



African Elephant Crossing – a \$25 million commitment to the care and conservation of elephants

With the opening of African Elephant Crossing, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is making a statement. One that says the Zoo is committed to the care and conservation of African elephants by providing them with a spacious and stimulating environment, utilizing best practices in elephant management and inspiring Zoo visitors with state-of-the-art naturalistic exhibitry and a compelling educational message.

The new exhibit is five acres in size and quadruples the former indoor and outdoor space for elephants. The exhibit was designed to hold a socially complete herd of elephants, including a mix of males, females and youngsters. The Zoo's three female elephants, Moshi, Martika and Jo, will be joined by Willy, a 13,000-pound bull elephant, and Shenga before the exhibit's public opening on May 5.

The elephants will share the exhibit with several other African species, almost all of which are new to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, including meerkats, naked mole rats, an African rock python, Kirk's dik-dik (a miniature antelope) and 10 different species of native African birds.

Built over and around the shell of the old 1950s-era Pachyderm Building and elephant yard, African Elephant Crossing is a multifaceted exhibit providing rich and diverse experiences for elephants and visitors. The \$25 million exhibit the largest capital improvement project at the Zoo since The RainForest opened in 1992.

The exhibit has several components, starting with the Crossing Gate, the feature that gives the exhibit its name, the Mopani Range, Savanna Range, African village, Sydell L. Miller Elephant Care & Visitor Center and Night Range.

Most visitors will see the Savanna Range first. A large trellis allows sweeping view of the Savanna Range, which includes the deep water swim channel, kopje rock feeding station with special nose-to-trunk viewing windows, and the shallower swim area with waterfall. If the elephants are on the Savanna Range, visitors may choose to follow the path toward the Savanna Theater where there are several other vantage points onto the Range.

The focal point of the exhibit is the Crossing Gate. The crossing represents the central educational theme of the exhibit as well – the delicate balance for survival between elephants and the people of Africa. The crossing consists of a series of gates that control the flow of traffic, both visitor and elephant. Visitors will use the crossing to enter and exit the exhibit. Elephants will use the same crossing to periodically migrate from the Savanna Range to the Mopani Range. The crossing will give visitors a true feeling for the size of the elephants, as they pass by within 15 feet of them. Visitors may even have a chance to help move the gates in preparation for an elephant crossing.

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Once through the crossing, visitors enter an African village modeled after the villages of Botswana. In the village, visitors will find the meerkat exhibit, the aviary, food and gift shops and large decks looking out over the Savanna and Mopani ranges. At the center of the village is the kgotla (goat-la), a traditional African meeting place, around which many of the cultural interpretation activities will take place.

At the rear of the kgotla is the Sydell L. Miller Elephant Care & Visitor Center, where visitors will see some of the indoor facilities dedicated to elephant care, interactive educational displays, and the habitats for the naked mole rats and the rock python. Meet the keeper programs at the working wall allow visitors to see the daily care elephants receive.

Behind the visitor center, off public exhibit, is the Night Range. This area provides the elephants the option of going outside at night anytime they want.

On the other side of the visitor center and crossing gate is the Mopani Range. This area is more wooded and has an inclined path perfect for exercise and foraging. The Mopani Range also features a sand pit and a mud wallow for the elephants to roll around in.

The innovations incorporated throughout African Elephant Crossing go beyond those designed specifically for elephant care, keeper safety and visitor enjoyment. In 2006, the George Gund Foundation contributed \$1 million to “green” the exhibit. The result is that African Elephant Crossing is on track to be the first LEED certified large animal exhibit in the country. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design is the nationally accepted standard for design, construction and operation of a green building, administered by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Funded half by Cleveland Metroparks and half by Cleveland Zoological Society’s capital campaign, African Elephant Crossing is the result of joint planning, hard work and the generosity of the community.

“Most people will never have an opportunity to see elephants in the wild,” said Zoo Director Steve Taylor. “Few zoo animals have the capacity to connect with humans the way elephants do. African Elephant Crossing gives our elephants the best possible environment and care so that they can continue to amaze and inspire the people of Northeast Ohio as living ambassadors for their wild counterparts in Africa.”

(Fifth Third Bank is the proud sponsor of the inaugural season of African Elephant Crossing with support from Cleveland Clinic Children’s Hospital.)

