

PRESS RELEASE

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Credit: Woodland Park Zoo

Zoo prepares for rhino Taj to move to El Paso Zoo

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo’s population of two male greater one-horned rhinos will soon change. Taj is scheduled to move in a couple of weeks to El Paso Zoo in El Paso, Texas. Pronounced like *Taj Mahal*, Taj means “crown” or “jewel” in Hindi.

The rhinos were born a day apart from each other and turned 7 in November. Taj currently weighs a whopping 4,670 pounds and Glenn 4,135 pounds.

Taj and Glenn represent the only rhinos who have lived at Woodland Park Zoo in its nearly 125-year history. The boys arrived at the zoo at 18 months old and made their public debut in 2018 in the new Assam Rhino Reserve. They immediately became popular to visitors, marking the first time for many to encounter rhinos in person.

Zoo members, visitors, and social media fans have watched Taj and Glenn grow and thrive together, learned about these iconic symbols of wildlife trafficking, and witnessed natural rhino behavior such as the pair wallowing in mud baths, play sparring, dipping in the pool and running zoomies throughout the yards.

In their native habitat, adult male rhinos live alone. Taj and Glenn have been together longer than any other male pairing in zoos accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#), but both just turned 7 and are naturally becoming more territorial with age. In the wild, the home ranges of adult males overlap to some degree, which essentially is how Glenn and Taj have lived at the zoo. Adult males will sometimes occur in temporary associations at wallows and grazing grounds where they often feed or rest together but move independently of each other. For the near term, Glenn will be the sole rhino at the zoo.

“We’re so grateful Taj and Glenn have compatibly shared the same space for more than five years,” said Erin Sullivan, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. “After Taj leaves, the rhino keepers will focus on spending extra social time with Glenn, such as scratch downs and training. A variety of new, fun toys will be offered to encourage natural behaviors including testing out his horn and play sparring, which are social behaviors the boys have engaged in while living together.”

Glenn may have a positive reaction to the departure of his long-time friend because mature males naturally want to lead a solitary life, explained Sullivan. “Without Taj at the zoo, Glenn will be in charge of his home range which will no longer overlap,” added Sullivan.

Rhino keeper Al Kennedy, who has cared for the zoo’s rhinos for several years, shares that Taj is attentive, steady and patient. “Taj likes seeking snacks and scratches from the rhino keepers and loves swimming, soaking and hot showers during cold temperatures. Taj is calm, cautious and steady and, while he doesn’t often initiate, he will gladly engage in playing,” said Kennedy.



Once medical testing is complete and the receiving veterinarian approves, Taj will travel to El Paso in a specially outfitted crate in a climate-controlled truck driven by an expert who specializes in moving large animals. Animal care staff are currently conducting crate training sessions using positive reinforcement techniques. “Thanks to the amazing preparation by teams across the zoo, Taj willingly entered the crate during the initial introduction sessions,” said Sullivan. “We’re very proud of how he immediately walked in on his own. The training sessions continue to go well, which bodes for a smooth, multi-state trip for Taj.”

A Woodland Park Zoo curator and a rhino keeper will follow in a chase vehicle along the ~1,700-mile road trip. Taj will be checked after he’s offloaded at El Paso Zoo and the keeper will stay a few days to help Taj settle in.

Taj and Glenn arrived at Woodland Park Zoo from San Diego Zoo Safari Park and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium’s The Wilds, respectively. Their move was recommended by the [Species Survival Plan](#) for greater one-horned rhinos. Woodland Park Zoo made a commitment to take on a supporting role by providing a home for these young males who were not ready to start families or live as solo bachelors at that time.

Taj’s move to El Paso is recommended by the Species Survival Plan and there is currently not a breeding recommendation. The current plans are for Taj to live a single male life with his habitat adjacent to an Asian elephant.

Five species of rhinos survive today: black, white, greater one-horned, Sumatran and Javan. In the last 200 years, the rhino population has plummeted from one million to fewer than 30,000 worldwide.

Also known as the Indian rhino, the greater one-horned is the largest of the five species left on the planet. The species has a single horn that is about 10 to 12 inches long; a gray-brown hide with skin folds gives it an armor-plated appearance.

Once found across the entire northern part of the Indian subcontinent, the population rapidly declined to fewer than 200 in the 20th century due to sport hunting, human conflict, poaching for their horns for use in traditional medicine and habitat loss. Woodland Park Zoo partners with the [International Rhino Foundation](#), a conservation organization operating on-the-ground programs in Africa and Asia that support viable populations of the five remaining rhino species and the communities that coexist with them.

To learn how to help protect rhinos, visit [#RhinoLookout](#). Also explore adopting a rhino by becoming a [ZooParent](#); the program supports the zoo’s animal care, education, and wildlife conservation in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Assam Rhino Reserve was made possible by private donations of all sizes from generous individuals, families, corporations and foundations through the zoo’s \$110M [Forests for All campaign](#), as well as funding from the Seattle Park District.

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