



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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Rosamond Gifford Zoo Expecting 'Big' Delivery in 2015

Syracuse, N.Y. (August 14, 2014) – County Executive Joanne M. Mahoney joined staff at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo today to share news that two of the zoo's Asian elephants, Mali and Kirina, are expecting calves this coming year.

"This is a milestone for our zoo's Asian elephant program and its commitment to elephants in zoos and the wild as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The zoo's premier exhibit, Asian Elephant Preserve, opened in 2011 in partnership with the Friends of the Zoo demonstrating our commitment to the elephant program. The success of the new elephant facility, coupled with the dedication of Rosamond Gifford Zoo animal staff, is crucial to conservation of this magnificent and endangered species," said Mahoney.

Based on recommendation from AZA's elephant Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), the zoo received a new bull, Doc, in 2012, in an effort to help sustain the North American elephant population by presenting the herd with a new, unrelated bloodline. Ultra sound and blood hormone analysis confirmed that both Mali and Kirina are expecting.

The average gestation period for elephants is 20-24 months. Mali's due date will be sometime in mid-April to late May 2015; Kirina's mid-June to late July. Elephant calves typically weigh 170-300 pounds at birth.

While any pregnancy has some degree of risk from complication, the zoo is taking all measures to ensure safety of the elephant mothers and unborn calves. Zoo staff is working with experienced veterinarians from Cornell University (who have a long-standing history with the zoo's elephant herd); in addition to the elephant TAG and world-renowned experts to monitor Mali and Kirina. In addition, the zoo's dedicated elephant staff has a combined experience of 80-plus years.

"We are greatly excited and cautiously optimistic," said Ted Fox, zoo director. "Our focus is on giving Mali and Kirina the best prenatal care possible. This includes careful monitoring, nutrition, exercise and regular check-ups. Mali is an experienced mother, while Kirina will be a first-time parent. With Mali's calf arriving before Kirina's, it will be a great time for her to learn mothering skills by watching Mali."

Mali was born at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to Targa in 1997. She delivered her first calf, Chuck, in 2008 while on loan to African Lion Safari (ALS) in Ontario, Canada. Chuck returned to ALS when he became independent based on recommendation from the elephant TAG. Kirina was born at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo to Romani in 1995.

Both Mali and Kirina's mothers, grandmothers to the unborn calves, remain part of the zoo's herd. Their support will be important once the calves arrive. Elephants are matriarchal, with females serving as head of the family group. Other females in the herd, often called "aunties," (the allo-mother), help support elephant mothers in raising babies. The zoo's current herd also includes matriarch, Siri.

“We are especially excited for the potential of our herd to have—for the first time ever—two sets of three generations of elephants, replicating the typical makeup of a family group in the wild,” adds Fox.

The zoo’s premiere exhibit, Asian Elephant Preserve, consists of a four-acre naturalized elephant habitat; Pachyderm Pavilion, a 10,000+ square foot barn with viewing window allowing visitors to observe the elephants’ daily activities and care; Elephant Overlook, where visitors and families can pause and spend time watching elephants in the yard or catch one of the zoo’s engaging summertime elephant demonstrations in the designated seating area just off the zoo’s Wildlife Trails; outdoor exercise enclosures; misters and sand wallows; oversized shade structures; giant scratching post; world-class technology, allowing for safe housing and handling of elephants; and a private maternity ward.

The facility was designed by animal experts and built through the support of Onondaga County and Friends of the Zoo to provide the elephant program with both a beautiful environment and necessary amenities to ensure the health and well-being of the zoo’s herd. Friends of the Zoo contributed a portion of funding for Asian Elephant Preserve as part of its capital campaign.

“We were excited and pleased to support construction of Asian Elephant Preserve. Since its opening in 2011, all of our supporters have been looking forward to this day. It is truly an exciting moment for our Asian elephant program,” said Janet Agostini, president, Friends of the Zoo.

Updates regarding the progress of the expectant elephants will be provided periodically on the zoo’s website and social media accounts.

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Founded in 1914, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education.

The zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to provide its guests “the best day ever,” ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults (19-61), \$4 for youth (3-18) and \$5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

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County Executive, Joanne M. Mahoney • Commissioner of Parks & Recreation, Bill Lansley
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Director, Ted Fox • Friends of the Zoo President, Janet Agostini

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