



NEWS RELEASE

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VIRGINIA ZOO MOURNS AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Norfolk, Va. – The Virginia Zoo is deeply saddened to announce the death Tuesday of Monica, one of its female African elephants.

“Monica played a central role in the Virginia Zoo family and was a favorite of both visitors and staff,” said Greg Bockheim, executive director of the Virginia Zoo. “It’s a very sad time for us. We will all miss her very much.”

Monica was euthanized at approximately 7 p.m. after battling an unknown illness. She had been under observation for several months and her condition worsened suddenly in early April. The 38-year old elephant experienced neurologic malfunction, loss of trunk coordination and reduced muscle mass. Since her condition’s cause was unknown, Monica received vitamin supplements and treatment for possible infections, and close attention was paid to maintaining her hydration and diet.

“It was a heart-wrenching decision, but her quality of life changed significantly this week and we didn’t want her to suffer,” Bockheim said. “Monica lost interest in socializing with staff and other elephants, and experienced further deterioration of both her mental and physical condition.”

The Virginia Zoo is committed to elephant care and is continuing efforts to determine the cause of Monica’s illness. Monica’s remains will be examined by a team of nationally recognized elephant veterinary experts. As soon as more information becomes available, it will be shared with the public and with other zoos nationwide to help increase our shared understanding of elephants and their care.

ZOO MOURNS ELEPHANT

African elephants are threatened in the wild and are part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Programs (SSP). Through a wide range of activities, including cooperative breeding programs, research, public education, fundraising and field projects, zoos are working to ensure the long range survivability of elephants. The Virginia Zoo encourages people wishing to honor Monica's memory to make a donation to the International Elephant Foundation's My Elephant Neighbor project, which educates children near wild elephant habitat and involves them in conservation efforts. Donations can be made at <http://www.elephantconservation.org/donation.php>.

Monica, along with Cita and Lisa, was one of three elephant residents at the Virginia Zoo. She came to the Virginia Zoo in July 1976 at the age of three. She was born with only one tusk and, like all the elephants at the Virginia Zoo, was noted for her artwork.



(L-R) Lisa, Monica and Cita, the Virginia Zoo's three African elephants. Monica was euthanized Tuesday after battling an unknown illness (Virginia Zoo photo by Greg Bockheim).

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