In the 50 years since Packy’s birth, we have learned more about elephants than was known in the previous 5,000 years. Zoos now have a much better understanding of what it takes to protect the physical well-being of these gentle giants and to satisfy their social and behavioral needs.

Thanks to funding from a 2008 bond, the Oregon Zoo is designing a new Asian elephant habitat that will put this understanding to work and exemplify the community’s commitment to animal welfare and sustainability. The habitat will not only exceed standards set by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums but also serve as a pioneering example of exhibit design.

As work progresses, the Oregon Zoo Foundation will be seeking donor support to augment the new habitat and ensure the zoo remains a world leader in elephant management and care.

**Timeline**

2010-2012: Research and design, with final designs completed by December 2012.

2013-2015: Construction will be conducted in stages so elephants can remain at the zoo.

**Animal welfare**

The habitat’s design prioritizes elephant comfort, health and enjoyment by meeting the animals’ physical and behavioral needs. Elephants will be able to participate in a variety of enriching social interactions and make more choices about how and where they spend their time. In the wild, females live in matriarchal herds where multiple generations typically remain together for life. The habitat will provide the space needed to support such family groups while giving bull elephants more opportunities to interact with female herds.

**Protecting wildlife**

Healthy elephants aren’t the new habitat’s only goal — its sustainable operations and visitor experience will also help keep ecosystems healthy. The new buildings will meet or exceed LEED silver certification standards and include eco-friendly features like native plantings and a geothermal loop; the loop draws on the earth’s relatively consistent underground temperature to provide heating and cooling. It will also inspire visitors to care about and protect Asian elephants through improved viewing opportunities, engaging informational displays and educational experiences.

The southern portion of the habitat includes the Elephant Meander outdoor habitat, Forest Hall and Elephant Building (barn).

Forest Hall, the habitat’s indoor viewing area.
**NEW ELEPHANT HABITAT**

**Elephant areas**

**Elephant Meadow:** A broad, grassy expanse of land, the northern habitat will be accessible to elephants from the Elephant Meander area.

**Forest Hall:** For visitors, this main indoor viewing area will offer both panoramic and up-close views of the animals as well as a variety of educational displays. For elephants, it will offer sand flooring, enrichment stations and access to the outdoors — elephants will often be able to come and go as they please.

**Elephant Building:** This behind-the-scenes barn will extend from Forest Hall. Features like natural flooring materials, spacious holding facilities and a quarantine area with its own heating and ventilation systems will help ensure elephant health and well-being. Taken together, Forest Hall and the Elephant Building form one of the largest indoor elephant facilities in North America at 40,000 square feet.

**Elephant Meander:** The habitat’s southern portion will have a rich landscape with mud flats, grassy hills, sandy beaches, water activity pools and shaded resting spots.

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**Oregon Zoo team**

- **Kim Smith**, zoo director
- **Mike Keele**, director of elephant habitats
- **Bob Lee**, elephant curator
- **Jim Mitchell**, project manager

**Design team**

- **SRG Partnership**, architects
- **CLR Design**, zoo exhibit architects
- **Atelier Dreiseitl**, landscape architects