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RIVER'S EDGE **Multi-species Immersion Exhibit**

A dramatic new immersion exhibit – River's Edge – opened in 2002. Visitors journey along a meandering waterway to see animals from South America, Africa, Asia and North America.

As guests enter the 10-acre exhibit, they become immersed in the animals' habitats including watching hippos float gracefully under water and elephants playing beneath a waterfall or diving into a deep pool. With educational "field stations" and limited barriers or buildings in sight, River's Edge stays true to the Zoo's mission to provide exhibits and projects that invite visitors to learn more about the world in which we live.

Visitors pass waterfalls cascading into a river. A light fog crosses the mud path, embedded with animal footprints and leaves. In the distance is the sound of a bird call, then a monkey chattering. Overhead, oropendola nests sway in the breeze.

The first animals that visitors encounter at River's Edge are at an Amazon backwater. Here there are **capybaras**, **bush dogs** and **giant anteaters**, which share a fragile ecosystem on which all are dependent for survival.

Up ahead a pair of **black rhinos** roams through Rhino Reserve, a rolling habitat with several vantage points. Because poachers continue to slaughter the black rhino for its horns, its population has been reduced by 96% since 1970. The St. Louis Zoo is an active participant in conservation research to help this critically endangered species.

Red river hogs, with their shaggy red coat and tasseled ears, make a colorful site at River's Edge. The male hogs have ridges and warts on their face. Sharing their space is a **bat-eared fox**, with enormous ears and fluffy gray coat. Unlike other foxes, its main diet is insects.

Nearby a colony of **carmine bee-eaters** shares its space with a busy beehive. The bright red and turquoise bee-eaters nest in colonies in cliffs near riverbanks, where they dig tunnels with their bills. On the watch for flying insects, a bee-eater snaps a catch with its bill, beats the insect against a perch and removes the sting if necessary.

Just beyond is Anheuser-Busch Hippo Harbor, a spectacular view of river **hippopotamuses**, massive in size yet elegant gliding through their underwater home. Hippos play a distinct role at the river bank. They spend much time socializing in the water, keeping their skin cool and digesting the food they grazed on the night before. Well adapted to the river, their eyes are on top of their head, and their nostrils face upward. They can even sleep while submerged.

river's edge
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An important part of the River's Edge landscape are the predators, spotted hyenas and cheetahs. Three female **spotted hyenas** live in a social clan. Female hyenas dominate the males and lead the clan on hunts. **Cheetahs** lead a more solitary life. Males and females usually come together only for breeding. At River's Edge, the cheetah survival center is designed so that appropriate introductions can be made. There's also a replica of an **African schoolhouse**, here where visitors can see how Namibian children learn about cheetah conservation and other African wildlife.

Near the cheetahs are the smallest carnivore of Africa, the **dwarf mongoose**, which prefers life in a termite mound. Agile and active, the mongooses run, jump and climb around their mound, sometimes with their diminutive offspring.

Up ahead is the Zoo's herd of **Asian elephants**. These magnificent and mighty creatures live in spacious natural habitats where they dive and swim in a deep channel of the river, take a dust bath or splash under a waterfall.

The end of the River's Edge journey brings visitors back to **Missouri wetlands** area. Here visitors see how wetlands act as "sponges" to soak up rainwater, as "filters" to strain impurities and as resting places for migrating birds. A simulated beaver dam shows how beavers act as natural modifiers of their environment, just like humans. The recreation of a **Missouri cabin** tells the story of the '93 flood and some of the reasons it came about. Visitors may wander through a cave to a 33,000-gallon Missouri River Aquarium with natives of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers.

An integral part of River's Edge is **River Camp**, which includes a conference/banquet facility for meetings and events, a refreshment stand and a picnic area.

Admission to the St. Louis Zoo and River's Edge is free.

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