

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **ELEPHANTS WIN CHEW AT THE ZOO**

NORFOLK, Va. – Elephants bested zookeepers in the first watermelon eating challenge at the Virginia Zoo today.

African elephants Cita and Lisa consumed nine watermelons in five minutes, while the eight keepers consumed approximately four and a half.

“What a fun way to end the summer!” said Greg Bockheim, the Zoo’s executive director. “Considering the elephants weigh a combined 18,000 pounds and the keepers only weighed perhaps a combined 1,200 pounds, I think the keepers made a good showing.”

Found in central and southern Africa, African elephants are the largest land animal in the world. They can grow to roughly 24 to 29 feet long and weigh 5 to 7 tons. Their tusks are made of ivory, for which an average of 96 elephants are killed in Africa every day, despite a ban on international trade in ivory. Their trunk is used for smelling, for breaking off branches, transferring food to the mouth, and gathering water for showering or to drink. Elephants can drink 50 gallons of water a day. They eat bark, fruit, grass and leaves. Powerful animals, they may topple trees over to feed on them. Elephants form herds from roughly 6 to 200 animals.

As an accredited Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) facility, the Virginia Zoo exhibits more than 400 animals on 53 beautifully landscaped acres. For more than a century, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to education and conservation, and offered a fun-filled day for visitors of any age. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and located at 3500 Granby Street in Norfolk. Daily admission prices are \$11 for adults, \$10 for seniors (age 62 and over) and \$9 for children ages 2-11. Children under 2 admitted free! Visit [www.virginiazoo.org](http://www.virginiazoo.org) or call (757) 441-2374 for more information.

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## ELEPHANTS WIN, 2 OF 3



Zookeeper Denise Luckey, left, and elephant manager Jennifer Long feed Lisa, an African elephant, at the Virginia Zoo during a watermelon eating contest between the elephants and zookeepers Aug. 30, 2014 (Virginia Zoo photo by Meg Puckett).

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## ELEPHANTS WIN, 3 OF 3



Zookeeper Charlene Wright demonstrates her watermelon eating prowess at the Virginia Zoo during a watermelon eating contest between the elephants and zookeepers Aug. 30, 2014 (Virginia Zoo photo by Meg Puckett).

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