



## CLOSE-UP

# Inside Papago Park: Not Your Father's Zoo

If you haven't visited the zoo since you were a kid, you're in for a surprise. For more than 20 years, the Phoenix Zoo has led the world in shaping the modern park, with priorities that include conservation, positive training techniques, and a dedication to the concept of sanctuary.

Take, for example, the story of Half-Ear and Notch, two female white rhinos currently residing at the Phoenix Zoo. Notch, who sports a scored left ear, and Half-Ear, whose right ear is smaller than her left, lived for years in Ohio's The Wilds. The gals were housed together and largely got along, except for some scuffles over food. (No matter how close you are to a friend, a true lady prefers her own food pile.)

But age caught up with the rhinos and, well, face it, Ohio winters *are* miserable. Half-Ear and Notch grew testy in the freezing temperatures and were forced to seek shelter in a warm barn for nearly half of each year. The Wilds couldn't keep them any longer—35 bales of hay plus grain per day were expensive, and the ladies were too old to breed. Their future didn't look secure.

Jeff Giek and David Richardson, of Tempe-based Rhino Staging and Rhino Internet Solutions, heard about the plight of the Ohio rhinos and donated \$60,000 to rebuild the Phoenix Zoo rhino habitat and to truck the ladies to Phoenix.

And so, like millions of people, Half-Ear and Notch have come to balmy Arizona to spin out their golden years. They've found sanctuary at the Phoenix Zoo and are welcome as long as they live.

The Phoenix Zoo has been successful in another mission—conservation. In 1962, the first year of operation, the zoo took possession of the last seven known Arabian oryx (a type of antelope) in the world. At that time, a captive-breeding program was untested, but "Operation Oryx" performed miracles, and these animals are now spread throughout the world. In 2002 the zoo celebrated the birth of its 225th oryx, an example of private enterprise working well.

Trainers at the Phoenix Zoo use only positive-reinforcement techniques, never punishment—and it works. Some years ago the zoo received three female elephants, two of which had been trained with negative reinforcement. The three chased one another and demonstrated other aggressive tendencies. The zoo brought in an animal behaviorist, who provided puzzles to stimulate the elephant's minds—when they figure out the puzzle, they get a food reward. Today all three elephants, now strong and healthy, cooperate with handlers and get along together.

The zoo, located in Papago Park, is designed to provide a natural environment



*Half-Ear and Notch, two retired ladies, relax at the Phoenix Zoo. PHOTO BY JIM HUGHES*

for each species. Even now, this concept remains controversial because some people don't like having to search for zoo residents. But animals thrive in familiar terrain, surrounded by other species they might encounter in the wild. Each animal is given plenty of space, and a full-time nutritionist plans all meals. Every animal receives an

annual physical from one of the three veterinarians at the park.

The privately funded zoo is located at 455 North Galvin Parkway and is open daily. Visit [www.phoenixzoo.org](http://www.phoenixzoo.org) or call (602) 273-1341 for further information. You can e-mail Half-Ear or Notch from [www.followtherhinos.com/contact](http://www.followtherhinos.com/contact).