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## **The Rare Pere David Deer Arrives at Cherokee Trace**

Jacksonville, Texas, (April 2007) – Staci Doty, Park Operations Manager at Cherokee Trace Drive-Thru Safari announced that the park's most recent arrivals are three Pere David's deer. The deer is named for Father (Pere in French) Armand David, a French missionary working in China, who reported the previously unknown species to western scientists. This



magnificent deer may have survived in the wild until the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Ms. Doty explained, "The Pere David's deer may be the first ever example of species conservation. The species survived because a herd was maintained in the large Imperial Hunting Park, south of Beijing, until about 1900." Several animals from the Imperial herd were sent to European zoos. An 1894 flood destroyed most of the Imperial herd. The rest were hunted during the Boxer Rebellion. The species disappeared from China entirely in 1922. The last 18 surviving animals from European zoos were moved to one location at Woburn Abbey in England by 11th Duke of Bedford. This herd has gradually built up. In 1956, some were sent to back to Beijing. In 1958, a small herd was released into its original habitat in the DaFeng Reserve, Jiangsu Province, China. China now has two wild herds with a combined total of about 170 deer. The total number of deer world wide is about 1200. They are considered critically endangered. All Père David's deer are related to the herd of 18 deer collected by the 11th Duke of Bedford.

The deer originally lived in the lowlands of eastern China probably in the swampy marshlands. The deer graze on grass and water plants in summer. This species likes water. In the summer, they may spend long periods of time standing in shoulder-deep water to keep cool. Males like to wallow in wet mud, using their hooves to flick mud and grass onto their back. Mature Pere David's deer weight between 330 and 440 pounds. The Chinese called them *ssu-pu-hsiang*, which means "the four unlikes". They thought that the deer had a stag's antlers, a camel's neck, a cow's hooves, and a donkey's tail.

You can see our new Pere David's deer at Cherokee Trace Drive-Thru Safari 12 miles east of Jacksonville, Texas. This 300-acre preserve is home to over 300 animals from 22 different species. The animals roam free in an open range habitat. Other animals in the park include several endangered antelope and deer species, such as the Scimitar-horned Oryx and Lechwi. For more information on this species visit the following websites.

<http://www.animalinfo.org/species/artiperi/elapdavi.htm>

[http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Elaphurus\\_davidianus.html](http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Elaphurus_davidianus.html)

[http://www.panda.org/news\\_facts/newsroom/successes/index.cfm?uNewsID=24017](http://www.panda.org/news_facts/newsroom/successes/index.cfm?uNewsID=24017)

The park has seasonal hours (extended March – August) and is open most holidays. Animal food is included with admission. Rates are \$12.00 for adults, \$8.00 for children from 3-12, and \$10.00 for Seniors 65 and up. Group rates are available. The park also features a five-acre picnic area, a gift shop with ice cold drinks and snacks, and Bed & Breakfast cabins [www.cherokeetracebandb.com](http://www.cherokeetracebandb.com) . Bathrooms are handicapped accessible. For more information visit the website [www.cherokeetrace.org](http://www.cherokeetrace.org) or call 903-683-3322.

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