



Alabama's Must See Attraction!



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2015

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Birmingham Zoo Elephant Procedure in Conjunction with UAB Research Team

BIRMINGHAM, AL – Scientific research is one of the 4 main staples in the Zoo's mission to Inspire Passion for the Natural World. The Birmingham Zoo's Trails of Africa Staff and Veterinary Staff showed how the Zoo works to fulfill the mission every day through an innovative procedure on one of the Zoo's African bull elephants. Bulwagi, the Birmingham Zoo's 35-year-old African bull elephant, had a long-term crack in his tusk. Elephants use their tusks for digging, lifting objects, gathering food, stripping bark to eat from trees and for protection. Through these actions, their tusks become worn and can break or crack.

On Thursday, November 5, 2015, Bulwagi underwent a procedure to prevent the crack in his tusk from growing which would happen if left unattended. This procedure was done in conjunction with a team lead by director of University of Alabama at Birmingham's Materials Processing and Applications Development Center, Brian Pillay, Ph.D. The research team included Ben Willis, Engineer 1 for the Materials Processing and Applications Development (MPAD) Center, Kristin Hardin, Ph. D. student in materials engineering, David Smith, undergraduate student in biomedical engineering and Shivani Vashi, undergraduate student in material engineering. Under the guidance and direction of Dr. Pillay, the team was able to create a specialized resin and application process in hopes of preventing the crack in Bulwagi's tusk from getting wider and longer. Due to the slow growth rate of the tusk, it will take months to assess if the application was successful.

The procedure performed on Bulwagi's tusk will show whether this resin combination will be able to keep the crack in his tusk from growing. If successful, this may prove to be a new way to treat cracked elephant tusks in other zoos and elephant facilities.

Zoo Mission: Inspiring Passion for the Natural World

2630 Cahaba Road • Birmingham, AL 35223 • 205.879.0409 • www.birminghamzoo.com



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Approximately 950 animals of 230 species call the Birmingham Zoo home, including sea lions, zebras, rhinos and endangered species from six continents. The Birmingham Zoo is open daily from 9am to 5pm. Regular admission is \$15 for adults and \$10* for senior citizens and children ages 2-12 (*Price not including tax). All Birmingham Zoo Members and children under two-years-old receive free admission.*

For more information about the Birmingham Zoo, please visit the Zoo on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter or at birminghamzoo.com.

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