



**Press Release**  
**For Immediate Release**  
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**For More Information**  
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## **ZOO STAFF MOURN THE LOSS OF MATRIARCH AFRICAN ELEPHANT**

**November 30, 2009, Toronto, Ontario:** With great sadness the Toronto Zoo today announces the sudden death of Tara, matriarch of the Zoo's elephant herd. Animal Care staff discovered Tara lying down and unable to stand up when they entered the Elephant House in the morning. She had not exhibited any recent signs of ill health. Attempts to get the 8,500 lb elephant back on her feet failed and she passed away at approximately 11:00 am, surrounded by her Keepers, Animal Health and Facilities staff who had tried valiantly to save her. Tara was 41. The average lifespan of elephants in captivity is 40 to 45 years.

A post-mortem will be conducted by Toronto Zoo Veterinary Staff, with assistance from the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, to hopefully determine the cause of death. Burial will take place on the Zoo site.

Tara was removed to the elephants' outdoor paddock area so the remaining elephants, Thika, Toka, and Iringa could have time alone with the body to mourn their loss.

The largest of the Zoo's elephants, Tara, was also 'the boss'. "She had a good relationship with all her Keepers," notes Eric Cole, Supervisor of the Zoo's African Savanna section. "She loved to have her face rubbed and would lower her head for this activity. Very food oriented, she was quite protective of her provisions. All the staff who worked with Tara are devastated by this unexpected loss. We will miss her greatly."

Born in the wilds of Southern Africa, Tara sailed to Canada via the Polish Ocean Liner Zabrze and arrived at the Toronto Zoo in 1974 shortly after the Zoo opened.

The Toronto Zoo participates in a Species Survival Plan (SSP) for elephants and works continuously to improve elephant care in captivity. Current research projects include a study of reproductive cycles in elephants. The Toronto Zoo also supports valuable field research projects through its Endangered Species Reserve Fund, to help preserve this magnificent species in the wild.

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