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From Canada to California: Performing Animal Welfare Society Welcomes Three African Elephants To Its Sanctuary

Trip to Natural Habitat Refuge Funded by Television Legend Bob Barker

SAN ANDREAS, California — On October 20, 2013, three African elephants from the Toronto Zoo in Ontario, Canada, arrived at the Performing Animal Welfare Society's (PAWS) ARK 2000 sanctuary in San Andreas, California. Their trip was funded by Award-winning television host, Bob Barker, who ardently advocated for the move, while PAWS assumes the financial responsibility for the lifelong care of the elephants. The elephants Toka, age 43, Thika, age 33, and Iringa, age 44, will eventually share an 80-acre natural habitat with the sanctuary's three resident African elephants, Mara, Maggie and Lulu.

"We are very happy that Toka, Thika and Iringa are finally here," said PAWS' president and co-founder, Ed Stewart. "PAWS looks forward to seeing these elephants make the transition from living in a zoo for most, if not all, of their lives, to exploring their expansive new home and meeting our resident African elephants. The elephants will receive excellent care from a dedicated staff, as they settle into their new lives at our sanctuary."

"This move has been a long time coming, but what matters is that the elephants are here," said Bob Barker, who was there to welcome the elephants, along with United Activists for Animal Rights president Nancy Burnet. "I am so excited for Toka, Iringa and Thika. The PAWS sanctuary is a place where elephants can just be elephants. It truly is a paradise for these magnificent animals."

"After their cross-country journey, our first priority is getting them settled in and comfortable in their new home," said Dr. Jackie Gai, DVM, PAWS' veterinarian. "I'm looking forward to getting to know Iringa, Toka, and Thika, and we are committed to providing them with the best care possible."

"PAWS thanks all of the people who made the road trip with Iringa, Thika and Toka," said Stewart. "You couldn't find a better or more qualified crew." California-based Active Environments coordinated the move, under the direction of Margaret Whittaker. Accompanying the elephants on their trip to ARK 2000 were Dr. Joel Parrott, DVM, Executive Director, Oakland Zoo; Pat Lampi, Executive Director, Alaska Zoo; Dr. Andrea Goodnight, DVM, Associate Veterinarian, Oakland Zoo; Jeff Kinzley, Elephant Manager, Oakland Zoo; Scott Blais, International Elephant Consultant, Co-founder, The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee.

The Toronto Zoo board voted in May 2011 to end the zoo's elephant program and send the elephants to another facility. The decision was based on a recommendation made in a March 2011 report that cited the high cost of building a new elephant facility, among other issues. In October 2011, the Toronto City Council voted 31-4 to move the elephants to PAWS.

PAWS now cares for 11 elephants at its 2,300-acre, natural habitat sanctuary that features grassy, rolling hills and fresh vegetation for natural foraging. The elephants include three female Asian elephants (Annie, Wanda and Gypsy), two male Asian elephants (Prince and Nicholas), and the six African elephants. The elephants have been relocated from circuses and zoos, including the Alaska Zoo, and Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos such as the Detroit Zoo, the Los Angeles Zoo, the San Francisco Zoo, and the Milwaukee Zoo.

The move comes amid a larger debate about the suitability of keeping elephants in captivity, and on the heels of documentaries such as HBO's "An Apology To Elephants" (for which Lily Tomlin won an Emmy) and The Fifth Estate's "The Elephant in the Room," and *The Seattle Times'* 2012 report on elephants in zoos, "Glamour Beasts: The Dark Side of Elephant Captivity."

To date, 25 zoos have closed, or will be closing, their elephant exhibits, for reasons ranging from lack of funding for exhibit expansions to welfare concerns such as inadequate space, unsuitably cold climates, and insufficient social groups. Other zoos are enlarging older exhibits to provide more space for their elephants.

For more information about PAWS, please visit www.pawsweb.org.

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Founded in 1984, PAWS operates three sanctuaries for captive wildlife. Located in the cities of Galt, Herald and San Andreas, California, these sanctuaries are home to more than 100 rescued and retired animals, including 11 elephants, African lions, bears, tigers and other exotic animals. PAWS is licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and is rated a 4-star charity with Charity Navigator.