We have experienced a whirlwind of growth at the zoo during the past 50 years, but even with all of the excitement in our past, nothing compares to the excitement of opening of Giraffe Safari later this spring.

This project will be the biggest ever completed at the zoo. It is one that will set a new standard for the future of our zoo and to everyone who visits from across Abilene and the world.

Many groups and individuals collaborated to bring this dream to reality — and this is what makes our zoo and our community special. Throughout the four years of Giraffe Safari’s creation, hundreds of people came together to build this important development in the growth of this great city.

Without a doubt, this project would not have been completed without the efforts of Gail Russey and the Grover Nelson Foundation Board of directors. This group has proven to be focused on the growth and enhancements in the Abilene Zoo for many years – Giraffe Safari, particular.

Abilene Zoological Society Board members have supported this project from planning and designing to fundraising and preparing for the grand opening. Each board member has provided financial support, volunteer hours, and encouragement. I would like to extend a generous thank you to our past two board presidents, Dr. Sara Core and John Pennington, for their vision and tireless efforts leading the way. A committee, orchestrated by Kathy Morehead, continues to see this project through from beginning to end carrying all of us toward the goal of unveiling it to the public.

Bill Gersonde, director of the Abilene Zoo, and his staff have worked countless hours on the project. The City of Abilene has been a vital partner, as well. We are blessed and thankful for the support our city provides to the Abilene Zoo.

Local foundations, corporate sponsors, and close to 1000 families and individual donors joined to help us accomplish this vision. We are grateful to our Buy-A-Spot donors and the many children that joined our Tall Neck Club. Every small and large gift, every encouraging word, every hour spent planning and preparing continue to be vital.

It is a blessing and a privilege to see this community project go from dreaming to opening. We truly go far working together as a proud community. Come and celebrate Giraffe Safari with us!
Many of you have been watching the construction, and everyone has been patiently waiting. Now, after more than four years of planning, fund-raising and building, “Giraffe Safari” will be ready to open next month. Once again, guests will feed giraffe at the Abilene Zoo. I think you’ll be pleased when our herd of giraffe take the stage and you stand face-to-face with these animals from the new feeding deck in Twiga Terrace. Instead of crackers, guests will be able to purchase lettuce, a much healthier choice for our animals, and enjoy the unique experience of hand feeding a giraffe.

Several new species to the Abilene Zoo will be taking up residence in Giraffe Safari. Blue duikers, red river hogs, kori bustards, and marabou storks will inhabit the surrounding exhibits. Our troop of colobus monkeys will be relocated from their current exhibit to a huge new enclosure, and a flock of helmeted guinea fowl will scurry under the feet of the giraffe. Giraffe Safari promises to be a little slice of Africa right here in Abilene!

A project of this magnitude would not be possible without the efforts of hundreds of people. From members of the zoo board’s fund-raising team and the Grover Nelson Foundation to the zoo and city staff, hundreds of donors and skilled designers, combined efforts have made Giraffe Safari become a wonderful reality.

We hope you will enjoy this new facility and will take advantage of the opportunity to learn more about several magnificent African species.

See you at the member’s preview!
March 12 - Snake Celebration Day  Learn all about these slithery reptiles and their important role in our environment. Activities from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  Free with admission.

March 26 -  Breakfast with the Easter Bunny  9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.  $15 for adults, $10 for children

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As part of the zoo's 50th anniversary this year, the zoo is collecting favorite photos and memories from time at the Abilene Zoo. People always tell us they treasure their time with friends and family at their zoo, and we want to create an exhibit of these cherished events.

Please send us your favorite photos in a digital format, 3000 pixels (if possible) to Abilene.zoo@abilenetx.com. Include the date your photo was taken and description of why it is memorable to you. Didn’t carry a smart phone with you way back then and don’t have a photo? That’s OK. We want to hear your favorite stories, too! Please limit your favorite zoo story to 150 words so we can have a concise tale to print out and share with others. Include your name and contact information and email to Abilene.zoo@abilenetx.com before May 2.
It's time to sign up for the summer teen program

If you have been interested in working at the zoo, Zoo Teens might be for you! We are looking for enthusiastic teens entering 8th grade through graduating seniors, interested in helping with our camps and helping our keepers. Applications are due April 19.

Zoo Teen Responsibilities:

**Jr. Keeper:** Work with the animal staff to complete their daily duties. This includes; raking, shoveling, hosing, bending, feeding, doing dishes, lifting and hauling. Jr. Keepers will work behind the scenes in close proximity to animals, but there will be little to no contact with the animals. Jr. Keepers will not work in cat or venomous reptile areas.

**Jr. Counselor:** Work with the education staff to put on Educational Summer Camps. Jr. Counselors will assist camp teachers in guiding the learning of campers through zoo tours, crafts and animal encounters. In addition, Jr. Counselors will learn how to handle and present certain education animals, both to campers and to members of the public.

Get an application from our website [http://abilenezoo.org/support-the-zoo/zoo-teens/](http://abilenezoo.org/support-the-zoo/zoo-teens/) or from the gift shop. Call 325-676-6487 or email zoo.education@abilenetx.com if you have questions!

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**Animal:** Angolan Colobus  
**Scientific name:** *Colobus angolensis*  
**Native habitat:** Dense rainforests of Southern and Eastern Africa  
**Diet:** Leaves, plants, seeds, fruit and bark  
**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable  
**Other information:** Colobus monkeys spend most of their days in trees eating leaves and can jump up to thirty feet from tree to tree. Unlike other primates, colobus do not have opposable thumbs. Colobus live in troops of 4-20 members defended by a dominant male and led by a dominant female. Females stay with the troop they are born into while young males leave the troop to start bachelor groups or to travel alone until they are able to take over their own troop. Colobus are born pure white and change color as they get older. By three months of age they are the black and white of the adults.
Preschool Ages 3 & 4: For this drop off camp, kids need to be potty trained and able to stay without an adult. AM session 9-11:30, PM session 12:30-3. $75 members/$85 non-members

Artsy Animals: June 6-10 (am session only) or July 25-29
Make art that focuses on different animals and their patterns
Hop To It: June 27-July 1 Learn about how animals get around

Ages 5 and Kindergarten:
Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
Scales, Feathers and Fur: June 13-17 or July 18-22
Learn about the different animal groups
Night and Day: June 27-July 1 or August 1-5 Learn about nocturnal animals

Entering 1st: Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
Home on the Range: June 13-17 or July 25-29
Learn about animals that call the grasslands home
Fabulous Flyers: July 11-15 or August 8-12
Learn about animals that can fly and soar – from birds to reptiles

Entering 2nd or 3rd Grade:
Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
African Safari: June 20-24 or July 18-22
Learn about the animals that call Africa Home
Chomp: July 4-8 or August 8-12
Learn about the amazing ways animals catch their food

Entering 4th or 5th Grade:
Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
Endangered!: July 11-15 or August 1-5
Come learn about the endangered animals and ways to save them
Zoo School: June 20-24 Learn about the zoo and how we care for the animals

Entering 6th or 7th Grade:
Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
Junior Zoo Keeper: July 4-8
Learn how to take care of the animals and shadow different departments.
Zoo School: June 20-24
Learn all about the zoo and how we care for the animals

Entering Kindergarten-5th grades:
Camp times 9-3. $135 members/$155 non-members
Party Animal: August 15-19 Play games and learn about animals!

After Camp Care is available until 5:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until 4:30 p.m. on Friday for all full-day camps. Cost is $15 per day or $65 for the week. Please indicate if you will need this service.

Cancellation Policy: If unable to attend a scheduled camp, please notify us within two weeks of the camp start for a refund, less a $10 cancellation processing fee. No refunds will be given for unattended days of camp.

Questions? Contact the Education Department at 325-676-6487 or zoo.education@abilenetx.com
Saving giraffe in the wild

The Abilene Zoo is proud to support the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, an organization that is dedicated to protecting all nine sub-species of giraffe.

Giraffe have already become extinct in seven countries because of threats such as poaching, habitat loss, and competition with grazing livestock. The Giraffe Conservation Foundation combines the use of research, population management, and education to help protect giraffe and their populations. There are two projects that are particularly exciting for us here at the Abilene Zoo because they help the wild ancestors of our very own Abilene giraffes!

Our giraffes, Asha, Punk, and our young baby are all reticulated giraffes. This subspecies historically ranges through parts of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Unfortunately reticulated giraffe populations have dropped 80 percent in the past 15 years. The Giraffe Conservation Foundation is working to help turn things around for reticulated giraffes with a project in Kenya. The Conservation with Pastorals project researches native giraffe populations and their environment to uncover the causes of their problems. It also includes creating the Twiga Walinzi (giraffe guards), a team of pastoralists (herders) to conduct patrols for giraffe and manage camera trap placements.

Our adult male giraffe, Masi, is a Rothschild giraffe. The Rothschild giraffe is listed as endangered and is approaching critically endangered status. Kicking off on 2014's World Giraffe Day was Operation Twiga. Operation Twiga moved a herd of Rothschild giraffe across the Nile River and into the southern part of Murchison Falls National Park. With more than 80 percent of Rothschilds living north of the river, it was important to relocate the herd to increase their range and create a satellite population in a new area. The last update on the giraffe is that they are doing well in their location, and we hope that their numbers continue to grow!

To learn more about projects at the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, please visit their website: www.giraffeconservation.org. Also be sure to stop by the zoo on June 25, when we will be celebrating World Giraffe Day!
HELP NAME THE NEW BABY GIRAFFE!

The contest winner will get a private meet and greet with the new baby giraffe!

The zoo staff got together and chose three potential names for our new reticulated giraffe calf. They considered his African heritage, his gender, his story of coming to Abilene from Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, and his general adorableness.

Choose from these three Swahili names and mail us this ballot. After the votes are tallied, we will draw one ballot from the pile of votes for the most popular name, and that person will win the meet and greet animal encounter.

Enzi: Pronounced EHNZiy. Enzi is of African-Swahili origin and means “powerful.”

Jumoke: Pronounced j-oo-M-OH-k-eh. This is a Swahili word that means “everyone loves the child.”

Kito: Pronounced KIY-Tow. A child’s name used mainly in African and Swahili. It means “precious gem.”

Name:____________________________________________________________

Address:__________________________________________________________

Phone:___________________________________________________________

Send your ballot before March 20 to:
Abilene Zoo, Giraffe Naming Contest, 2070 Zoo Lane, Abilene, Texas 79602.
Or email a response to abilene.zoo@abilenetx.com.
Bringing up baby

As many of you know, the zoo received a new giraffe calf from another facility recently. The youngster couldn’t nurse from his mother and needed intensive care and attention from zoo staff. He’s a handful, but nobody’s complaining!

Each morning our baby’s day starts at 7:30 a.m. Keepers prepare a formula that is especially formulated to meet the fat, protein and caloric requirements for baby giraffes. Our baby enjoys his milk about 102 degrees. Right now our baby is fed two liters of formula, four times per day, but that will change as he grows. The baby is weighed twice weekly to ensure he is growing on schedule and adjustments are made as needed. At this stage, he’s only nibbling or licking on adult food. Eventually we will wean him off bottles as he begins eating hay and grain that is formulated for giraffes. Weaning should begin around five or six months of age and be completed around eight to nine months -- as long as he is eating an adequate amount of adult food by then.

Hand-raising a giraffe calf is not only time consuming but also can be very complicated. Calves that must be hand-raised do not get “first milk” from their mothers; therefore, these babies do not have the best immune systems and tend to be susceptible to infections. Fortunately, this is not rare in baby cows and horses so there are injectable medications available to help. Our baby giraffe was given one of these products during his first day of life at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center to help give him the best chance at a healthy life. Keepers and veterinary staff observe the baby several times on a daily basis to make sure he is acting normally. If there is any concern, the baby is closely examined to ensure nothing is wrong with him. Testing is routinely performed on his feces and blood to ensure the baby remains healthy. Since the baby is in a new environment and is curious about that environment, there is always a risk that he will ingest parasites so he is treated with medications to help prevent those infections.

Since his arrival he has been slowly introduced to our herd and is now with Asha, one of our adult females, all the time. Asha and the baby have indoor and outdoor access throughout the day. Although the baby is adorable and interacting with him is beyond rewarding, the most important thing for him right now is to be with other giraffes!
Behavioral management takes on many different roles in a zoo, especially when opening a new exhibit.

Because animal enrichment includes any change in environment, everything about the new exhibit and holding areas will be enriching for the animals. Training the animals in preparation for these new areas is important. Animal training takes on many different forms: introducing animals to others in the group, training them to shift into crates for easy moves, and even training for medical behaviors such as blood draws and weights.

Our giraffe team is not only raising a baby giraffe and introducing that baby to the adults, they are also training them to enter a hallway in order to be weighed and have routine veterinary checkups. The design of that hallway allows staff to access all areas of a giraffe’s body safely from their heads to their hooves.

Some of our other new arrivals such as the red river hogs and blue duikers are enjoying playing with their enrichment items and learning some basic training behavior such as shifting in and out of their holding areas and crating. The crating behavior is essential for non-stressful moves from their current holding areas to their new exhibits.

Even though animals are not yet on exhibit, our staff is working hard to get them ready, and we are excited about sharing their training and enrichment experiences with you.

Photos by Liz Kellerman
SAVE THE DATE!

GIRAFFE SAFARI
MEMBERS ONLY

SNEAK PEEK

APRIL 14, 2016
4 p.m. to 7 p.m.