



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**June 12, 2014****MEDIA CONTACT:**

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ABILENE, Texas -- One of the Abilene Zoo's rare black rhinoceros, Uhuru or "Ru" for short, has been called away for duty – breeding duty.

Ru will be moved to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose to live and mate with three females of his subspecies after pre-shipment exams are complete.

Born at the Fort Worth Zoo, Ru came to the Abilene Zoo in 2008 as a mere six-year-old. His father was a rhino captured in the African wild, which makes Ru's genetic profile ideal for mating and helping increase the sparse rhino population.



“Naturally, the staff is sad to see him go,” said Denise Ibarra, head mammal zookeeper. “But we know he’s going into a great situation and happy life. He’ll be doing important work.”

The Abilene Zoo still will have one black rhinoceros, Macho, on exhibit.

Black rhinos (*Diceros bicorni*) are a critically endangered species, and Ru is part of the rarest subspecies of the group, a southern black rhino.

His move to Fossil Rim is part of the International Rhino Foundation, which works to ensure the health and genetic diversity of the captive population so that black rhinos eventually can be re-introduced into protected areas in southern Africa.

Less than 2,300 of Ru's species are left in the wild, and only 115 black rhinos live in captivity in Association of Zoos and Aquariums -accredited facilities. The native population has been victimized by rampant poaching for their horns, which are prized in Asian countries for their mythical medicinal purposes.

According to the International Rhino Foundation, during the last century, the black rhino has suffered the most drastic decline in total numbers of all rhino species. Between 1970 and 1992, the population of the species decreased by 96 percent. In 1970, it was estimated that there were approximately 65,000 black rhinos in Africa – but, by 1993, only 2,300 survived in the wild. That number slowly has been improving, thanks to international efforts by many organizations dedicated to the rhinos' survival, but diligent work still must be done.

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About the Abilene Zoo: The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 900 animals from 250 species. The Zoo offers many educational programs and kids' activities, including camps, birthday parties and Behind the Scenes Tours. The Abilene Zoo is open 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3.50 for children ages 3-12, \$5 for seniors aged 60+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$30. www.abilenezoo.org. 325-676-6085. Summer hours run through August with the zoo is open every Thursday until 9 p.m., with admission ending at 8:30 p.m.