

MOTION

Billy, the Asian bull elephant who has lived for decades at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens (Zoo), has spent much of his time in Los Angeles in less than optimal conditions. For many years before the opening of the current Elephants of Asia exhibit he was kept alone in a small enclosure where he was subjected to hard surfaces not considered beneficial for his feet and joints, and an alleged lack of sufficient exercise and stimulation. He has been exhibiting abnormal (stereotypical) behavioral patterns many elephant experts characterize as indicating detrimental impacts from that environment.

In the new exhibit Billy and the other elephants have had more – yet still inadequate - space but still experience a lack of soft surfaces, and Billy's very presence along with the cows (females) Tina and Jewel, have necessitated that the acreage be divided into large corrals so that Billy can be kept separate, as is standard for elephant bulls and cows in captivity. This substantially has compromised the costly effort to expand the usable space for the Zoo's elephants.

Additionally, in the last several years the Zoo has been attempting to collect genetic material from Billy for use in assisted captive breeding efforts in North America. Techniques for collecting this material are inherently problematic and extremely invasive, adding to the list of ways Billy's long stay at the Zoo has been detrimental to his well-being. According to the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, "Elephants in zoos breed poorly or not at all." Noting that, for assisted reproduction, timing is crucial, the Institute's website continues, "...Unfortunately, techniques for freezing an elephant's (reproductive material) and then thawing it at the opportune moment have not been perfected." This suggests that Billy could continue to be subjected to invasive treatment in the future with scant prospect of effectuating successful breeding.

It is time the physical discomfort, potential threats to his health, and other indignities Billy has suffered for much of his life come to an end. Nearly a decade ago the Zoo sent Ruby, an African cow who would not fit the Asian elephant concept of the new exhibit, to the Performing Animal Welfare Society sanctuary in Northern California. This earned the Zoo plaudits and allowed Ruby to live out the rest of her life in the most positive environment then available to her in North America.

Subsequent litigation (*Leider v. Lewis*) found that the Zoo still needed to improve its care and treatment of elephants. The court found in favor of the plaintiff but, because the case remains under appeal, there remain questions as to whether the Zoo has genuinely complied with all of the prescriptions of the court for improved treatment of the elephants.

Billy has long since earned an opportunity to live free of doubts about the adequacy of his living situation. Relocating him to a sanctuary is the solution and there are indications that philanthropy may be available to underwrite it, making it cost-effective for the Zoo.