

The history of our zoo

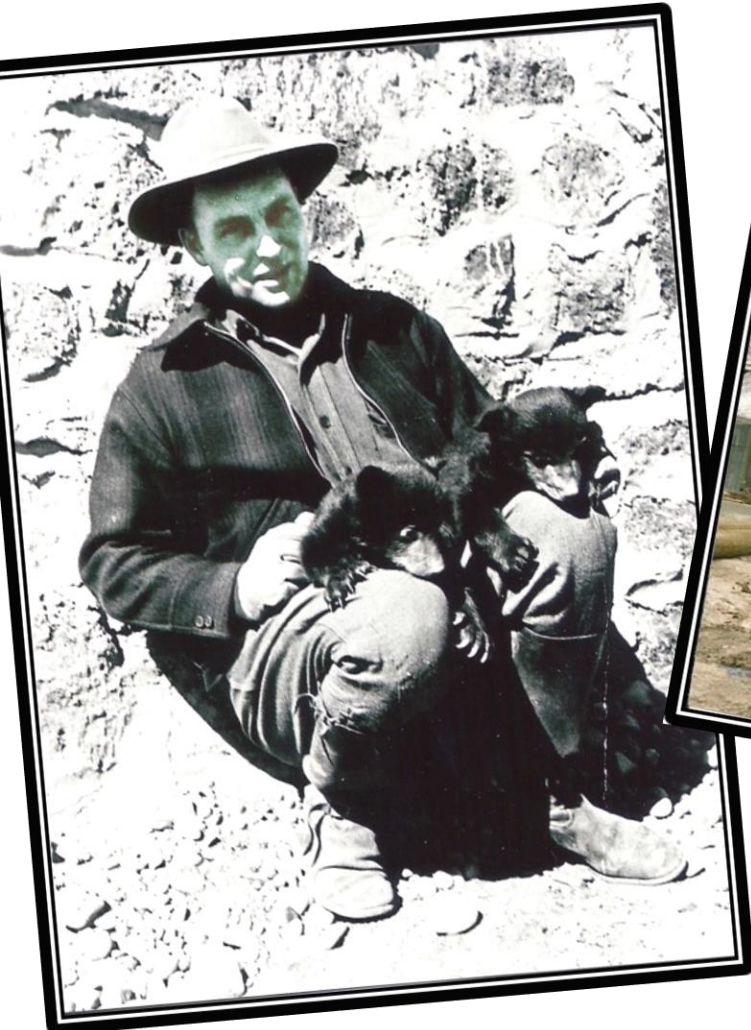
The land now known as Tautphaus Park was named for its initial developer, Mr. Charles Tautphaus. Mr. Tautphaus acquired 58 acres under the Homestead Act. He improved it by terracing, planting, and adding a lake in 1886. Because the land was virtually an oasis in the desert, it was referred to as "Tautphaus Park" before extensive use by the general public.

In 1912, J. Frank Reno bought the property and named it "Reno Park." He operated it as an award winning sheep ranch. After Mr. Reno died, his son sold the property to American National Bank.

In 1934, the City of Idaho Falls paid \$13,500 for the land. The government developed it as a city park and renamed it "City Park." In 1943, the park's name was officially changed back to "Tautphaus Park".

The first collection of zoo animals consisted of elk, deer, antelope, badgers and a coyote. They were originally maintained by the Heslop family on their own property. Mr. Al Heslop became the first resident superintendent at Tautphaus Park. In the summer of 1934, the hoofstock were moved to Highland Park. The other animals were moved to Sportsman's Park.

During the fall of 1934, approximately \$62,000 was spent on recreational improvements and animal facilities for a zoo. All buildings were planned to be constructed of logs, and financed as a Works Progress Administration project. Exotic animals arrived at the zoo in 1935.



By the late 1960's, all animal pens were connected to the sewer system, gas heat was added, and a chain-link fence was constructed around the park for security.

In 1979, a Mayor's Zoo Committee was formed to identify and accomplish needed improvements to the zoo's aging facilities. Unfortunately, as other needs in the city consumed the resources, only a few of the smaller projects were actually completed.

In 1985, another committee, also appointed by the mayor, formulated a ten year plan to modernize Tautphaus Park Zoo, stressing natural habitats and shelters for the animals. This instigated a major renovation of the zoo that has continued into the present day.

The first improvements involved phasing out the small cement and chain link enclosures housing felids, canids, ursids, and birds. In 1989, nearly an acre was developed with spacious, natural terrain exhibits with running water for African lions, Siberian tigers and mountain lions. North American canids and ursids were phased out of the collection in the late 80s. Some birds were given new spacious exhibits and others were mixed with hoofstock in open, multispecies exhibits. The remainder were removed from the collection.

From 1991 to 1992, improvements to behind-the-scenes service areas took precedence. A commissary, maintenance shop, indoor animal holding facility, and hay storage building were added to the grounds. A restraint chute was added to the elk enclosure and more off-exhibit holding was created for hoofstock. Also, the old condemned monkey house was demolished and plans for a new primate building were begun.

Tautphaus Park Zoo was approved to participate in its first Species Survival Plan in 1992. A pair of snow leopards was acquired for breeding in accordance with SSP Committee recommendations. A support organization, the Tautphaus Park Zoological Society was also created in 1992, to assist the city with fundraising, expansion efforts, and increasing public awareness for the zoo and its conservation/ education goals. Since their inception, the TPZS has sponsored several fundraisers and special events including Zoobilation, the Zoofari Ball, Boo at the Zoo, and the Bear Bash. These events have generated money for exhibit construction and renovations. Similarly in 1992, the Docent program was developed to provide volunteers for education programs, special events, and maintenance. In 1993, the "Habitat" was completed. The Habitat houses education animals and biofacts.



During the early 1990's, several animal exhibits were developed or renovated with the intention of improving the diversity and conservation goals in the collection. These included: a multispecies Asian exhibit with muntjac deer, demoiselle cranes and mandarin ducks; an outdoor macaw aviary with natural perching and ground cover; an Aldabra tortoise exhibit and winter barn; a 1/2 acre Bactrian camel exhibit; a multi species Australian exhibit containing wallabies, emu, black swans, egrets, ducks, and public restrooms; a serval cat/DeBrazza's guenon complex; and an American alligator exhibit. In 1993, the first phase of the Primate Discovery Center was completed with two holding enclosures, a squeeze cage, an indoor and an outdoor exhibit for lemurs and a nocturnal exhibit for a bush baby.

The long awaited "Explorer's Station" gift shop and renovated entry and parking area opened in April, 1995. The building, donated by a local businessman, was relocated to the front of the zoo and a new entry was developed around it. Participation in subsequent SSPs included Amur tigers and red-ruffed lemurs in 1995. SSPs in 1996 included cotton-top tamarins (housed where the bush baby used to be), ring-tailed lemurs, and African penguins. "Penguin Cove", a black-footed penguin facility, premiered in 1997. It was funded, in part, by the Tautphaus Park Zoological Society.

The zoo became accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association in 1998, and has earned re-accreditation every time it has come up for review since. A staging area and education programs for regularly scheduled "Animal Encounters" with Children's Zoo Keepers were developed in 1998, with assistance from Cream O' Weber Dairy.

A formal Education Department was finally realized in 1999. This much-needed addition allowed the zoo to dramatically expand education programs, as well as improve the merit of existing programs. 1999 also increased our South American collection with "Patagonian Realm", which added Chilean flamingoes, Patagonian conures and a walk-through aviary containing 9 species including the first elegant-crested tinamou imported into the US in several years. Unfortunately, a snowstorm later destroyed the aviary.

A 2000-2001 joint society-city campaign raised \$280,000 for the CHC Animal Health Care Center, a veterinary facility to provide basic and emergency care, isolation, and quarantine for the collection. The zoo also joined the SSP for DeBrazza's guenons in 2001.



In 2002, the former superintendent's residence was renovated and Zoo Administrative Offices were relocated. These new offices provided humane sized office space, new work areas including separate space for graphics development, meeting space, special events preparation and storage areas essential to professional operations. The former administration offices were divided into a much-needed classroom and Education office.

In 2003, a multi-species New Guinea complement expanded the "Land Down Under" with New Guinea singing dogs and a selection of birds native to Papua New Guinea.

In the summer of 2004, the zoo experienced a construction explosion. Work was completed on Phase II and III of the Primate Discovery Center, which opened in August of that year. The new building became home to white handed and white cheeked gibbons, black and white Colobus monkeys, DeBrazza's guenons, ring tail and red ruffed lemurs, red tailed boas, Goeldi's monkeys and cotton-top tamarins. Phase I of Asian Adventure opened in September 2004 with a red-crowned crane and renovated Bactrian camel exhibit. In the North American section of the zoo a new coatimundi exhibit was added. The Education Department opened a playground called the "Eggceptional Eggsplorer's Eggsperience", funded in part by a grant from the Idaho Community Foundation.

Phase II of Asian Adventure premiered in May 2005 with the addition of a new endangered species to the zoo - two male red pandas! Also, a renovated home for our North American river otters opened later that summer.

2006 included a renovated exhibit for macaws and prehensile tail porcupines. The same year also premiered a new African field research tent called "Kamp Kiwanja."

Phase III of Asian Adventure opened to the public in May 2009, with the addition of two male sloth bears.

In 2010, the long-time zoo superintendent left to become the director of another zoo. Ultimately, the existing General Curator became the new superintendent.

2015 saw the latest facelift to our zoo - a change in name and logo! We are now officially called The Idaho Falls Zoo and we have replaced the kangaroo in our logo with a penguin instead!

