

# News

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## SAINT LOUIS ZOO ANNOUNCES PREGNANT ELEPHANT

The Saint Louis Zoo has announced that one of its Asian elephants, Rani, is pregnant. Rani is 14 years old, and this will be her second birth. Her daughter, Jade, will turn three years old on February 25, 2010. The Zoo's bull elephant, 17-year-old Raja, is the father. He was the first Asian elephant ever born at the Zoo in 1992, and this calf will be his third offspring.

An elephant pregnancy lasts about 22 months. Rani will be due to deliver in early summer 2011.

"We are very excited about this pregnancy!" says Curator of Mammals Martha Fischer. "We are optimistic that everything will go well, and even though her due date is over a year away, we have already begun to prepare for Rani's delivery," adds Fischer. "We will modify Rani's regular exercise plan and add in stretches and exercises specifically designed to get her ready for the rigorous delivery," Fischer said. A newborn elephant weighs about 250-350 pounds. "Rani is already receiving regular prenatal and ultrasound exams by the veterinary team. Soon we should be able to determine the gender of the baby with blood tests."

Rani lives with Ellie, Jade and the rest of the elephant herd at the Zoo's River's Edge habitat. She and her mother Ellie arrived at the Saint Louis Zoo in 2001 from the Jacksonville Zoo, where Rani was born in 1996.

The Asian elephant is facing extinction in the wild. There are fewer than 35,000 Asian elephants left in the wild. Given the shrinking population of Asian elephants, the Saint Louis Zoo is committed to conserve this species. The Zoo participates in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Elephant Species Survival Plan, a national cooperative breeding and management program. Also, the Zoo supports the welfare and conservation of Asian elephants in Sumatra, Sri Lanka and other countries in Asia through the International Elephant Foundation, as well as the conservation of African elephants in Kenya.

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