta golden weaver (pictured), violet-backed starling, white-headed buffalo-weaver

The aviary in African Elephant Crossing will be filled with colorful native African bird species and a miniature species of antelope known as Kirk's dik-dik. To complement the cooperative social nature of the meerkats and naked mole rats, several of the bird species, including the two different kinds of weavers, are also known for living in large groups. Keep an eye out in the aviary for the elaborate basket-shaped

nests the weavers build out of grasses and reeds.

Mammal: Kirk's dik-dik

Madoqua kirkii

Range: Eastern and southwestern Africa

Kirk's dik-dik is one of the smallest species of antelope. They grow up to 26 inches in length and weigh only 10 to 12 pounds. Dik-diks live in pairs and mate for life. They have short horns, about 2 inches in length, and in the wild they eat roots and tubers.

