

Kiko the giraffe leaving Greenville Zoo for Toronto

Eric Connor 1:32 p.m. EDT May 12, 2015

They grow up so fast, don't they, eh?

Kiko the giraffe — the beloved Greenville Zoo native whose birth in October 2012 was a social media sensation viewed on webcam across the world — will soon be leaving the zoo for a new home across the border in Toronto, Canada.

The reason?

It's time for Kiko to try to become a father himself.

"We followed Kiko through every milestone of his life, from watching him take his first steps to seeing him develop into an active and curious young giraffe," Greenville Zoo Administrator Jeff Bullock said Tuesday. "He will always be a part of the Greenville Zoo family, and we look forward to following the next journey of his life as he begins a new family in Toronto."

Kiko is headed to the Toronto Zoo, where he will join two female giraffes in the hopes they will breed, just as Kiko's parents did when they were matched in Greenville in July 2007.

The days leading up to Kiko's birth brimmed with excitement as more than 200,000 people [worldwide watched via Earthcam](#), which keeps up with the day-to-day lives of the 2 1/2-year-old Masai giraffe and his family.

Family relations could soon be strained, however.

At Kiko's age, the young giraffe shifts from baby to potential mating competitor — something zoo experts say is detrimental because of the stress of conflict between the two males and the potential for in-breeding.

Kiko was the first offspring of Autumn, a 9-year-old female from the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston and Walter, a 9-year-old male from the San Diego Zoo.

Autumn and Walter tried to add another member to the family last August, but the male baby calf was delivered still-born.

The still-born birth was but one loss the zoo experienced last year, when two of the zoo's longtime elephants died.

Last March, Ladybird, a 44-year-old elephant considered elderly for her age, died in the zoo. Ladybird had been brought to the zoo in 2006 to serve as a companion to Joy, a 44-year-old elephant who had been at the zoo since 1977, alone for two decades.

Joy fell down in transport to a Colorado zoo, required because regulations no longer allow zoo's to keep single elephants.

The death raised questions about Joy's handling, who had no strap to hold her up in case she fell and no camera to keep surveillance.

On Tuesday, Bullock said Kiko's transport would be handled "following all standard protocols ... associated with any animal transfer."

The zoo will use a special giraffe trailer with a high ceiling and low floor. The move is slated for sometime in the next week.

Kiko's move to the Toronto Zoo was recommended by a Species Survival Program of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and overdue as most giraffe calves are transferred out just after age 1.

The Greenville Zoo will put on a farewell celebration for Kiko this Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

