

## PETA INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

**“[Elephants] are actually very poor candidates for life in captivity. ... Their requirements are so substantial—it is probably beyond the capabilities of most zoos to even begin to resolve.”**

**—David Hancocks, former director of the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington**



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distracted Mali from the stupefying futility of her barren existence, giving her this item was nothing more than a public relations tactic that was intended to allay visitors' concerns. Elephants such as Mali don't need ice blocks, rubber balls, and dead tree limbs; they need what no zoo can provide: vast savannahs, lakes, ponds, and, most importantly, the company of other elephants.

### Pachyderm Props

Zoos would like the public to believe that they enhance conservation efforts and educate visitors, but in reality, they confine animals such as this proud and sensitive elephant merely in order to draw tourists and make profits. Officials try to justify the decision to keep one of the world's largest land mammals in captivity by claiming that the animals in the zoo are “ambassadors” for their wild counterparts. But seeing a sick, depressed, and miserable elephant in an artificial setting does nothing to foster respect or to inspire an appreciation for the species. The zoo industry is misleading visitors—especially children—about elephants' needs and behaviors. Children who see an elephant in the zoo learn nothing about who elephants really are.

### Relief Is Available

Mali needs to be retired without delay. The Manila Zoo should follow the progressive lead of zoos in the U.K. and the U.S. that have already closed their elephant exhibits. The Elephant Sanctuary in the U.S. can give elephants vast spaces to roam, ponds to bathe in, fresh vegetation, foraging opportunities, and the company of many other elephants. The facility understands and has experience with elephants like Mali. They also have a history of healing and restoring quality of life to elephants who have become debilitated by years of captivity.

The decision to retire Mali to a sanctuary would be not only kind but also lifesaving. A recent study published in the *Journal of Science* found that zoo elephants, despite facing no predators, lived only half as long as elephants who lived in more natural habitats. The study compared Asian and African elephants in European zoos to those in Kenya's Amboseli National Park and other locations.

Mali has served the interests of the Manila Zoo and Botanical Garden for more than 30 years; it is time for the facility to do what's right and send her to a sanctuary where she can live the remainder of her life in comfort and in the company of other elephants.

### Additional Resources

The Elephant Sanctuary in the U.S.: [www.elephants.com](http://www.elephants.com)

PETA

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### Mali: The Manila Zoo's Aging and Ailing Elephant



PETAAsiaPacific.com

# MALI: THE MANILA ZOO'S AGING AND AILING ELEPHANT

The Manila Zoological and Botanical Garden features numerous stone and concrete islands that confine a variety of animals. On one such tiny plot of land lives an Asian elephant named Vishwamali (Mali for short). Born in Sri Lanka in 1974, Mali was only 3 years old when she was torn from her home and family and shipped to the zoo. Mali is the only captive elephant in the Philippines.



**Mali's barren enclosure provides her with no opportunity to engage in any natural behavior.**

would browse and graze, pluck fruit and leaves from trees, take mud baths, and spend hours a day swimming and playing in the water.

At the Manila Zoo, Mali spends her days alone in a barren enclosure, which provides her with no opportunity to engage in any of the activities that elephants need for their physical, mental, and emotional health. The recent improvements that have been made to her enclosure do little to alleviate her suffering. Even if her enclosure were to be doubled or tripled in size, it would still be completely inadequate. Adding more elephants to the Manila Zoo would not be for the well-being of Mali; it would be done for the purpose of increasing profits. The Manila Zoo's decrepit elephant enclosure is nowhere near adequate to house one elephant, let alone more than one.

Leading zoo industry organizations—including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums in the U.S. and the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria—require accredited

## Far From Home

In the wild, elephants like Mali live and travel in close-knit matriarchal herds of related females, including grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, and nieces. The herds are led by the oldest, wisest female. Female elephants spend virtually all their time in the company of other elephants, socializing, nurturing their young, and sharing experiences. Elephants have extraordinary memories and gain wisdom as they age. Their families' distinct cultures are passed through generations.

Wild elephant herds roam up to 80 kilometers a day—activity that is essential to their well-being. Asian elephants have home ranges of between 25,000 and 60,000 hectares, but the entire Manila Zoo measures only 5.5 hectares. In the wild, Mali

facilities to provide a minimum of enrichment, including rocks, tree stumps, or large, sturdy objects for rubbing against and scratching. Mali has none of these things, and her only form of enrichment is a small pool at the back of her enclosure.

These organizations also recommend that elephants be kept on natural substrates as much as possible to keep their feet and toenails healthy and infection-free, yet Mali's entire enclosure is made of concrete.

Asian elephants eat up to 80 different plant species. According to zoo records, Mali's diet consists of pechay, bananas, camote tuber, carrots, cornstalks or grass, and pineapple. Mali is reportedly fed 14 loaves of white bread per day.

## Sick and Tired

A lack of exercise and long hours spent standing on hard surfaces contribute significantly to foot infections and arthritis, which are the leading causes of death among captive elephants.

The physical and mental frustrations that captive elephants endure often lead to abnormal, neurotic, and even self-destructive behaviors called "zoochosis" or "stereotypy." Zoo visitors see Mali pacing incessantly or merely standing in one spot with her trunk to the ground. She's been seen walking to the edge of her enclosure and reaching out her foot in the hope of going farther. According to people who witnessed one such incident, when Mali felt empty space, she stepped back and repeated the same behavior. Finally realizing that there was nowhere to go, a dejected Mali walked aimlessly around her enclosure, picking debris off the ground. Clearly, Mali is profoundly depressed.

A study published in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* examined the repetitive behaviors of a lone female elephant who was kept in an enclosure with an outdoor area more than three times as large as the pen in which Mali lives. The study found that the elephant engaged in stereotypic movements 52 percent of the time—3.5 times as long as periods for which female elephants who were kept in groups in other zoos engaged in such movements. The study also noted that repetitive behavior was more likely to be seen in elephants who were housed in small enclosures with few animals.

A zoo worker revealed to PETA that when she's not on display, Mali spends most of her time in the dark and decrepit concrete enclosure where she sleeps.

In April 2008, Manila Zoo officials reportedly ordered "therapy" for their "stressed-out animals." Mali's "therapy" consisted of a block of ice with fruit inside it. While this may have temporarily

**Mali spends her days exhibiting repetitive behavior.**

