

Written by Ryan Bickel
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Des Moines (December 6, 2012) – Two eastern black rhinoceros have arrived at Blank Park Zoo in preparation for the new \$4 million Africa exhibit opening next spring.

“Rhinoceros are the perfect addition to the Blank Park Zoo. They are a very large animal that will be popular with our guests. They are also an animal in great danger in the wild as poachers are killing them at devastating rates because of the value of their horns,” said Mark Vukovich, CEO of Blank Park Zoo. “We want to raise awareness about this because it’s possible that within our lifetime these animals will be extinct in the wild.”

According to the International Rhino Foundation, there are less than 5,000 black rhinos left in the wild and less than 30,000 of all species of rhinos.

Blank Park Zoo acquired two black rhinoceros, a male named Kiano and a female named Ayana. The rhinos are part of a breeding program called a species survival plan (SSP), and zoo officials hope they will breed when they become mature. This program’s goal is to maintain a sustainable population of black rhinos in zoos. The male came from the Great Plains Zoo in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and the female came from Zoo Miami in Florida. Ayana was born in August 2010 and weighs 1,900 pounds and Kiano was born in October 2010 and weighs just over 1,000 pounds.

Ayana and Kiano are now going through a required thirty day ‘quarantine’ process which helps the animals become accustomed to their new home and keepers monitor their health and stress. Once this process is completed, keepers will begin to introduce the animals to each

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other.

About Black Rhinoceros (source: International Rhino Foundation, www.rhinos.org)

The black rhinoceros has two horns, with the front one being the larger of the two. They can weigh up to 3,000 pounds and be 5.5 feet tall at shoulder height and up to 12.5 feet long if you include the head and body. The black rhino has a prehensile lip that is well-suited for grasping branches, leaves and shrubs. This is the species' most distinguishing characteristic. The black rhino lives in Africa, primarily in grasslands, savannahs and tropical bush lands. Female rhinos reach maturity at four to seven years of age while males reach maturity at seven to ten years. Between 1970 and 1992, the wild population of this species has decreased by 96 percent. The term 'black rhino' is believed to come about because of the color of the soil the rhino covers itself with while wallowing in the mud. Unlike the white rhino, black rhinos are only semi-social and do not live in herds.

About Blank Park Zoo

Blank Park Zoo, Iowa's WILDEST Adventure, is open 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. seven days a week this winter. The Zoo will be closed Dec. 24 & 25, & Jan. 1. Winter Admission rates are \$7 for adults, \$3 for children under 12, and \$6 for seniors and active military. Children two years and under and Blank Park Zoo members are free. The Zoo is located at 7401 SW 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50315. Visit the Zoo online at <http://www.blankparkzoo.com> . The Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) The AZA is America's leading accrediting organization that sets rigorous, professional standards for zoos and aquariums. The AZA is building North America's largest wildlife conservation movement by engaging and inspiring the 143 million annual visitors to its member institutions and their communities to care about and take action to help protect wildlife.

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