

## **THE FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANTS IN CANADA'S ACCREDITED ZOOS**

Recently an article entitled “Compromised Survivorship in Zoo Elephants” was published in the magazine Science. This article raises many questions based on flawed data and analysis and does not reflect the good work being done with elephants in zoos today.

CAZA is concerned that this flawed study can be used to attack or criticize CAZA institutions unfairly. The data set on which the study is based covers the entire period from 1960 – 2005 in European zoos only and therefore distorts the reality of elephant management in CAZA zoos today. Using data from that extended time frame gives a reflection of the past rather than an accurate picture of the present.

It is widely recognized that elephant management in zoos has improved dramatically since the 1960's and 70's. Many advances since that time have improved elephant care and welfare in terms of more species appropriate exhibits, improved staff training, more comprehensive reproductive and health programs, and advancements in environmental enrichment.

The fact is that elephants in today's accredited zoos are as long-lived as elephants in Asia and Africa. The average life expectancy for female Asian elephants in professionally-managed zoological facilities in North America is 44.8 years. The current female African elephant life expectancy in professionally-managed zoological facilities is 33 years.

### **ELEPHANTS IN CANADA**

- There are 21 Asian elephants in Canada (5 male, 16 female) in 4 institutions.
- There are 10 African elephants (1 male, 9 female) in 4 institutions
- All elephants that reside permanently in Canada are in CAZA accredited facilities.

- **The elephants in Canada have an excellent record for reproduction as compared to the rest of the elephant population in North America and Europe.**
- **CAZA elephant holding institutions conduct many valuable research projects in conjunction with international scientific and educational partners in a variety of fields.**
- **CAZA elephant holding institutions contribute to and participate in a large number of elephant conservation projects *in situ* for both Asian and African elephants.**
- **CAZA elephant holding institutions provide training for elephant managers and veterinarians dealing with elephants worldwide in the form of workshops, consultations, and the sharing of expertise, knowledge and experience.**
- **There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration between CAZA elephant holding institutions.**
- **There have been 15 Asian elephant births in Canada of which 12 are still living. Five of the births are second generation; there is one third generation birth. The 15 births are from 7 sires and 8 dams.**
- **Nineteen of the 21 Asian elephants in Canada are part of the Elephant Species Survival Plan/ Taxon Advisory Group (SSP/TAG). Six of the 10 African elephants in Canada are part of the SSP/TAG.**  
**The Species Survival Plan (SSP) is an American Zoo Association (AZA) cooperative breeding and conservation program designed to maintain a genetically viable and demographically stable population of a species in captivity and to organize zoo and aquarium based efforts to preserve the species *in situ*.**  
**A Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) is an AZA committee whose primary functions are to produce a Regional Collection Plan for a given taxon, including recommendations for new studbooks and Species Survival Plans and to facilitate the activities of relevant species management committees by providing a forum for discussing husbandry, ethics and other issues that apply to the entire taxon.**
- **CAZA elephant holding facilities have developed excellent partnerships with other elephant facilities worldwide.**