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**NEWS
RELEASE**

12/06/2024

Endangered Animals Depart El Paso Zoo & Botanical Gardens to Support Critical Conservation Efforts

EL PASO, Texas—The El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens bids a heartfelt farewell to two beloved residents, Obi the reticulated giraffe and Olan the Malayan tiger, as they embark on new journeys to support global conservation efforts.

These animal transfers, part of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), are aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of endangered species through strategic breeding programs.

A Mission of Preservation

The SSP, a cornerstone of AZA-accredited institutions, focuses on managing animal populations to maintain genetic diversity and bolster the survival of critically endangered species.

“It’s always bittersweet to say goodbye to animals we’ve cared for and nurtured, but we’re proud of the vital role they’ll play in the future of their species,” said El Paso Zoo Director Joe Montisano. “Obi and Olan will always be part of our Zoo family, and their contributions to conservation are a testament to the work we do here.”

Obi: A Future for Giraffe Conservation

- Age: 1.5 years
- Departure Date: December 12, 2024
- Destination: Dallas Zoo

Born in April 2023, Obi was the first giraffe calf born at the El Paso Zoo as part of the SSP breeding program. Now transitioning to the Dallas Zoo, Obi will join a herd of five females in hopes of bolstering the endangered reticulated giraffe population.

This natural transition mirrors behavior in the wild, where young giraffes leave their family groups, known as towers, to form their own. Moving Obi before he is fully grown reduces stress and allows space for the Zoo’s next giraffe calf, expected in early January.

Obi’s parents, Gigi and Juma, have been cherished residents of the Zoo for four and 14 years, respectively.

The El Paso Zoo invites the public to bid farewell to Obi before his departure on December 12.

Visitors can reflect on the impact of these efforts and celebrate Obi’s role in securing the future of his species.

Olan: A Critical Move for Malayan Tigers

- Age: 11 years
- Relocation: November 2024
- Destination: Palm Beach Zoo at Dreher Park, Florida

Olan, born at the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, arrived at the El Paso Zoo in 2019 with hopes of breeding with Seri, a 17-year-old Malayan tiger. While the pairing didn’t result in offspring, the SSP recommended his move to ensure Olan’s valuable genetic contribution to the critically endangered Malayan tiger population.

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The number of Malayan tigers in the wild has plummeted from 500 in 2005 to fewer than 100, due to habitat loss, agricultural expansion, and poaching.

“Conservation is at the heart of everything we do,” said Montisano. “Through programs like the SSP, we take active steps to safeguard species from extinction and contribute to their survival.”

To learn more about the El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens, visit www.ElPasoZoo.org.

About the El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens

The El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens stretch across 35-acres and house animals representing over 20 species, including critically endangered species. Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the El Paso Zoo celebrates the value of animals and natural resources. It creates opportunities for people to rediscover their connection to nature.

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