

Fresno Chaffee Zoo gets two elephants for new African exhibit

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The Fresno Chaffee Zoo opened its arms to a pair of new additions to the family — two African elephants that have traveled from Arkansas to Fresno for the new 13-acre African Adventure exhibit set to open in late October.

The mother/daughter duo consist of Amy, 27, and Ms. Betts, 7, who have been transferred from Riddle's Wildlife Sanctuary to the Chaffee Zoo. The move is based on an attempt to establish a breeding herd and ensure the survival of African elephants, which are currently considered vulnerable to poaching and habitat loss in sub-Saharan Africa.

The first African elephants to come to the zoo, Amy and Ms. Betts are some of the largest terrestrial animals on the planet. The elephants join two cheetahs and four wildebeest that have arrived for the zoo's new exhibit.

15,500 the weight, in pounds, of the largest African elephants

300 the weight, in pounds, of plant material an elephant can eat daily

"Animal transportation takes a lot of time and planning," said Dan Subaitis, the zoo's general curator. "Our goal was to get the animals moved in before it gets too hot. This also gives them time to acclimate and get comfortable in their new surroundings."

The animals are under quarantine and observation during the transition to their new home and are not yet on exhibit, said zoo veterinarian Dr. Lewis Wright. The animals are expected to clear quarantine before the African Adventure exhibit opens.

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