

The Boston Globe

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2015

NEW KINGS ON THE BLOCK



KAMAIA

Age: 6

Height: 4½ feet tall, at the shoulder.

Weight: 450 pounds.

Favorite meal: 10 pounds of processed horsemeat.

Hobbies: Likes to lounge in the shade, and catch a nap whenever possible. Sometimes he sleeps for 18 hours.

Characteristics: Might be a cat, but in Texas his trainers called him a "chow hound." He's got an appetite that's unmatched.

DINARI

Age: 6

Height: 5 feet tall, at the shoulder.

Weight: 470 pounds.

Favorite meal: He eats what his brother eats — they do everything together.

Hobbies: Often seen sleeping, or pouncing on his brother.

Characteristics: Rubs his head against the cage when caretakers are in sight. He's recalled as a "pretty cool guy to work with" by his friends in Dallas.



PHOTOS BY DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

The two new lions at Franklin Park Zoo appeared in public for the first time Friday, filling the hole left by the recent death of 21-year-old Christopher. Kamaia and Dinari, brothers, come from the Dallas Zoo. **B2.**

New lions make a quiet debut at zoo

By Steve Annear

GLOBE STAFF

It is going to take some time for the brothers to adjust to life in Boston. They're all moved in, and their belongings have been unpacked, but everything still feels new.

For starters, they are branded as Texas Rangers fans — they traveled to the city all the way from Dallas, some 1,700 miles away — so warming up to the Red Sox this season may present some challenges.

Dinari and Kamaia, the two new lions at the Franklin Park Zoo, also have new bosses to contend with, and a duty to follow the roaring success of their crowd-pleasing predecessor.

The 6-year-old animals got a taste of fame on Friday, as they appeared in public for the first time.

"They're not necessarily as self-confident as I had expected they would be at this point. But they're settling in slowly, and we are being respectful of that," said John Linehan, president and chief executive of Zoo New England, which manages the Franklin Park Zoo.

Though the lions' entrance was somewhat subdued — the zoo did not promote the appearance, and the animals spent the early afternoon lounging in the shade — those lucky enough to catch them were plenty excited.

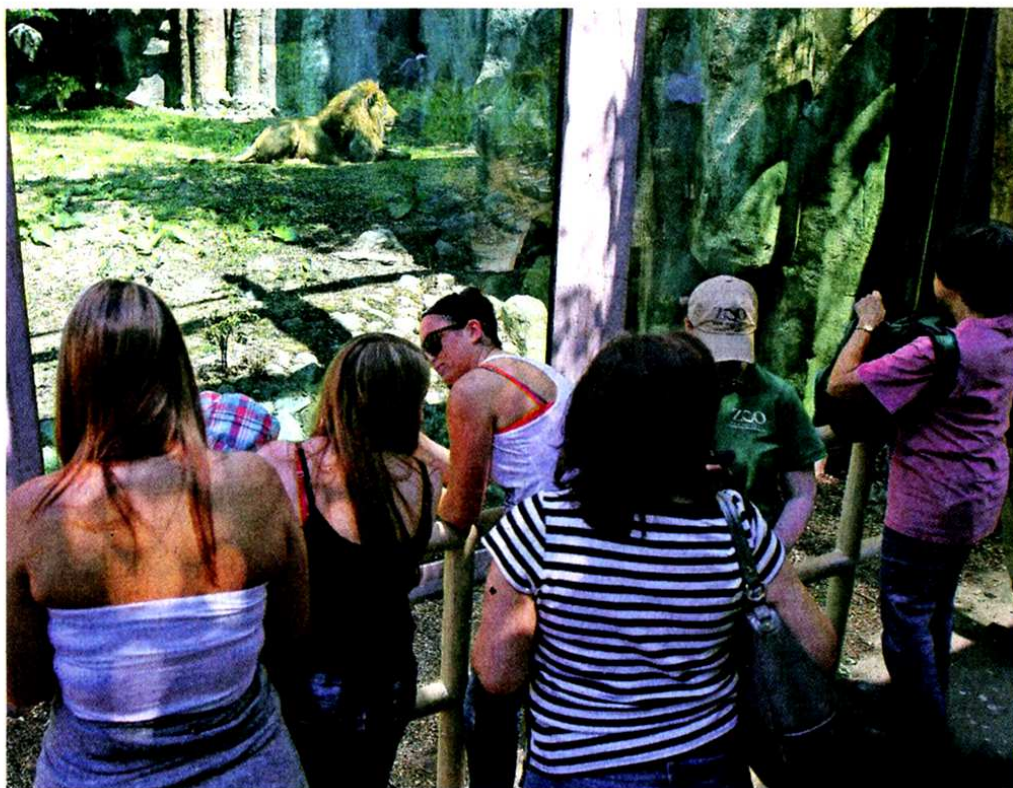
Cole Cunningham, 4, raised his two fists in the air as he peered into the lion's den at the lethargic creatures.

"This is the best day ever!" he said, turning to his mother.

The zoo has been a lot quieter since the April death of Christopher, a 21-year-old mainstay who had long projected his hair-raising roars from a familiar perch in the popular lion exhibit.

In time, zoo officials promise that Dinari and Kamaia will each send their own guttural calls echoing through the park.

"They are such physically big animals, they will be quite impressive out there. After they settle in, they will be up on that



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

Franklin Park Zoo's new lions are brothers. Their predecessor, Christopher, died in April.

same rock, roaring. The sound will carry, as it did with Christopher, across the zoo and even outside the zoo," said Linehan.

Becky Wolf, the carnivore keeper at the Dallas Zoo, where Dinari and Kamaia lived for the last five years, said their roars and physical stature — each cat weighs in at more than 450 pounds — are matched by their personalities and visibly apparent kinship.

Wolf said the Franklin Park Zoo was fortunate to land the pair, a plan that was in the works long before Christopher died. One lion offers an exciting exhibit, but two pack a punch that guarantees some playful antics.

"Boston is going to fall in love with those two goofballs. The thing I'll miss the most is watching them be ridiculous together," she said.

Zoo visitors will soon see the brothers' strong bond firsthand. But they will also notice varied character traits.

"They, for sure, are very dif-

ferent," said Wolf.

Kamaia is the smaller of the two, with a more colorful golden mane. He typically exudes a confidence and sense of bravery that his brother does not. It takes a lot to unnerve him, and he warms up quickly in new environments and situations where he's introduced to unfamiliar faces.

The same can't be said for his sibling. But once Dinari gets comfortable, he's a "cool guy" to work with, she said.

"If Kamaia does something first, then Dinari will know that it's OK," Wolf said. "Dinari has to earn trust, and he follows his brother's lead for sure."

The lions were sent to Boston from the Dallas Zoo as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan, a breeding and population program created to maintain genetic diversity and demographic stability at parks across the country.

Attempts to breed them in

Dallas were unsuccessful. In Boston, they will get to be bachelors, since the zoo does not have any plans for mating.

"They didn't like the dating pool" in Dallas, said Wolf, calling their new home a frat-like environment where they can bound and pummel each other in a playful manner.

Since the transfer, the Franklin Park Zoo's staff hasn't seen the full scope of their personalities, and the lions even threw the trainers for a loop.

When they were finally introduced to their new digs, Dinari showed pomp and waltzed in with bravado, something they all expected from Kamaia, though that will evolve as time passes in their new city.

Their preference for sports teams won't.

"I think they will always be Rangers fans," said Wolf.

Steve Annear can be reached at steve.annear@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @steveannear.

marlo