

Animals and Exhibits from the Zoo's Past

Zoo guests often ask about animals and exhibits that they remember from earlier years. This normally takes the form of, "Whatever happened to . . ." or "Where was the . . ."

To help respond to some of those questions the Training and Mentoring Team has assembled the following information about animals or exhibits that were previously part of the zoo. If you have other zoo history questions that come up, please send them to alec.schrader.hou@gmail.com. We will then gather available facts and update this list.

Alligator – Blanco was the white, leucistic (not albino) alligator that lived in the Reptile House from 1994 until 2016. He was moved to the Crocodile Encounter in Angleton, Texas in order to have access to larger quarters. The reticulated python now lives in Blanco's previous exhibit.



Bears – Boomer and Bailey were grizzly bears that came to the zoo in 2007 after an HSPCA confiscation in Gonzales, Texas. This confiscation was the subject of an episode of *Animal Cops, Houston* and aired on Animal Planet. They both passed in 2015.



Camel – The last camels at the zoo were Crackerjack and Camille. They lived in the old Children’s Zoo and in the West Hoof Run, where the warthogs currently are, before being sent to Lee Richardson Zoo (Garden City, Kansas) in 2006.



Children’s Zoo – The previous Children’s Zoo was located at the south end of the property where the African Forest is now. Sometimes people ask about the tunnel where they could walk under water. That tunnel was located in the old CZ and has since been torn down.



Gorilla – An Eastern Lowland Gorilla named Mac lived in a habitat where the current painted dog exhibit lies today. He died of old age in 2004.

Hippos – Two female Nile Hippos, Liberty and Labor Day, were housed in an exhibit with a pool where the newly build elephant pool is today. In 1995 they were transferred to the Kansas City Zoo.

From 1996 until 2003 the zoo had pygmy hippos where the tapir/capybaras are now.

Lion – Jonathan was a male rescue lion that came to the zoo in 2006. He was beloved by both guests and staff who mourned his passing in September of 2016. He was 18 years old at that time.



Monkeys – A circular monkey house used to be at the end of the Reflection Pool where Wortham World of Primates is now. **Spider monkeys** were in an exhibit on the north exterior wall of the Small Mammal House (now Natural Encounters).

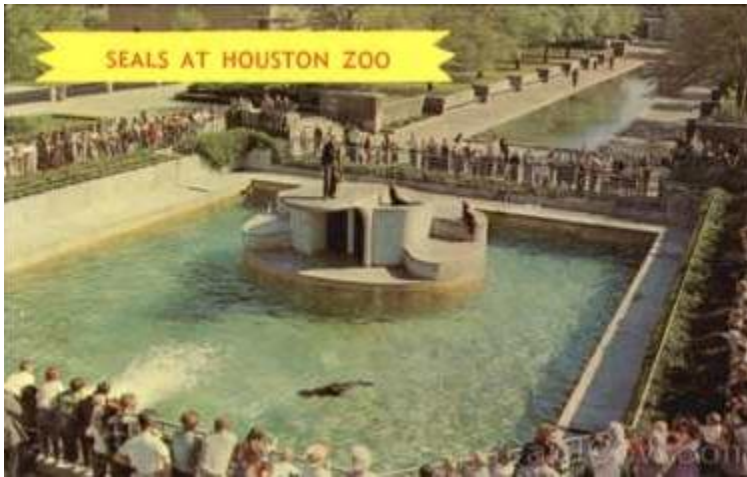


From 2004 until 2006 a troop of **Golden Lion Tamarin monkeys** roamed in the wooded area between Duck Lake and West Hoofrun. The program ended due to the medical needs of the group.

Polar Bear – The last polar bear was named Sedna lived at the zoo from 1968 until she died in 1983.

Rhinos – Three Southern White rhinos came to the Houston Zoo in 1971 and lived where the Ankole habitat now resides. One of the females, M'Billi, was transferred to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center to participate in their breeding program in 1989. Marcibut (Marci) passed away in 2006 and Samburu (Bu) moved to West Hoofrun (the area closest to the Butterfly Garden and staff gate) that same year. Hence the name "Rhino Gate."





Seals/Sea Lions – Previously the exhibit was located near the front entry in the plaza. This area, pictured left, will be the site for the new Reflections restaurant in 2022. The entire front plaza will be rebuilt into Galapagos for the Zoo’s centennial celebration

Snow Leopards – The zoo had a number of these rare and endangered cats beginning in 1973. The last snow leopard here was Aya who passed away in 2007. Aya was a special snow leopard as she had no tongue and required specialized care from her keepers.



Texas Wetlands – Located in between the two elephant habitats across from the herp building. This area left in order to expand our growing elephant herd. A new Texas Wetlands is going to be built near Cypress Circle where the current Duck Lake lies.

Tigers – A white Bengal tiger and a number of Amur (also called Siberian) tigers lived at different times in an exhibit near where Masihara tent currently is. Guests may remember one large Amur tiger named Rambo or the three cubs, Koshka, Robeki, and Seelni. These cubs were born on Valentine’s Day in 1994 and left in 1997.



Other Questions

Which is the **oldest animal** in the zoo? Timmy/Bill, the Madagascar Radiated Tortoise was born in Madagascar in **1932**. The zoo in Zurich, Switzerland loaned him to the Houston Zoo in 1987.



How long has the **lion drinking fountain** been at the zoo? No one knows for sure, but at least since the 1960's.

For more history and **milestones**, see pages 5-7 in the Volunteer Handbook.