

Miami Metrozoo – Its Past & Its Future

Miami Metrozoo's beginning can be traced back to a small island off the coast of Miami. The Crandon Park Zoo, located on Key Biscayne, was created in 1948 when three monkeys, one goat and two black bears were purchased for \$270 from a small road show stranded near Miami.

The animal collection grew to around 1,200 animals, resulting in the Crandon Park Zoo being ranked among the top 25 zoos in the United States. The zoo received worldwide recognition for the first successful captive birth and rearing of an armadillo in 1967.

The zoo received a pair of Asian elephants in 1967. These animals, "Dalip" and "Seetna", matured and produced three offspring, still a rather rare accomplishment in zoological collections.

In 1968, the Crandon Park Zoo received a white tiger – only the second of its kind to be brought into the United States.

In 1970, the rarest animals to be exhibited at the Crandon Park Zoo arrived: a pair of Indian rhinos.

Also in 1970, the Crandon Park Zoo received the first Key deer ever taken out of the Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge.

In 1973, two southern bald eagles were hatched – the first successful captive hatching in over fifty years.

In 1965, Hurricane Betsy put three feet of water over most of the zoo and caused the deaths of 250 animals. After the devastation of Hurricane Betsy in 1965, there was frequent talk of a new zoo for Dade County. However, no serious planning was done until 1970 when the Zoological Society Board became aware of the availability of the Richmond Naval Air Station property. On December 11, 1970, Dade County officially applied for 600 acres of this land for a new zoo.

On February 1, 1971, T. A. Strawser was hired by the Zoological Society to develop a master plan and model for the new zoo.

In August of 1972, Dade County Manager Ray Goode announced his proposed Decade of Progress bond issues which included \$10 million for a new zoo as part of the park bond issue.

On June 13, 1973, the first animal purchased from bond issue funds specifically for the new zoo, arrived at Crandon Zoo. This was a two-year-old black rhino, named Cora.

Construction began in the fall of 1975 on the perimeter moat, fence and the quarantine building. These were completed in early 1976.

The Preview Center, consisting of the initial twelve exhibits, opened to the public on July 4, 1980. The grand opening for the first major exhibit section, the Asian lobe, was on December 12, 1981. With the opening of this section, a total of 38 exhibits, covering 200 acres, were available to the public.

On December 4, 1982, an additional 25 acre exhibit area opened featuring six new exhibits of African hoofed stock. This brought the total exhibit area to 225 acres featuring 44 exhibits. The monorail, which had been under construction for about a year, also opened to the public.

On December 28, 1984, the Wings of Asia exhibit, a 1.6 acre, free-flight aviary, opened.

On December 18, 1985, three new exhibits of African hoofed stock opened, extending the African lobe. This new section brought the total area to approximately 280 acres.

In the fall and winter of 1986, two new exhibits were opened in the African savanna section. Animals were then on display on all paddocks up to Monorail Station 4 and adding approximately 10 acres to the total.

The Australian lobe of the zoo was unveiled in 1988, featuring koalas, kangaroos and wallabies. In 1989, the first koala born on the east coast was born at Metrozoo.

PAWS, the children's petting zoo, opened in 1989, replacing the original area called Sulawasi.

On August 1990, the Asian River Life Experience was opened to the public. Small-clawed Asian otters are featured, along with a blood python, Malayan water monitor, clouded leopards, land tortoises, muntjac deer, demoiselle cranes, and fly-river turtles.

On August 24, 1992, Metrozoo had quite a set back when Hurricane Andrew hit. Over 5,000 trees were lost, and the 1.5 acre free-flight aviary, Wings of Asia, which was built to withstand winds of up to 120 mph, was reduced to a pile of rubbish and twisted netting. The 300 exotic birds, which represented the finest collection of Asian birds anywhere, were lost.

Although the zoo looked considerably different, it reopened on December 18, 1992.

By July 1993, many animals were returned to their homes at Metrozoo and 7,000 new trees planted to restore a natural canopy to animals and visitors. Metrozoo was well on its way to recovery!

In December, 1995, the koalas returned to Metrozoo. And on January 26, 1996, the Falcon Batchelor Komodo Dragon Encounter, featuring the largest lizards on earth, was opened to the public.

Recently opened exhibits include the Andean Condor (1999), the Meerkats (2000), the Cuban Crocodiles (2001), Squirrel Monkeys (2001) and an indoor facility, "Dr. Wilde's World," in which traveling zoological exhibits are to be housed.

American Bankers Family Aviary, Wings of Asia opened May 03, 2003.

MIAMI METROZOO'S MISSION: ANIMAL CARE AND CONSERVATION

A Modern Zoo

One of the world's great zoos, Miami Metrozoo houses more than 1,200 wild animals in a cageless setting that closely approximates the animals' natural habitats and allows them to roam freely on their individual islands. Large, open-air exhibits allow visitors to enjoy beautiful and endangered wildlife at a safe yet remarkably close range, while the animal remains free of tight enclosures. With nearly 300 developed acres on a 740-acre parcel of land, Metrozoo is the only zoo in the continental United States located in a subtropical climate. This climactic advantage and our large, natural exhibits enable the Zoo to establish successful breeding programs with animals that cannot easily be exhibited in colder climates.

Conservation Partners

In the wild, our commitment to worldwide conservation efforts serves as one of our mission's cornerstones to encourage an appreciation for the world's wildlife and to help conserve it for future generations. The Zoo forms critical partnerships with other scientists, conservationists such as World Wildlife Fund, and governmental and non-governmental organizations to help save the endangered plants, animals and ecosystems of the world. From significant research and special studies conducted in South Florida to field conservation efforts in some of the most remote and exotic places on Earth, Miami Metrozoo, a fully accredited member of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), is recognized as a leader in the fight to preserve some of the world's most endangered animals and ecosystems.

Accreditation

Accreditation by the AZA involves rigorous inspection and reviews to insure the highest standards in collections care, veterinary programs, breeding programs, conservation, education and safety, among other criteria. Miami Metrozoo was re-accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) in March 2005 for another five years, until 2010. AZA accreditation is recognized as the benchmark for the finest animal care institutions in North America, and Miami Metrozoo is the only animal attraction in Miami-Dade county to hold this accreditation. We encourage you to look for the AZA accreditation symbol when you decide to visit zoos or attractions that house animals.

Animal Transfers

Policies regarding animal care at the zoo are written by experts in the field who study animal science. These policies consider the animal's well-being and conservation efforts foremost, regardless of age or "marketability". The zoo's animals and their offspring are only sent to AZA member facilities when the facility has either been visited personally by Metrozoo's professional staff or has references from another AZA institution and has signed our Zoo's policy statement acknowledging their responsibility in long term care for the animal. Most often, these transfers are because of a demonstrated need and compatibility for breeding suitability between two members of a species or to work with other qualified institutions to assist conservation programs at both locations. This has been Miami Metrozoo's policy for many years, and it is continuously reviewed and approved by exotic animal professionals. Animals owned by Miami Metrozoo are not conveyed to auctions, hunting ranches or facilities with poor care. To learn, please feel free to download the animal Acquisition and De-Acquisition policy from the ZSF website: www.zsf.org and click "Animal Care".

From the 2005 Zoological Society of Florida Website: www.zsf.org

Miami Metrozoo is an accredited member of American Zoo and Aquarium Association