

# A DAY AWAY.....

# AT THE DALLAS ZOO!



Sentry Meerkat standing guard.

by Francine West

The Dallas Zoo began in 1888 with two deer and two mountain lions. Since that time the zoo has grown to include 2,067 animals. It is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums along with being a member of the "Survival of the Species plan."

As you enter the zoo the first new exhibit you see is the interactive map. Children of all ages from young to old are encouraged to travel over and through the areas of different habitats while listening to sounds (played by pushing buttons) of the animals of the habitats.

Lacerte Family Children's Zoo is a favorite among the young and old. The Children's Zoo includes a learning center, a petting zoo, pony rides, goats, fish,



a butterfly garden, pot belly pigs and many more animals that kids can pet, feed, ride and simply enjoy. The Underzone

located inside the Children's Zoo is designed to teach kids about the different animals. In the dwarf mongoose habitat, tunnels were designed so kids could crawl through and end up inside the actual habitat inside bubbles to watch the animals up close.

Traveling further into the zoo you encounter the Tiger habitat. This habitat opened in May 1999. It is a one acre exhibit resembling a rainforest that has been recently logged or clearcut. There are Sumatran tigers and Indochinese tigers. Three tigers currently reside at the Dallas Zoo.

Upon entering the habitat you encounter a large glass viewing area where you may come face to face with a 300-pound tiger. The tiger habitat has logs for the tigers to climb and play on, rocks which are heated for them to sit or lay upon, many different sights, sounds and smells for the tigers to maintain the feeling of the wild.

The award-winning Jake L. Hamon Gorilla Conservation Research Center is a two-acre reserve. The gorillas appear to be in a

wild environment. The gorilla center contains waterways for splashing and drinking, and heated rocks to provide warmth on cold winter days. Fog nozzles help simulate the humid, misty atmosphere of a rainforest.

"A unique feature of the gorilla center is the Field Research Station, which provides optimum research space for the study of this endangered species. A thatched-roofed building created to resemble an actual research station in the wild, it houses modern electronic equipment, including video screens and parabolic sound reflectors, and allows researchers to document data on gorilla behavior in thorough, non-intrusive ways not possible in the wild.

The Field Research Station is open to the public during Zoo hours. Gorilla guides are at the station daily to provide educational information and help visitors learn more about gorillas."

The Zoo currently has four lowland gorillas: adult males Hercules and Patrick, and adult females Jenny and Timbo.

The Monorail Safari takes visitors on a one-mile, approximately 22 minute tour of six different habitats, from the deserts of Africa to the rainforests. It is the only Monorail in the United States engineered to climb and turn. The monorail is only open seasonally from March 1 to June 19 and the Friday before Labor Day to December 1.

Birds, birds and more birds. The Dallas Zoo is home to many different sizes and kinds of birds, from the largest great

blue heron to the very small African pygmy falcons. They are home to the saddle-billed storks, which derives its name from the saddle-shaped patch of yellow in the middle of its predominantly red and black bill. The Dallas Zoo was the first Zoo to breed these tall, colorful birds



AFRICAN PYGMY FALCON

in captivity, and are currently the first in the country to successfully breed the kori bustard, which is the heaviest flying bird in the world.

There are many more animals and exhibits to see and enjoy at the Dallas Zoo. Go for a few hours or spend the entire day.

According to the Dallas Zoo brochures, New attractions are coming October 7,

African black-footed penguins – Direct from an extended engagement at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas, these land-lubbers from South Africa will make a big splash in their new home in the Wilds of Africa.

Perentie monitors – commonly called the Komodo dragons of Australia, these big lizards are native to the desert, scrub, and grasslands of Australia. The Dallas Zoo is the only zoo in North America to have Perentie monitors and the only zoo outside Australia to successfully breed them in captivity. Their

new habitat is a glass-walled enclosure in front of the kangaroo and wallaby exhibit undergoing renovation at the corner of Primate Place and the North Hill.

Travis & Zach's Birds

Landing – One of the only interactive bird exhibits to feature more than 20 different species of birds, Travis & Zach's Birds Landing is home to 60 birds that have been chosen for their friendly interest in humans. Visitors can buy seed, insects, and food pellets to feed these feathered friends from South American and other tropical locations.



BLUE HERON



Sumatran Tiger getting a refreshing drink of clear cool water.



Hercules is one of four lowland gorillas at the Dallas Zoo.

Photos by Jo Gilbreath and Francine West



Klipspringer



Victoria crowned pigeon



Saddle-billed storks