

C O L O R A D O

Free!

P A R E N T

Reaching Boulder & Denver Metro Area Parents • ColoradoParent.com • September 2004

The AD/HD Parent

Are You an Adult
with an Attention
Disorder?

**6 Hot
Button Issues
in Education
Today**

Al Roker

He's Still
a Big Guy

**"A-maze-ing"
Family Fun**

Check Out Our
Calendar of Events



CHECK IT OUT!

Behind the Scenes at Predator Ridge

Recent visitors to the Denver Zoo have noticed sweeping changes: the front entrance has been completely remodeled, and with the opening of "Predator Ridge" there are abundant new opportunities for learning and discovery. The new main entrance features 22 life-size stainless-steel sculptures of giraffes, crocodiles and lions, evoking the wildlife to be found inside, along with a new "open-air" gift shop and coffee concession.

The first phase of a four-part, \$125 million master plan, Predator Ridge is an example of what zoos nationwide are trying to achieve – larger, more naturalistic exhibits. Predator Ridge consists of a series of dynamic exhibits designed to recreate a portion of the Samburu National Reserve in Kenya, Africa. Fourteen African species of mammals, birds and reptiles totaling 50 animals ramble across the eight-acre site. Lions, spotted hyenas, African wild dogs, crowned cranes, African porcupines, banded mongoose, vulture guinea fowl and more meander through the rock outcroppings and landscaping.

The "Lion Kopje" (pronounced COE-pee, an Afrikaans term for a rocky outcropping) exhibit is home to two prides of lions. Great care has been taken to provide the animals with features that evoke a wild environment. The lion habitat features 10-foot-tall mounds so they can survey their surroundings and electric "hot rocks" for warmth. One of the lion pride groups, including two males, Rian and Rajah, were already zoo residents – the other pride, the most genetically diverse in the country, was granted to the zoo in hopes of breeding taking place. To that end, designers created a separate maternity den for mothers and future cubs, named Pahali Ya Mwana, Swahili for "Place of the Young".

Pahali Ya Simba, Swahili for "Place of the Lions," is the interactive discovery center that lets visitors learn more about the Samburu Game Reserve and the new animals in the exhibits, as well as watch the zookeepers as

they work with the predators.

A new perk for the spotted hyenas and wild dogs includes rotating them through the various exhibits so that their sense of smell is excited by the presence of the previous inhabitants. These predator animals have been taught basic verbal commands so that they can, for instance, put out a paw or nose for vaccinations or contraceptive injections. The training reduces the need for anesthesia and can help to lower the animals' stress level.

Other areas of Predator Ridge showcase multiple species habitats – which means that the banded mongoose, East African crowned crane and the crested porcupine share the same enclosure, while nearby the African dik-dik (a tiny antelope species) and the vulture guinea fowl share space as they would in the wild.

Aside from providing for the outstanding wildlife, the exhibit's designers created inventive educational opportunities for visitors. Boulder-based ECOS Communications created many of the lively educational and interactive materials in the exhibit with kids in mind. More than 30 bronze sculptures of life-sized bugs, birds, reptiles and insects grace the exhibit. Built at ground level, they may go unnoticed by many adults, but children will be enchanted.

And what's a trip to the zoo without a trip to the bathroom? ECOS worked closely with zoo staff to create a colorful walkway that resembles a tropical riverbed ecosystem complete with a swimming tiger, hippo, frogs and crocodiles leading to the restrooms. Animal sounds are piped into the restrooms, and a voice comes from the speakers every few minutes discussing water conservation tips or animal facts related to a bathroom topic.

