

Santa Ana Zoo at Prentice Park

“TIERRA DE LAS PAMPAS”

Project Description

The proposed “*Tierra de las Pampas*” (roughly translated “Land of the Grasses”) exhibit will occupy the northwestern corner of the Santa Ana Zoo at Prentice Park. The Zoo is a 20 acre park that focuses on the diversity of wildlife from the Neotropics, a zoogeographic region that includes the southern tip of Mexico, and Central and South America. The “*Tierra de las Pampas*” exhibit will represent the grasslands, one of four major biomes (forests, wetlands, grasslands and deserts) to be represented at the zoo as part of its Master Development Plan.

Bringing las pampas to Santa Ana involves recreation of this region of South American through the development of two new multi-species exhibit areas, visitor walkways and viewing areas, a strong botanical component and interpretive graphics. The first of these areas will house a pair of **Giant Anteaters**, the largest species of anteater, which are 6 to 8 feet long and can weigh up to 140 pounds. It will include an animal management area/holding facility, exhibit yard, indigenous plant material, and water feature. The second area will house **Greater Rheas**, large flightless birds, and **Guanacos**, an Andean camel, the wild relative of the llama. This area will also include an animal management area/holding facility, an exhibit yard large enough to accommodate a grazing herd, and native plant material including the majestic Ombu tree. Walkways will be constructed of earthy material that will visually join the two areas. By this, and treating the habitat as a dominant element, the design attempt will be to blur the lines between visitor and exhibit space, and visually connect the exhibit areas so that the guest feels as though they are part of the space, rather than on the outside looking in.

Education components of the exhibit will speak to **interrelationships**: animal and habitat ecosystems and their interdependent relationships, and **adaptations**: how living organisms are specially suited for the extreme environments in which they live.

The Vision for the “*Tierra de las Pampas*” exhibit, and all zoo development, is to provide a setting that captivates and transports the visitor, while teaching about the symbiotic relationships between animals and their habitat. It will be **a place where people learn, that provokes thinking, and inspires change**.

Why the Pampas?

The Pampas region of South America lends itself well to conservation education because it is one of the most endangered habitats on earth. The humid ecosystem, temperate climate and fertile soil make it one of the richest farming areas in the world; it is therefore over grazed and over cultivated. Within the Neo-tropics, the Pampas region occupies an area 300,000 square miles in size. The Pampas extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Andes Mountains, primarily in Argentina and Uruguay. The word “pampas” is rooted in an indigenous word for “level plain”. The Argentine Pampas area is home of the “Gaucho”, the original South American cowboy.

Within the South American Pampas are at least 15 mammal species, 20 bird species, and 15 plant species that are at serious risk of extinction. Many of these species are identified in the Santa Ana Zoo’s Master Development Plan for inclusion in the “*Tierra de las Pampas*” exhibit, once future phases are implemented.

Subsequent phases of the *Tierra de las Pampas* exhibit calls for the continued evolution and expansion of the Pampas landscape into the zoo’s northeast corner. Once complete, it will be home to many species whose existence is now threatened: the Maned Wolf, Pudu, Paca, Jaguarundi, White-Lipped Peccary, Pacarana, and the Cavy.

Working together to instill a passion for the natural world.