

THE NORFOLK
Compass



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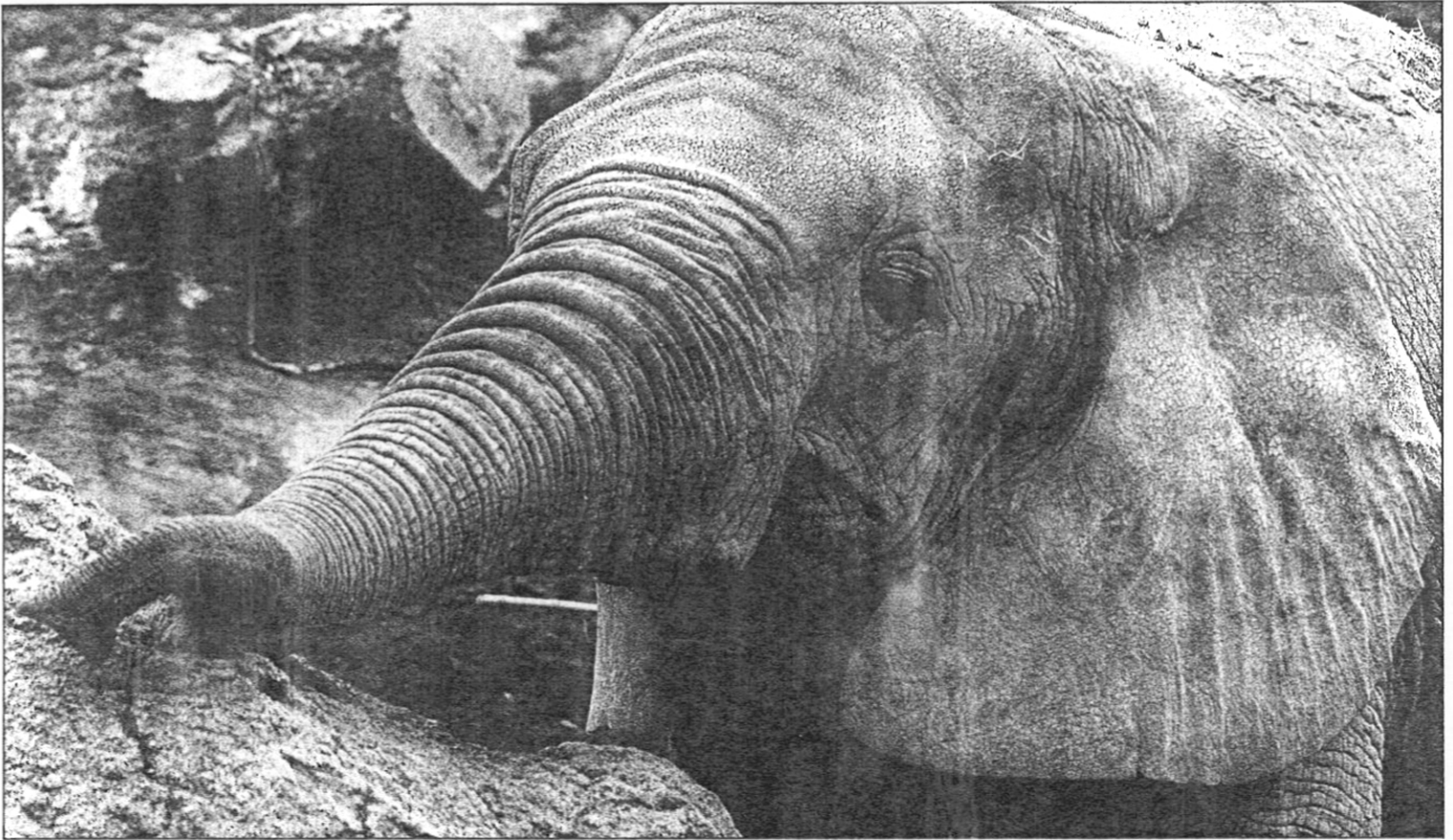
Visitors head for the new Africa exhibit at Virginia Zoological Park in Norfolk during Saturday's opening.

Out *of* AFRICA

Okavango Delta, the new Africa exhibit, made its long-anticipated debut last weekend at Norfolk's Virginia Zoological Park

PAGES 8-9

COVER STORY



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One of the zoo's two elephants, which have been part of the existing park for years, enjoys the new, more spacious surroundings at the Okavango Delta Africa exhibit.

A NEW VIEW AT THE ZOO

BY JOAN C. STANUS
THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

DESPITE COOL temperatures and rainy skies, an estimated 9,000 visitors flocked to the Virginia Zoo last weekend to be among the first to take a "walking safari" through Africa, Norfolk-style.

As part of the opening of the zoo's long-awaited Okavango Delta exhibit, all things Africa were on tap for the grand opening celebration weekend. Zulu dancers, stilt walkers, African drummers, storytellers and other performers entertained, and exhibitors displayed African artifacts and crafts.

Not surprisingly, the animals and their new naturalistic habitats were the major attraction. Animals on view to the public for the first time were a

zebra, several bongos, pancake tortoise, monitor lizards, African rock python, various exotic African birds, a rock hyrax and a brush-tale porcupine.

Longtime zoo favorites, like the African elephants and Southern white rhinoceros, had been moved into new habitats for the opening. Zoo officials were "thrilled" with the turnout from the public.

"It was just fabulous," noted Tammy Lindquist, the zoo's marketing director. "We had record attendances, record sales in the gift shop and some 200 new family memberships over the weekend."

Although a few people were upset that all the exhibit's animals had yet to arrive, most people understood, noted Lindquist.

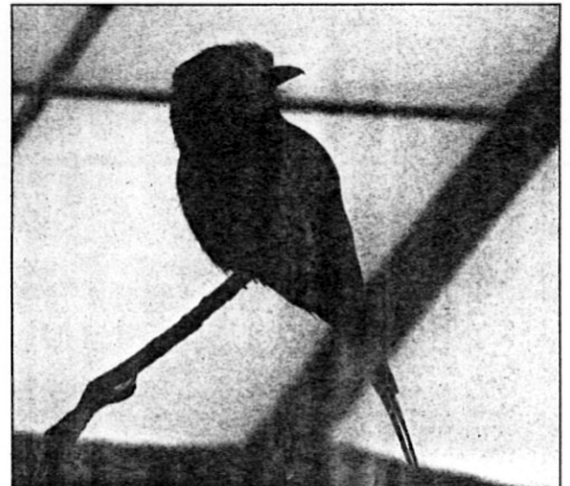
"They realized that our first concern was for the welfare of

the animals," she said.

As conditions become right for their introduction, more animals will be shipped to the zoo over next few months.

Two new lions are expected to be on display later this month, and more will arrive later this year. Other new animals arriving within the next few months are the meerkats, two Masai giraffe, two female zebras, a gazelle and a dik dik.

By next spring, the exhibit should be completely populated, officials note. A new \$5 million education and visitors center will also open this summer. "Every two weeks or so this summer, we'll have something new and exciting for people to see," noted Louise Hill, animal supervisor. "We hope they'll just keep coming back." If opening weekend was an indication, they will in droves.



MARK MITCHELL/THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

A Lilac Breasted Roller was one of the many exotic birds in the new Africa exhibit.

COVER STORY



MARK MITCHELL
PHOTOS/THE
VIRGINIAN PILOT

LEFT: A Gelada baboon mugs for the camera during Saturday's opening of the Okavango Delta exhibit.

BELOW: As patrons began heading through the gate, workers put the finishing touches on the Education and Visitors complex.

ZOO AT A GLANCE

HOURS: Open Daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
PRICE: Adults-12 & up \$ 3.50; Senior Citizens 62 & older \$1.00; Child (2-11) \$ 1.75
AMENITIES: In addition to new Africa exhibit, more than 150 animals in natural habitats, discovery farm, six exhibits featuring animal life from Australia, South America, North America and Asia, a Great Dismal Swamp exhibit, conservatory, programs for children, horticulture programs, special events, and restaurants.
PARKING: Free.



LEFT: With the lion exhibit in the background, visitors walk along the new trails through the Okavango Delta exhibit Saturday at the Virginia Zoological Park.



RIGHT: Holly, an African Pygmy goat, was held on a leash so visitors could pet her.