



The Sad State of Captive Elephants in Canada



by Winnie Kiiru
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Winnie Kiiru has been working to protect the wildlife of Kenya for more than 15 years and currently serves as a consultant to numerous local and international wildlife organizations.

Most recently, Ms. Kiiru served as Project Manager for the Amboseli Human-Elephant Conflict Project where she worked with engineers and technicians to develop and test humane deterrents to prevent human-elephant conflict situations.

From 2000 until 2004, Ms. Kiiru served as the East Africa Representative for the Born Free Foundation (BFF), an international wildlife protection charity based in the United Kingdom. As the BFF representative, Kiiru represented the foundation in regional and international conservation forums and in the delivery of their African field projects.

During that time Ms. Kiiru also served as Regional Representative of the Species Survival Network, a coalition of 67 non-governmental wildlife protection organizations from around the world.

From 1992 until 1997, Winnie Kiiru was employed by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). For several years, she served as a Research Scientist for the KWS Elephant Management Program where she designed and supervised nationwide surveys of Kenya's elephant populations. She was also responsible for monitoring human-elephant conflict throughout the country and for the development of mitigation strategies.

During her last two years at the KWS, she was a Community Specialist responsible for a broad range of human-elephant conflict mitigation work across the country.

Ms. Kiiru received her Bachelor of Education (Science) from the Kenyatta University in 1990 and a Masters degree in Tropical Resource Ecology from the University of Zimbabwe in 1995. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Biodiversity Management through the University of Kent.

Winnie Kiiru lives in Nairobi, Kenya with her husband and two sons.



INTRODUCTION

It is now widely acknowledged that elephants are sentient beings, self aware, highly intelligent and with complex social networks. Elephants share these attributes with humans, apes and dolphins. Long-term studies conducted by the Amboseli Elephant Research Project have led to greater understanding of the complex nature of elephant social, cognitive, emotional and communicative abilities.

An elephant family is comprised of a matriarch, her female offspring and their young. The matriarch leads the family group through a range of daily, seasonal and lifetime events including periods of food abundance, droughts, matings, births and deaths. The core family units may vary in size ranging from 6 to 20 individuals. During periods of abundance these individual units come together as members of related clans or bond groups, forming large aggregates of over 100 and sometimes even up to 1000 elephants. Males are known to leave the nuclear family grouping at the age of 14 to 15, but studies have now shown that males spend over 70 percent of their time in association with other males or with family groups. Elephants in the wild can live to between 60 and 70 years.



In recent years, the question of elephants in captivity has become an important area of focus. Studies have shown that elephants in captivity suffer a wide range of problems due to the inability of zoos to meet their ecological, social, behavioral and physiological needs. Elephants are adapted to survive across a wide range of habitats and climatic zones ranging from deserts, mountains, wetlands and the vast savannahs of Africa with their large seasonal variations in temperature, rainfall and thus availability of food. To be able to survive in these complex environments, elephants have evolved a complex repertoire of adaptations in their social organization, behavior and physiology. Elephants in zoos are denied the opportunity to utilize these unique and innate attributes. The result is frustration and boredom often manifested in the form of stereotypic behavior and aggression.

Elephants in zoos also suffer a range of health problems resulting from their captivity. These include foot infections, arthritis and obesity, among others. Elephant range in both Africa and Asia falls within tropical and sub-tropical climatic zones. While elephants in these zones may experience short periods of low temperatures, these are not comparable to the winters in the temperate zones. During winter, elephants in western zoos spend prolonged periods indoors standing on concrete floors. This exposure to hard, cold and often moist floors can result in severe foot problems. Elephants are adapted to walk long distances (up to 40 kilometers in a single day). In the wild the pads on the bottom of their feet wear down as they walk. In zoos, the foot pad and the toes require constant trimming and treatment as they do not have the opportunity to wear naturally as they would in the wild. In many cases, despite provision of foot care by zoo staff, captive elephants have developed infections which cannot heal properly. Improper healing occurs because the captive elephants cannot walk long distances; consequently, they have poor circulation. . This condition is very serious and the leading cause of death in elephants living in North American zoos.

Obesity in elephants is attributed to long periods of inactivity and the use of food to entertain elephants as part of 'enrichment' programming. Obesity and chronic stress precipitate circulatory problems, another prevalent cause of death in zoo elephants. Infant mortality resulting from birth related complications, rejection of the young calves by the mothers and the forced separation of young calves from their mothers have impacted the breeding programmes in zoos.

Adult male elephants provide a major challenge for zoos, particularly when they are in musth. Elephants in musth are often aggressive and energetic. They need to be provided with ample space and stimulation during these periods or they become destructive and potentially dangerous. Zoos are on record for chaining bulls for long periods and transferring them regularly between facilities to get rid of 'problem' animals.

ELEPHANTS IN CANADA

Records indicate that there are about 35 elephants in zoos across Canada. These elephants are found in private and municipal zoos across the country. The provincial governments are responsible for setting the laws that govern these facilities while the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) sets national industry guidelines. Unfortunately, these guidelines are voluntary and many accredited zoos in Canada reportedly fall short of the guidelines outlined by CAZA. Canadian zoos are encouraged to seek accreditation from CAZA and/or the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). Accreditation is also voluntary and not a legal requirement.

The CAZA accreditation process guide contains a full chapter on guidelines for elephant management and care. The guide recognizes that ‘The intelligence, strength and social needs of these magnificent animals can pose many challenges for managers of elephants in human care. Facilities that manage elephants should therefore understand the substantial human, financial, and ethical commitments involved in appropriately maintaining elephants’.

The guidelines cover the areas of personnel, training, tools, husbandry, facilities, behavior, reproduction, veterinary care, nutrition, conservation, education and research. Among the tools that are recommended for use in care and management of elephants include the guide, ankus or elephant hooks as traditional tools used for directing elephant behavior. Chaining is listed as an acceptable method of temporary restraint. Facilities are advised to limit the time elephants spend tethered, unless tethering is necessary for veterinary treatment or transport. The Elephant Restraint Device (ERD) is highly recommended, particularly in facilities managing bulls or elephants in protected contact. Recommended safety tools include pepper spray, fire extinguishers, electric prods, tranquilizer guns and an elephant gun, which is a gun of sufficient caliber to dispatch an elephant.

The guidelines do not define minimum space requirements for indoor or outdoor enclosures. They recommend that adequate space be provided to allow elephants to exercise and interact socially with others. Holding space for males must be designed to best care for the male elephant in musth. Indoor space should also have adequate space for elephants to move about and lie down without restriction.

As noted earlier, zoos are not required to maintain these requirements by law. Incidents reported in Canadian zoos, both recent and in the past, indicate that many zoos have not adhered to these guidelines. Cases of cruelty to elephants, where handlers use bull hooks and electric prods, resulting in injury to elephants and triggering public concern have been recorded in Canada. A report about an elephant that severed her trunk caught in a door latch in August of 2006 received national attention. The climatic conditions elephants have to endure in Canada and the resultant health problems are a cause for concern. The legislative arrangement where zoos are governed by provincial governments, some of which lack the will or the capacity to monitor the welfare of elephants in zoos, is an added problem.

This report was compiled after a visit to Canadian zoos to assess the conditions of elephants. All visits were unannounced to allow the author to view the elephants as any member of the public

would. The visits were preceded by a study of the studbook record to ascertain the number of elephants held in each facility. Media reports were also studied to familiarize the author with the happenings in various zoos. Where possible, zoo staff were interviewed or their presentations to the public used as sources of information. Information bulletins in the facilities were also studied. The author looked at the general body condition of the elephants, the activity during the period of observation, the size and condition of the enclosure and the information available to the public.

TORONTO ZOO - ONTARIO

The Toronto Zoo is partially funded by the City of Toronto and operated by a management board which includes a city councilor. There is also the Toronto Zoo Foundation with a board of directors which oversees the fund raising activities. The Toronto Zoo is accredited by both AZA and CAZA.

Information available from the studbook indicates that the Toronto Zoo has kept 10 African elephants over the years of which three are noted as dead.

- Tara - female, wild caught from Mozambique, estimated year of birth (EYB) 1969
- Tessa - female, wild caught in Mozambique EYB 1969
- Iringa - female, wild caught in Mozambique, EYB 1969
- Tequila - female, wild caught in Mozambique EYB 1970
- Toka - female, wild caught in Mozambique, EYB 1970
- Thika - female, born at Toronto Zoo to mother Tequila and father Tantor in 1980
- Patsy - female, wild-caught in Mozambique EYB 1967

The following elephants are marked as having died in the studbook:

- Tantor - male, wild caught in Mozambique, EYB 1969, **died 1989**
- Toronto - female born at Toronto Zoo to mother Toka and father Tantor in 1984, **died in 1994**
- TW - female, born at the Toronto Zoo to Mother Tessa and father Tantor, **died two days after birth**

I visited this zoo on the 7th day of September, 2006. There were a total of seven African elephants on display in an enclosure split into two by a walkway. The elephants wandered around, some singly and others in pairs. They dusted themselves and fed on hay piles situated throughout the enclosure. The elephants showed no visible injuries or difficulties walking around. Stereotypic behavior was not observed.



The elephant enclosure has no trees or shrubs, just man made structures, rocks, termite mounds, fake tree stumps and huge umbrella-like structures. This was in stark contrast to the lush vegetation all around the zoo. There was a pool in one of the enclosures.

One of the information bulletins contained information on the various ways the keepers have devised to keep the elephants interested. This included treats hidden in the termite mound like structures, shade umbrellas with nozzles that sprayed a cooling mist on the elephants and food in barrels tied high up in the ground for elephants to find. A discussion with one of the keepers indicated that keeping the elephants busy was a big challenge. Foot infections were a problem, especially with the older females. Protected contact is used with all the elephants.

This zoo has an African elephant called Thika. The author was born and brought up in Thika, a beautiful little town in Kenya, just north of Nairobi. According to the stud book record, Thika was the only surviving calf of the three born in the Toronto Zoo. She was also the youngest female here, being only 26. If she was in the wild in Kenya, she would probably have two calves by now. She would not have to look at lush vegetation from across the fence but would have access to the beautiful forests of the Aberdare mountain range just north of Thika town.

At approximately 7 acres, the Toronto Zoo elephant enclosure was larger than some of the other zoos I visited in Canada. That said it is still extremely small in comparison to 2700 acres afforded to the elephants living at The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee which is a mere fraction of the size of the area an elephant in the wild would utilize in their lifetime. It appears that the staff at the Toronto Zoo are attempting various ways of enriching the elephant's lives, but the fact that artificial enrichment is necessary is a symptom that the environment is deficient to start with. Lack of enrichment is a consistent problem with the majority of North American zoos that keep elephants, as are the foot problems experienced by captive elephants.

CALGARY ZOO - ALBERTA

The Calgary Zoo in Alberta, run by the Calgary Zoological Society, is a registered non-profit, charitable organization controlled by a board of directors. It is an accredited member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (USA) and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

According to the Asian Elephant studbook, the Calgary Zoo has 4 Asian elephants:

- Ganesha a.k.a Spike - male, captive bred in the USA, estimated year of birth (EYB) 1981
- Kamala - female, captured in Sri Lanka, EYB 1975
- Swarna - female, captured in Sri Lanka, EYB 1975
- Maharani a.k.a Rani - female, born at Calgary Zoo to mother Kamala and father Bandara in 1990

The following elephants are marked as having died in the records:

- Bandara – male, captured in Sri Lanka, EYB 1975, **died in 1991**
- Gyrette – female, captured in Thailand, EYB 1959, **died February 9, 1967**
- Gyro – males, captured in Asia, EYB 1959, **died June 26, 1967**
- Unnamed baby – born at the Calgary zoo, **died in less than one month after birth**

Maharani gave birth in 2004 at age 14, but rejected the baby, who died less than one month later. The death of the baby was the fourth death at the Zoo. In 1967, two elephants died at Calgary Zoo. Gyrette a female elephant wild caught in Thailand and Gyro, a male elephant, wild caught from Asia. They were both 8 years old at the time of their death. Bandara, another male elephant, who was wild caught in Sri Lanka, died in 1991 at the age of 16 years.

I visited Calgary Zoo on the 4th of September, 2006. The elephants were found in a small yard surrounded by heavy duty metal bars and an electric fence. One side of the enclosure was under construction.



I observed three female Asian elephants feeding on hay that was placed in small piles on the ground. The only three trees in the yard had mesh wire wrapped around the trunks. The ground was mainly loose dirt with no vegetation cover. There were huge rock like structures around the yard and no visible shade structures. There was no visible mud wallow or pool of water. It was a hot day and the keepers hosed the elephants with water. Two men were observed in the enclosure collecting elephant dung. They both had bull hooks hanging from their belts. An adult bull Asian elephant with a metal cap on one of his tusks was released from the barn to join the females soon after the clean up.

Next to the elephant exhibit, a display of elephant dung, a piece of tusk and what looked like a child's adventure with paint provided the props for an enthusiastic young man as he talked and responded to questions about elephants. According to him, Spike, the bull elephant, broke his tusk while throwing a rubber tire against the roof of the barn during a time when he was in musth. The tires were provided in the barn to keep him active. He now 'proudly' wears the largest dental cap in the world. All contact with Spike is protected and an 'elephant hugger' or Elephant Restraint Device is used to restrain him during cleaning and other procedures. He reported that it is a serious challenge to keep Spike busy and Spike sometimes exhibited stereotypic behavior when bored. The youngest female was Maharani and she had indeed lost a calf two years ago. Maharani had mated with Spike just three weeks earlier and a pregnancy was anticipated. The zoo staff person showed a painting, which he indicated was painted by Kamala, who had developed the art of painting using her trunk.

During the talk, the elephants continued to wander around the enclosure, dusting themselves occasionally with the loose dirt, rubbing against the rocks and feeding on hay arranged in small piles in the enclosure. They seemed to be in good body condition with no visible injuries or displays of stereotypic behavior. The male, Spike, however, seemed rather large for his 25 years. The presenter confirmed that the elephants remain indoors at all times when the zoo is closed to the public and in the winter when temperatures fall below -5 degrees C. He also informed the author that chains are used to restrain the elephants during procedures such as foot care and veterinary treatment.

In an effort to protect zoo staff, many zoos are moving away from free contact management in favour of protected contact where keepers do not enter the enclosure with elephants. At the Calgary Zoo, free contact is still exercised with the females while Spike is managed by protected contact.

According to an article in the Globe and Mail newspaper dated March 26, 2004, a 38 year old elephant keeper at the Calgary Zoo suffered chest, spinal and shoulder injuries when a female elephant pinned her against the wall.

The information bulletin outside the enclosure showed the layout of a refurbished elephant exhibit. The new look exhibit, 'the elephant crossing', was expected to expand the space available to the elephants, both indoors and outdoors, to allow zookeepers to enhance animal enrichment, and to offer exciting experiences for visitors. The zoo staff person indicated that the new enclosure will be approximately twice as big as the existing area. The project, which is reportedly expected to cost ten million Canadian dollars, is part of a zoo improvement plan dubbed 'Project Discovery 2010'.

Even with the addition of space, the area allotted to the elephants at the Calgary Zoo will still be thousands of times smaller than the area used by elephants in the wild and therefore will not allow the elephants ample opportunity to exercise all of their natural behaviors. In addition, given that Calgary's climate is very cold in the winter and the elephants are locked in while the zoo is not open, these elephants will continue to spend more than half of their lives inside the barn.

PARC SAFARI ZOO - QUEBEC

This Quebec facility is located near Montreal. It is a privately owned facility and is CAZA accredited. The elephant enclosure is located in the drive-through section of the park. According to the elephant studbook, this facility has housed 7 African elephants over the years, only three are still alive.

According to the Asian Elephant studbook, Parc Safari currently has 3 Asian elephants:

- Churchill - male wild caught (no country of origin listed), estimated year of birth (EYB) 1974
- Carole - female, wild caught in Zimbabwe, EYB 1983
- Junot (a.k.a Michael) - male wild caught in Zimbabwe, EYB 1983

The following elephants are marked as having died in the records:

- Semo - male wild caught (no country listed) EYB 1969, **died 1984**, had a baby Tess - who was transferred to another zoo at 19 months old
- Mary - female, wild caught (no country listed) EYB, 1969, **died 1985**
- Root - female, wild caught (no country listed), EYB 1969, **died 1990**
- Majestica - male, wild caught (no country listed), EYB 1970, moved or died, no details given but he is no longer at PS

I visited on a chilly (approximately 14° C), damp morning on the 13th of September, 2006. Two adult African elephants were on display in the elephant enclosure. The male was probably 23 year old Michael from Zimbabwe. The female's identity was more difficult to guess as she certainly looked older than 23, which is Carole's age according to the studbook. When I arrived at the enclosure the elephants were standing just outside the gate that led to the barn as if begging to be let in, probably to seek relief from the cold, damp weather. Except for worn, packed dirt paths, the outdoor enclosure was mostly grass covered but had no trees. There were rocks all around the enclosure and at the one end was a pool of water.

The fencing around the elephant enclosure consists of hot wires strung horizontally around the perimeter with deer fencing outside of the wires. If an elephant were sufficiently motivated to leave the enclosure, this fencing would not hold the elephants inside.



After about 15 minutes of observing the elephants standing outside the barn, the male then started to walk towards the pool of water along what appeared to be a well used path. The female just stood at the same spot, swaying her head and shifting her weight from one foot to the other. After a while she turned very slowly and started to follow. She made slow steps and appeared to

be stiff and sore. It appeared that she may be suffering from arthritis related pain and possible foot infections. She also kept stopping to rub her right breast. Meanwhile the male stopped to scoop some soil from a hole near the pool of water. Eventually, the female got to where the male was scooping soil and she joined in. After a few minutes, the male suddenly started to walk towards the barn and the female followed slowly behind. While standing near the barn entrance, the female flinched periodically as though experiencing weakness in her legs.

Records show that the elephants and a number of other animals in this zoo have been in quarantine since 1993 due to bovine tuberculosis. This is not really surprising, given the very cold temperatures that the animals here have to endure. It is quite surprising to learn from Zoocheck that, even with the TB problem, the zoo still has rented elephants on site for elephant rides. There was no keeper in sight and the elephants stood for a long period of time near the barn door. It started to drizzle and there was no visible sheltered area for the elephants to escape the rain or wind chill.

While the Parc Safari elephant enclosure was somewhat larger than others I have visited in Canada, it is still a small fraction of the size of the enclosure at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee and thousands of times smaller than the area used by elephants in the wild. Three elephants cannot be described as anything close to a natural social grouping. Furthermore, the climate in Quebec, particularly in the winter, is inappropriate for elephants and the female is showing signs of physical distress likely caused by an arthritic condition and possible foot problems.

GRANBY ZOO - QUEBEC

This is a privately owned zoo and is accredited by both AZA and CAZA.

According to the studbook, this facility has housed 4 African elephants over the years but currently only two are still living.

- Toutonne - female, wild caught (no country listed), estimated year of birth (EYB) 1979
- Sarah - female, wild caught (no country listed) EYB 1984

The following elephants are marked as having died in the records:

- Gretchen -, female, captured in South Africa, EYB 1965, **died 1998**
- Eltypo - female, wild caught (no country listed) EYB 1970, **died 1986**

I reviewed this facility on video since it was not open while I was in Quebec. The video was recorded on the 23rd day of September, 2006, a chilly (approx. 10° C) and rainy day.

The elephants were in small yard which had a few trees in the middle and was surrounded by an electric wire and a small fence. The area containing the trees had another hot wire around it keeping the elephants from getting to the trees. There were patches of grass and dirt in the enclosure and what seemed like a ‘play’ area with a tire and wooden frame. For most of the one hour recording, Sarah walked in circles around the enclosure. She walked very fast and made the same circle over and over. She stopped for a few moments to look at visitors on the other side of the fence but she generally spent the bulk of her time walking around the enclosure. At one point, she picked up a small ball and carried it along on her trunk. Toutonne on the other hand moved very little. She stood at the furthest corner of the enclosure, totally oblivious of Sarah’s activity or that of the visitors.

She moved slowly and appeared to be overweight and very sore, probably due to an arthritic condition which, as mentioned above, is common in zoo elephants, especially those forced to live in cold climates.

According to the studbook records, Toutonne is only 27 but she certainly looked older than that. The keeper carried a bull hook which suggests that the zoo likely does not practice protected contact.



In 1987, the *Montreal Gazette* reported that Toutonne suffered bruises, lost patches of skin and had three welts resulting from an incident where an “untrained keeper tried to show her who was boss” and misused a training prod in the process. The SPCA was contacted but no charges were laid.

The Granby Zoo elephant enclosure is very small, certainly not adequate for the elephants to express all of their natural behaviors and the social grouping is not appropriate for the species. Of most concern is the climate, which is completely inappropriate for elephants and may be the cause of physical disorders.

AFRICAN LION SAFARI - ONTARIO

The African Lion Safari (ALS) is a privately owned facility located near Hamilton, Ontario and is accredited by CAZA .

The following inventory is based on the Asian Elephant Studbook printed in 2000. Since there is no government requirement in Canada for reporting elephant births and deaths, the inventory information is not current. Calves not listed were seen at the facility, and since the elephants are not all on display at this facility, it is not possible to accurately list all elephants at this facility.

According to the Asian Elephant studbook printed in 2000, 13 elephants were listed in this zoo

- Kitty - female captured in Thailand estimated year of birth (EYB) 1965
- Jenny - female, captured in Thailand, EYB 1967
- Rex - male captured in Kamataka, EYB 1968
- Dame - female, wild-caught (no country listed), EYB 1970
- Mugwamp (a.k.a Maggy) - female, captured in Burma, EYB 1968
- Phoebe - female, captive bred in Israel, year of birth (YB) 1987, no longer at ALS, unsure if died or traded)
- Natasha - female, born at ALS 1994
- Piccolo - female, born at ALS in 1994
- Samson - male, born at ALS in 1998
- Albert - male, born at ALS in 1998, no longer at the facility, possibly dead or traded;
- George - male, born at ALS in 1999
- Johnson - male, born at ALS in 2001
- Lily - female, born in Israel in 1985

The following elephants are marked as having died in the studbook:

- Beau Thai - male, born at Houston Zoo in 1984 **died at ALS in 1988**
- Gina - female, captured in Thailand, EYB 1958, **died in 1986**
- Unnamed baby - born at ALS in 1993, **died shortly after birth;**

I visited this facility on the 15th of September, 2006. A group of elephants, three adults and four calves of different ages, were on display in the outdoor enclosure. The enclosure substrate was largely dirt with small patches of grass. There were no large trees or pools of water in this enclosure. A mother and her young calf stood in one corner of the enclosure with the mother stopping frequently for the calf to feed. Another of the young calves wandered around among the adults and appeared not to have a close bond with any of the females on display. This calf made half hearted attempts to feed on hay that was placed in small piles on the ground. The calf was then observed trying to suckle from the breast feeding mother but was gently pushed away. In the same group was another female that seemed to be lactating but she seemed to show no interest in this wandering calf. The two older calves did not seem to take much interest in each other either. This was probably a group of unrelated elephants with the exception of the mother and calf.

An elephant show, dubbed “*The Elephant Round Up*,” was the highlight event of the day at the zoo. Many families and their young children gathered in an arena to watch the show. Led by two guides each with a bull hook in hand, three adult Asian elephants and a young calf sprinted into the arena. The elephants held each other by the tail.



They got to the middle of the arena and after the ‘safari salute’, a manipulated behavior consisted of the elephant’s raising one front leg up and waving his trunk, the commentator introduced the elephants as Lily with baby Logan, Dame and Maggy. After the introduction, an elephant pulled a log around the enclosure. Lily was then made to push the log back, with her calf running wildly alongside. Next, Maggy picked up a coin from the palm of a spectator’s hand and after that lifted one of the trainers up with her trunk. The woman commentator then climbed onto Maggie’s back and Maggie ‘helped’ her to climb down by raising her foot. The elephants were then made to lie down on their sides. The show went on with a number of other sequences, including drumbeating, painting and even a headstand. All the while, the young calf ran frantically after the mother as she performed. The men with the bull hooks were giving commands and walking around looking tense and stiff throughout the show. I believe the bullhook was seen as a threat by the elephants. The presence of the calf was truly baffling. In the wild, elephant mothers are very protective of their young. Here was this mother, forced to go through this humiliating routine of circus style tricks and meanwhile her calf ran along, seemingly totally bewildered all through the show.

The audience was informed during the show that 11 baby elephants have been born in this facility since 1991. Three of them were born in the last year, including the calf that was in the arena during the show. This calf, Logan, was born in April, 2006, together with another named Emily. The third calf was born in November of 2005. These were the two calves on display in the elephant enclosure. Emily was the calf who did not seem to have a mother in the group. This zoo certainly has a large breeding programme. Being a private facility, ALS is not subject to Freedom of Information laws and so it is difficult for interested parties to keep track of the breeding program or records of elephant movements in and out of the zoo.

After the main show, the crowd surged forward and many wanted to touch the elephants. The crowd was very noisy and the guides were visibly nervous. The guard rail separating the people

and the elephants was not adequate to contain elephants and one could easily envisage an elephant breaking through and trampling this group of enthusiastic families and their children. The audience seemed totally oblivious of this possibility, despite reports in the media revealing that indeed the African Lion Safari facility has had their fair share of incidents:

In 1992, *The Toronto Sun* reported that a 14 year old boy was injured when he was stepped on by an elephant named Tara. The kid was apparently leading the elephant through the zoo at the time.

In 1989, the *Globe and the Mail* and other media reported that a 21 year old elephant trainer at ALS was crushed to death by Tusko a bull elephant.

In this same facility, two young people were attacked when driving through the tiger enclosure and suffered serious injuries.

After the 'Elephant Round Up' groups of parents eagerly waited in line to pay for elephant rides for their young children. Information about this facility reveals that the elephants are regularly used in films, commercials, parades, circuses and private parties.

African Lion Safari reportedly has the biggest elephant breeding program in Canada as part of the Species Survival Plan (SSP). These SSPs were developed to create self-sustaining captive populations of particular animals, not for the purpose of returning animals to the wild. The elephant SSP's have no plan to return animals to the wild so they have little real conservation value, if any, to wild elephant populations. Furthermore, the circus style elephant show provides little, if any, positive education and in fact may result in negative education about normal elephant behavior.

BOWMANVILLE ZOO - ONTARIO

Bowmanville zoo is a privately owned facility located about 45minutes east of Toronto. The zoo is an accredited member of CAZA.

According to studbook records, Bowmanville Zoo currently has 4 elephants.

- Vance - male, Asian from Thailand, captured from the wild, EYB 1971
- Caesar - male, Asian, origin not clear, EYB 1986
- Limba - Female Asian from Vietnam, captured from the wild EYB 1964
- Kesheiba (a.k.a Sheba) - African, Female Captured from the wild, Mozambique EYB 1975, on loan from Bridgeport Zoo.

The following elephants are marked as having died in the records:

- Angus - male, African captured from South Africa, **27 years old at death**
- Lisa - female, Asian captured from Thailand, **32 years old at death**
- Tony - male, Asian country of origin unknown, **27 years old at death**

I visited this zoo on the 6th of September 2006. There were two elephants on display in a small enclosure surrounded by a short steel fence with horizontally-running cables. The elephants stood at the back of the enclosure close to the barn. One of the elephants, an adult Asian male, had his tusks sawn off, leaving two short stubs.



This elephant exhibited stereotypic behavior, standing on the spot and swaying his head and trunk repeatedly from side to side. Next to him was a tuskless female African elephant. She had great difficulty walking. Her hind legs were very stiff and rigid, and thus she had a very strange walk. After walking a few paces, she kicked her back legs forward and rubbed the pads of her feet against her ears. She repeated this strange movement with the other leg. She repeated this after every few steps. Her legs seemed very sore and at one point, when she spotted a bird in the enclosure, she attempted to move forward to chase the bird but the effort was too much. She backed towards the top of the enclosure, shook her head vigorously and then kicked her legs towards her ears again. She seemed visibly agitated.

The Asian male continued to sway from side to side, totally oblivious of the female's presence. This male was probably Vance. Information from Zoocheck Canada indicates that in 1990, Vance suffered a serious leg injury during a show when he was being forced to walk on his hind legs. Vance was then propped up in the barn in a sling until the injury healed. In 2003, Vance underwent a thermograph to diagnose a leg ailment.

According to Zoocheck Canada, Bowmanville Zoo has a long history of using their elephants for various types of entertainment shows including circuses, parades, fairs, films, children's parties commercials, etc. This is confirmed by numerous media reports in the *Globe and the Mail*, Canada's largest national newspaper. One report I read also indicated that the elephants are chained inside the barn periodically, although I was unable to observe this myself.

One of the two owners of Bowmanville Zoo, Michael Hackenberger, has been publicly accused on several occasions of mistreating elephants. For example, in 2002, a Winnipeg Humane Society media release indicated that Hackenberger had flown to Winnipeg to discipline an elephant that he had loaned to the Assiniboine Park Zoo. The elephant, Limba, had attacked a keeper at the zoo, so, according to the release, "Limba's owner flew into Winnipeg from his home in Ontario following the attack, purchased a whip and electric prod at a local livestock supply company and beat the elephant as a reprisal for the attack."



The elephant enclosure at Bowmanville Zoo is very small, a mere fraction of the size of sanctuary enclosures and miniscule compared to the area used by elephants in the wild. The elephants that I observed at this facility were exhibiting stereotypic behaviors indicating that they are likely stressed or bored. In addition, the stiff stance of the African elephant and her restricted gait would indicate that she may be suffering from an arthritic condition or other joint disorders. Furthermore, as I have mentioned throughout this report, the climate is inappropriate for these animals, causing them to be kept in barns for a significant portion of their lives. The allegations of heavy-handed tactics being used to 'control' the elephants is also concerning.

EDMONTON VALLEY ZOO - ALBERTA

The Edmonton Valley Zoo in Alberta is operated by the City of Edmonton and is an accredited member of the CAZA. The funding from the zoo is therefore mainly from City Council, who have full control over the zoo's management. In 2005 a proposal was put in front of council to spend up to \$ 80 million to upgrade the zoo. The plan indicated that the zoo should focus on cold climate species, and yet still advocates keeping elephants as a flagship species at the zoo.

According to the studbooks, the Valley Zoo has only two elephants;

- Lucy - female, captured in Sri Lanka, estimated year of birth (EYB) 1975
- Samantha - female, captured in Zimbabwe, (EYB) 1988

I visited this zoo on the 5th of September. The outdoor enclosure was surrounded by a low metal barrier and an electric fence. There was no vegetation in the enclosure and the ground was mainly earth. There was ample vegetation outside the enclosure, which gave the appearance of a lush environment, but the elephants had no access to it. There were no rocks to rub against or pools of water to drink from or to wallow in. It was a hot day (approximately 28° C) when I visited.

Upon my arrival, Lucy was standing just outside the door of the barn. Samantha was locked inside the barn and a sign on the door announced that she was not going to be on display as she was recuperating from a trunk injury. She had been in the news since recently after she severed her trunk caught in a door latch. The elephant barn door was open and therefore it was possible to catch glimpses of her behind the bars in the barn.



Lucy walked into the barn after awhile and stood near the metal bars that separated her from Samantha. Lucy then walked out of the barn and took a position just outside the door. She started to move back and forth making one step forward and then rocking back and forth on the spot, a stereotypic behavior which may be an indicator of stress and/or boredom. She repeated this for about 10 minutes. With Lucy standing away from the doorway,

Samantha could be observed better through the barn door and the severed end of her trunk was now visible as she swayed vigorously from side to side.

As Lucy continued rocking back and forth, a family with some young children stopped briefly to look at her. The mother explained that the elephant was 'dancing'. Just then Lucy's trunk touched a ball that had been lying on the ground next to her and the young mother explained that she was now 'playing ball'. The children were delighted. They stood there for a few more minutes and then walked away. This kind of misinformed interpretation of elephant behavior is typical in a zoo setting due to elephants exhibiting aberrant behaviors and living in unnatural

settings. Lucy made no attempt to dust herself or cool herself by flapping her ears while standing in the hot midday sun. There were no keepers in sight and numerous attempts to find them were fruitless.

According to information Zoocheck Canada acquired from Valley Zoo staff, Lucy and Samantha are locked in the barn when the zoo is closed and in the winter when temperatures drop below - 10° C The zoo is open between 9.30am and 4pm on weekdays and from 9.30 am to 6pm on weekends and holidays. Between October 10 and December 31, the zoo closes at 4.30pm everyday. Given Edmonton's northern climate and the zoo schedule, this means that, in an average year, the elephants would be locked in approximately 70% of the time.

Various newspaper journals including the *Edmonton Journal* have reported that Lucy suffers from arthritis and foot infections. These conditions probably result from standing for long hours on hard, cold surfaces.

After reviewing all of the elephant enclosures in Canadian zoos, it is my opinion that the Edmonton Valley Zoo is the worst at this time. The climate in Edmonton is completely inappropriate for elephants. This cold climate, combined with the zoo's lock-in policy, results in the elephants being locked inside the barn for most of their lives and they are showing physical ailments as a result. In addition, the stereotypic behavior exhibited by Lucy and Samantha are typical of stressed elephants in zoos. I recommend that the City of Edmonton take immediate action to move Lucy and Samantha to a sanctuary that can provide them with a more appropriate physical and social environment and to close the elephant exhibit at this zoo.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

From the studbook records and information from these visits, there are currently approximately 35 elephants in zoos across Canada. The youngest is an Asian elephant born at the African Lion Safari in November, 2005. The oldest elephant in Canada is 42 year old Limba, a female Asian elephant at the Bowmanville Zoo. Over the years Canadian zoos have held a total of 58 elephants. Of these 58 elephants, 18 have died under varying circumstances and 4 could not be accounted for as it could not be confirmed if they were dead or had been transferred to other facilities.

Of the dead elephants, 4 were born in various zoos in Canada. Maharani Junior died after 30 days in Calgary Zoo. TW died after two days in Toronto Zoo. An unnamed baby died soon after birth at African Lion Safari and Toronto died after 10 years in the Toronto Zoo. The African Lion Safari has the largest breeding programme, accounting for at least 8 captive bred Asian elephants born in Canada and listed in the studbook. Maharani in the Calgary Zoo is the 9th Canadian born Asian elephant in the studbook records. Thika is the only surviving African elephant born in Canada. The studbook records indicate that there were a total of 22 Asian and 13 African elephants in Canada when the information was compiled.

From this survey, it is clear that elephants in Canadian zoos suffer in varying degrees all of the classical problems exhibited by elephants in captivity in the western countries. The problems in Canadian zoos are compounded by severe and long winters and, to a smaller extent, some exceptionally hot summer days. The space available for elephants both indoors and outdoors is inadequate in all of the zoos visited. Even where there is a large outdoor enclosure, like Parc Safari Zoo in Quebec, the elephants have to spend many hours indoors due to the severe cold for a significant portion of the year. The CAZA guidelines are voluntary, non-punitive and therefore not particularly useful in ensuring that even a minimum standard of care is being met. In addition, these guidelines do not give any recommendations on the size of elephant exhibits. AZA space requirements are 400 sq ft, indoors, for a single female, and 600 sq ft for a male or female with a calf. Outside the requirements are 1,800 sq ft for a single animal with an additional 900 sq ft for each additional elephant. A number of US zoos have closed their elephant exhibits because they cannot meet these space requirements, as well as for other reasons. The Detroit Zoo and the San Francisco Zoo have opted to send their elephants to sanctuaries, while the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago has opted not to bring in more elephants after the death of their existing elephants. The Philadelphia Zoo and the Bronx Zoo have also closed their elephant exhibits. Furthermore, there continue to be chronic problems with captive elephants in US zoos that do meet the AZA standards, including foot problems, arthritis and stereotypic behaviors. These problems indicate that even the AZA standards are not adequately meeting the animal's needs.

Stereotypic behaviors were observed at the Bowmanville Zoo, Edmonton Valley Zoo and Granby Zoo. It was confirmed that, even in places where elephants were not seen actively engaged in pointless repetitive behaviors, the keepers had a great challenge keeping the elephants busy, particularly when dealing with adult males, like Spike at the Calgary Zoo.

Health problems related to foot infections and arthritis were clearly evident. The keepers referred repeatedly to foot care routines as being constantly required by elephants in the zoos visited.

Medical records from these zoos would certainly give a clearer picture of the health issues they experience. However, these records are not available to the public as the law does not provide for them to be released, even on request.

The information available to the public was often found to be inaccurate or misleading. For example, at the Bowmanville Zoo, the information display indicated that captive elephants live longer than their wild counterparts. In addition, the use of the term 'herd' to describe two elephants of different species in an enclosure is also untrue and the use of the term 'habitat' to describe a barren enclosure with concrete tree stumps and ant hills is equally misleading.

The continued assertion to the public that elephants are faced with extinction in the near future in both Africa and Asia is also grossly incorrect. There are an estimated 400,000 elephants in the wild in Africa and 50,000 Asian elephants. Although severe poaching contributed to the reduction of the number of elephants in Africa and Asia in the 1970s and 80s, the problem has been brought under control. In Botswana in southern Africa there are over 120,000 elephants in the wild. Kenya in East Africa has a population of 35,000 elephants and the numbers are growing steadily.

Zoos claim that they play a central role in conservation and education. They say that, by giving the public an opportunity to see elephants, they encourage people to care about elephants in the wild. But those claims have not been substantiated. Elephant conservation projects in Africa and Asia are unable to meet their modest budgets, while zoos continue to spend astronomical amounts of money building elephant exhibits, despite expert advice from field biologists and other scientists who have established that the unique needs of elephants cannot possibly be met in zoos. The claim that funds from zoos support conservation in Africa is dubious. Zoos spend huge amounts of money building new exhibits, but negligible amounts on conservation in the wild. The contribution of zoo-based 'Species Survival Plans' to conservation in the wild is not convincing. Zoos have not demonstrated any ability or plan to re-populate the wild with elephants from zoos.

The use of elephants in circus style shows in zoos demonstrates a commercial side to zoos that totally disregards the elephant as a species. To make an elephant stand on her head, beat drums or 'paint' T-shirts is disgraceful and provides a simplistic, negative view of these amazing animals. The actions necessary to make elephants docile enough to perform these acts is incompatible with the conservation and education agenda that zoos pretend to stand for. Nowhere in the wild do elephants have to do any of these acts. They add no value to their survival and are purely for human amusement. The desperation of zoos to attract crowds leads them to use elephants in this way. Under normal circumstances, elephants are gentle creatures that move in a relatively slow and methodical way and so do not lend themselves very well to human amusement. Anybody wanting to enjoy elephants would have to see them in natural environments and have the time to observe them for long periods. This education of the natural behavior of elephants can be accomplished through television programming, movies, publications, internet or ecotourism. Education about elephant behavior is not possible in the zoo where people breeze through exhibits at lightning speed to get to the next attraction. When they do spend a few minutes at an enclosure, they see elephants exhibiting aberrant behaviors in unnatural settings.

Keeping elephants in Canadian zoos only perpetuates the suffering of these highly intelligent, social animals and provides an inaccurate view of natural elephant behavior, social activities and even their physical attributes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada is no place for elephants. The winters are too severe. All zoos in Canada that are currently holding captive elephants should take immediate action to relocate them to more suitable facilities in warmer climates.

The Edmonton Valley Zoo, in my opinion, is the most problematic due to its northern location and cold climate. Lucy and Samantha are both suffering from stereotypic behavior and Lucy shows signs of severe arthritis and possible foot problems. The City of Edmonton should take immediate steps to move these two elephants to a more appropriate facility, such as The Elephant Sanctuary, in Tennessee, where they will have the ability to heal and can live in more healthy social groupings with other elephants.

CAZA should adopt a no breeding policy for its members and furthermore should formulate a strategy for the phase-out and relocation of elephants to more suitable physical and social environments in warmer regions.

The provincial governments in Canada should ban the use of elephants in traveling shows or other entertainment acts. These acts expose elephants to cruelty as the training regimes require tools such as bull hooks and deprivation of food to achieve dominance.



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