



**Press Release  
For Immediate Release**

**For More Information  
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## **THE TORONTO ZOO ANNOUNCES THE UNEXPECTED DEATH OF AFRICAN ELEPHANT "TESSA"**

**Sunday, June 14, 2009, Toronto, Ontario:** Toronto Zoo today announced the unexpected death of 'Tessa', a much-beloved and special member of the Zoo's elephant herd, on Saturday, June 13, 2009. Tessa's death, an unfortunate and sad incident, was a result of being knocked over by a more dominant member of the herd. After the fall, despite the tireless efforts of Toronto Zoo Staff, Tessa was unable to stand again. Tessa was born in the wild and was in her 40<sup>th</sup> year. She has been at the Toronto Zoo since 1974.

The unexpected incident between the two elephants was witnessed by a Toronto Zoo Elephant Keeper. Staff immediately rushed into action and enlisted the support of heavy equipment and a sling in order to get Tessa standing again. After extensive effort, Tessa was able to get upright but was still unable to stand on her own. Further attempts to get Tessa standing were made challenging due to the awkward position in which she fell and her weight distribution. During this time Zoo Staff worked tirelessly to keep Tessa comfortable with water and food.

Elephants, like people, form strong social networks. As a mourning process, the remaining Zoo elephants, Thika, Toka, Iringa and Tara, were given time to view the body and mourn Tessa's death.

A post-mortem was conducted by Toronto Zoo Veterinary Staff today, and burial will take place on the Zoo site.

"Tessa was the gentlest of the elephants and was dearly loved by the elephant keeping staff." says Eric Cole, Supervisor of African Savanna. "At the Toronto Zoo since 1974, Tessa was a weaker member of the herd and enjoyed a life expectancy longer than would have happened in the wild. Ordinarily Tessa managed to avoid the activities of the more dominant elephants but in this incident was caught off guard and tripped over."

The conservation of these incredible animals is important to the Toronto Zoo. We participate in a Species Survival Plan (SSP) for elephants, comply with the highest standards for elephant care and contribute valuable research for this species. 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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Zoo Hours: May 16<sup>th</sup> to Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>: 9:00 am to 7:30 pm. Last admission 6:30 pm. General Admission 13-64 incl. is \$21, Children 3 and under are free, Children 4-12 are \$13 and Seniors 65+ are \$15. Parking is \$8. Sharks at Stingray Bay is \$3. Events and admission prices are subject to change without notice. The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy. 401, Exit 389 east and west bound. The Toronto Zoo is open year round except Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>. For general information, call (416) 392-5929 or visit [torontozoo.com](http://torontozoo.com)