

# Riverbanks Zoo welcomes two of Columbia's newest residents

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By Noah Feit

There are two new residents at Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, a pair of female southern white rhinoceros.

Visitors will soon be able to see Kande and Winnifred, as a rhino exhibit returns to the Columbia habitat for the first time since 1989, zoo officials said Wednesday in a news release.

They will soon be joined by Bill — a 15-year-old male from Seneca Park Zoo in Rochester, New York — as the rhinos' make a new home in the former elephant exhibit at Riverbanks. The rhinos join more than 2,000 other animals that live at Riverbanks Zoo.

Eight-year-old Kande, from Jacksonville Zoo, and 2-year-old Winnifred, from Tampa's Busch Gardens, arrived at the Columbia zoo in late June, according to the release. They have been exploring the new rhino yard this week after getting to know each other, away from the eye of visitors, officials said.

"They are very curious and have been acclimating well to their new space!" zoo officials said on Facebook.

But the rhinos are starting to go public.

"Learning a new environment is a delicate process for animals as well as their zookeepers, and we always move at the animal's pace," Riverbanks director of animal care and welfare John Davis said in the release. "For the next several days, our visitors might occasionally see Kande and Winnifred on the rhino yard for brief periods until the two have fully acclimated to their new surroundings."

Meet Nandi, the southern white rhino baby born at the North Carolina Zoo

When Bill arrives in the fall, he, Kande and Winnifred are expected to form a family group that was constructed as a part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Southern White Rhinoceros Species Survival Plan, according to the release.

The International Rhino Foundation said about 18,000 individual rhinos remain in the wild, and most are found in the grasslands of southern Africa. The main threat to the animals is illegal hunting because of the high demand for rhino horn for commercial and medicinal use, according to the release.

Northern white rhinos are now extinct in the wild because of poaching, zoo officials said.

“We are excited to give our members and guests the opportunity to once again connect and interact with these magnificent creatures that, without us, face an uncertain future,” Riverbanks president and CEO Thomas Stringfellow said in the release. “By simply visiting the zoo, our members and guests can create meaningful connections with our animals which inspire actions that have a lasting impact on conservation.”

White rhinos can weigh up to 6,000 pounds and reach 6 feet tall, but can run upwards of 30 miles per hour, according to the release. Officials said they are the most social of the five species of rhinoceros and the second largest land mammal behind the elephant.

Riverbanks visitors will notice some changes that have been made to the former elephant habitat to accommodate the new residents. The exhibit now features a large, elevated pavilion where visitors can experience the rhinos up-close, zoo officials said.

Those visitors must wear masks or face coverings at indoor and outdoor locations at the zoo because of Columbia’s recently passed ordinance, requiring everyone within the city limits over the age of 10 to cover their face in public during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Riverbanks has some other protocols in place to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Timed ticket reservations are required for visitors to get inside the zoo. Groups are limited to a maximum of eight visitors, and they have to wait for staggered entry times assigned for every half hour, officials said.

This rambunctious little rhino is one of an estimated 20,000 Southern white rhinoceroses around the world today.



Two female southern white rhinoceros, Kande and Winnifred, are the newest residents at Riverbanks Zoo & Garden. Riverbanks Zoo & Garden

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