



city of  
**greenville**

# News Release

## **GREENVILLE ZOO ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO GIRAFFE FAMILY**

**(Greenville SC)** Greenville Zoo officials announced today that Walter, the zoo's male giraffe, is among 20 Masai giraffes from across North America that the Giraffe Species Survival Program (SSP) has recommended for transfer to other facilities. According to the SSP, because the pairing of Walter and Autumn, the zoo's female giraffe, has resulted in two successful births (Kiko and Tatu), they recommend that Walter be transferred to the Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, NJ to join the bachelor herd there. While details of the transfer are still being worked out, the Greenville Zoo is preparing for Walter to leave in late March or early April.

The purpose of the SSP recommendations is to create better genetically matched breeding groups, so in addition to the 20 transfers, the SSP has also recommended 39 females, including Autumn, for breeding. Since Autumn is still considered genetically valuable to the captive population, the SSP has recommended that Miles, a seven-year-old male giraffe, be transferred from the Houston Zoo to the Greenville Zoo to breed with her. Miles is ranked 12<sup>th</sup> genetically within the male breeding population of 53 giraffes and Autumn is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> genetically within the female breeding population of 61 giraffes. The Greenville Zoo is postponing Miles' arrival until late summer or early fall so that Tatu has time to grow before they introduce a new male. While Tatu will likely be part of a future SSP transfer recommendation, for now, there are no plans for him to leave the Greenville Zoo.

Species Survival Programs were created in the 1970s to manage the captive breeding populations for individual species. In general, the goal is to manage a captive population for 100 years into the future while maintaining a genetic variability of at least 96%. This often means moving animals from one facility to another to spread out the gene pool, much like what happens in the wild. Over time, closed breeding groups would eventually die off due to inbreeding, which weakens animals genetically over generations and can create life-threatening deformities.

According to zoo administrator Jeff Bullock, as the Greenville Zoo continues its partnerships with the various SSPs, and its breeding programs continue to be successful, animals will continue to move in

and out of the Greenville Zoo. “Walter and Autumn came to us in 2007 and made their debut in our newly opened giraffe exhibit, so it’s hard to imagine him not being here,” said Bullock. “I know our staff and the community will miss him, but it’s important to remember that this change will help ensure the survival of this magnificent species for future generations.”

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