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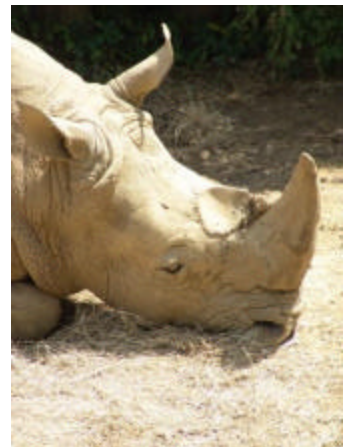
## **Zoo Adapts to Aging Animals and those with Special Needs**

Approximately sixteen percent of the animal population at the Jackson Zoo is considered middle-aged or elderly for their particular species. This is a good thing.

It means that animals are living longer due to the care and enrichment they are getting at the Zoo.

The Jackson Zoo and other zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums have become better equipped to provide the special needs of an aging animal population due to established standards of care, nutritional studies, advances in veterinary care, information sharing and extensive recordkeeping of animal bloodlines and other pertinent information.

“We are committed to excellent care at each stage of an animal’s life,” says zoo director Beth Poff. “We constantly monitor diet, weight and general health and we strive to ensure each animal’s quality of life is good.”



### **Among the oldest animals are:**

- 43-year-old Chimpanzee
- 36-year-old American Alligator
- 38-year-old Southern White Rhinoceros
- 37-year-old Black Vulture
- 34-year-old Black Bear
- 33-year-old American Flamingo

### **Phoenix**

Phoenix has roared at seasoned zookeepers and unsuspecting visitors, catching them off guard by the sheer majesty of his pronouncement, and grown men have shivered in their tracks. At 18-years-old, Sumatran tiger Phoenix is the equivalent of an approximately 110-year-old human. A Sumatran tiger’s life expectancy in the wild is 15 years old.

Old age has made Phoenix less active, and has diminished his eyesight. The Zoo veterinarian observes him every week.

“We have noticed in the past few weeks that Phoenix sleeps more and does not attempt to climb his exhibit structures as readily as he once did,” says Zoo

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Vet. Tech. Donna Todd. “We focus on keeping him free of stress and as comfortable as possible.”

**Jackson**

Jackson, the first chimpanzee born at the Jackson Zoo, turned 30 this year. In 1979 Jackson was injured by an adult male chimp and had to be separated from the troop for several months.

Zookeepers began seeing signs of mild seizures in Jackson some time later and he was placed on medication. For years his seizures remained under control, but in April of 1988 Jackson had a grand mal seizure during the night and he fractured his T4 vertebra.

A team of specialists was called in and they successfully repaired the fractured bone. Creative therapy by zoo staff followed and Jackson finally walked again four months later and four months after that he returned to the troop.

Jackson has not had a seizure in 20 years but does have a sizeable scar on his back and a noticeable limp.

Animal Care staffers at the Jackson Zoo make notes on all the animals in their care on a daily basis. They record any significant changes in appetite, physical appearance, behavior or mood.

“We rely, not only on the skills and knowledge our keepers acquire, but the relationship they forge with the animals in their care,” says Animal Curator Dave Wetzel.



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