

# Designing and Managing a Multi- species Black Rhino Habitat

Presented by  
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AZA Ungulate TAG  
2022  
Mid Year Conference  
Long Beach, CA



## Design goals:

Provide a home for the critically endangered black rhino breeding pair

Provide a home for multiple other species

Provide multiple opportunities for dynamic experiences for animals

Provide multiple viewing opportunities and dynamic experiences for guests

## Habitat by the numbers:

5 friends called

4 acres

3 barns

2 primary yards

2 Encounter spaces

9 species plus tunnel species

1 Animal Care Curator

5 Animal Care Keepers

\$17M

10/20/2021- Black Rhinos arrive in Palm Desert, CA

11/12/2021- Grand Opening Day





## COMING FALL 2021 TO THE LIVING DESERT!

WELCOME A PAIR OF  
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED  
AFRICAN BLACK RHINOS  
AS WE AIM TO ENSURE  
THEIR SPECIES SURVIVAL.

To learn more about our conservation projects,  
please visit [LivingDesert.org/Conservation](https://LivingDesert.org/Conservation)



GLMV *strategic*



PRIDE  
OF THE DESERT

THE LIVING DESERT  
ZOO AND GARDENS



THE LIVING DESERT  
ZOO | GARDENS



## COMING FALL 2021 TO THE LIVING DESERT!

NEW OVERLOOKS AND  
AREAS FOR GUESTS  
TO OBSERVE AND  
LEARN ABOUT AFRICAN  
WILDLIFE.

To learn more about our conservation projects,  
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**COMING FALL 2021 TO  
THE LIVING DESERT!**

EXPERIENCE SCENIC  
LANDSCAPES AND  
NEW MULTI-SPECIES  
HABITATS FOR AFRICAN  
DESERT ANIMALS.

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Lots of options for all with increased 24/7 welfare in mind-  
building for the future.

Built in:

- Exclusion areas for the smaller species
- Waterholes
- Mud wallows
- Timed feeders
- Wobble trees
- Browse hangers
- Rockwork
- Change in topography
- Access points

















# Hydroseeding









Chaiken  
Animal  
Care &  
Nutrition  
Center

Desert  
Barn

Outpost  
Barn















# Managing Rhino Savanna



- Animals
- Humans
- Habitat



# Species List



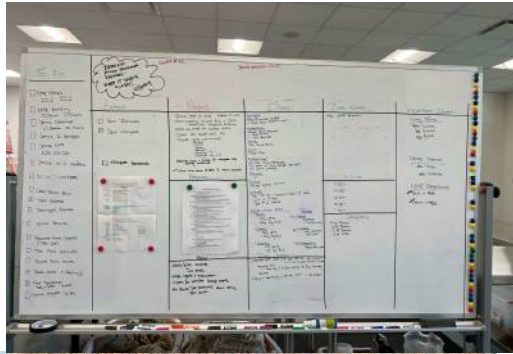
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- 1.1 Black Rhinoceros
  - 0.2 Waterbuck
  - 1.2 Springbok (+0.4 awaiting intro)
  - 1.1 Klipspringer
  - 1.1 Cape Vulture
  - 1.1 Great white pelican
  - 1.1 Pink-backed pelican
  - 0.0.20 Cattle egret
  - 0.0.14 Helmeted guineafowl

Life Underground Tunnel species:

- Dwarf Mongoose
- Banded Mongoose
- Naked Mole Rats
- Giant Millipedes
- Baboon Tarantulas



# Working the Habitat



- No set routine or strings
- Communication is vital for both safety & animal care
- Most animals can be fed/serviced with rhinos on habitat
- Switched all ungulates to rhino pellets (except klipspringer)
- Feed animals their unique diet items in exclusive areas
- Utilize various equipment





# Keep Animals Moving & Searching

Browse Hangers



Pellet Feeders



Stable Grazers





Varied  
Terrain

Challenging Animals



Water & Mud  
Wallows



# Exercise & Behavioral Ecology



# Habitat Functionality



Corridors



Rhino Exclusions



Multiple  
Exclusion  
Types



# Browse

- Browse is a pillar of Rhino Savanna's management philosophy
- 3 browsing ungulate species
- Browse is given every day in significant quantities
- To date we have fed 50+ different species of trees/shrubs including some African species favored by wild rhinos
  - 8-12 of these species can be fed regularly
  - Goal is to continue to increase the variety
  - Supplement with purchased browse



# Guest Connections



Training  
Anywhere



Rhino  
Encounter



Animal care interactions



# “Pivoting” as we went



## COVID Strikes Again!

- Construction delays
- Supply chain delays
- Changing our best laid plans
- So, we started with half a Rhino Savanna!
- Put up fence and shade cloth to restrict animal to the completed side

## Phase 1- Moving Animals into the habitat

- Pelicans
- Vultures
- Waterbuck
- Springbok
- Guineafowl
- Cattle egrets
- Klipspringer







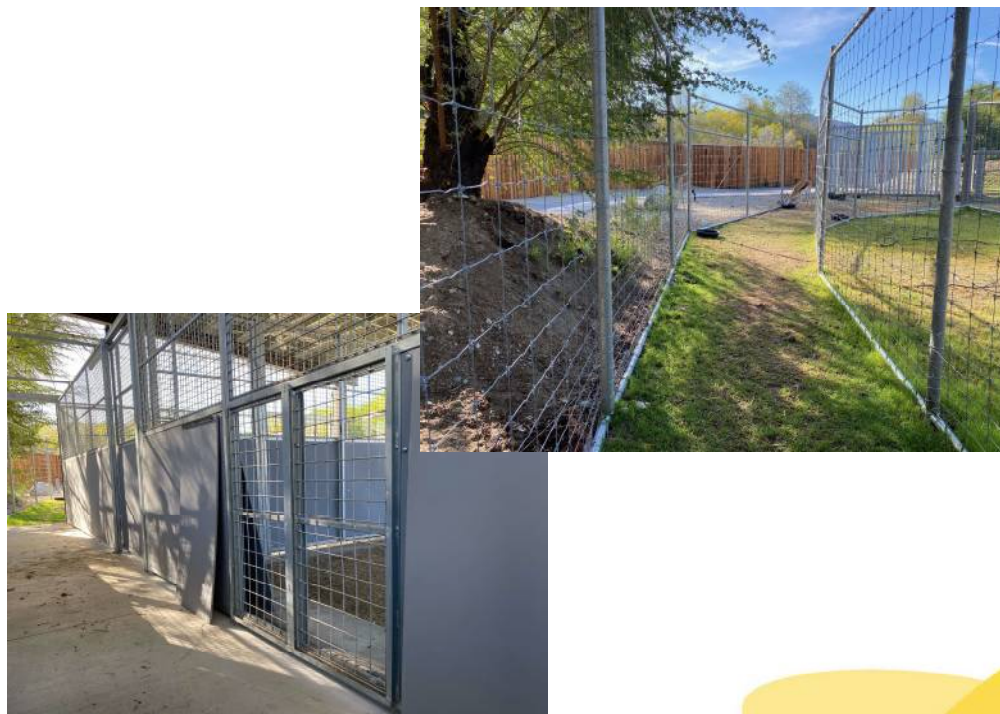
## Phase 2 - Establishing the Animals in Their New Home

- Started by feeding the animals on a routine to establish their comfort in the habitat and observe their behavior
- Rhinos were shifted in and out to train recall and make sure they did not damage the temporary fence
- We had to learn the ins and outs of the new habitat ourselves
- Finish and open the other half of Rhino Savanna and introduce the animals (rhino last)



# Phase 3 - Develop Rhino Savanna into a Fully Functioning Habitat

- Train recall behaviors
- Establish/re-establish training behaviors
  - Train hoofstock to calmly use hallway for procedures
  - Various rhino behaviors
- Develop the rhinos' comfort on both habitats and the encounter space
- Accessing rhinos to habitats 24/7



# Phase 4 – Habitat/Ecosystem Management

- Behavioral Observations
  - Data driven decision making
- Fully implement automatic feeders
  - Less than half of planned feeders are installed
- Develop a habitat feeding strategy
  - All animal have access and eat the rhinos' diets
- 60-70% of rhinoceros diets made up of browse
  - As well as other browsers
- Rhino Core Use Habitats/Territories
  - 60/40 habitat split for rhinos to mimic wild rhino territorial use
  - Night-time introductions











Thank you!

Feel free to reach out for more information.

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