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Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples
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Lions, Snakes, and Monkeys Have Plans for Hurricane Season

Newest Primates on the Islands Getting Special Storm Training

Naples, FL – Like many families across Florida, the curators and keepers at Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples keep a special watch on the weather this time of year. While some Zoo plans are the same as yours, like having gas for backup generators and extra water storage, there are some crucial differences. Instead of peanut butter and cans of tuna, the Zoo stocks up on thousands of pounds of frozen carnivore beef diet, monkey chow, grains, and fruits. And plans this year also include special training for the monkeys and lemurs living on islands at the Zoo.

As everyone was reminded last year, where a hurricane will strike is not always predictable. And while the Zoo has long had its emergency plans in place, one step in that process – bringing the monkeys and lemurs off the islands -- always takes extra time. And since the goal is to have animals in the Zoo's hurricane secure areas for the shortest amount of time possible, the key is speed. Toward that end, earlier this year keepers began teaching the primates to enter transfer carriers on cue so the animals can be relocated as quickly as possible.

Like moving fish in an aquarium at home, the primates are typically caught with nets when they need to be relocated to a safe place from the storm. Teaching them to enter carriers on their own, however, will result in a faster move so they can be left out longer on the islands where they are more comfortable prior to a storm. Once off the islands, they are secured in concrete buildings. This is just one example of the unique preparations an accredited zoo takes to prepare for emergencies.

Animal care staff first began this training with the newest species to inhabit the islands, a pair of west African moustached monkeys. Along with these colorful primates, the keepers are also now working with ring-tailed lemurs, brown lemurs, and red ruffed lemurs.

So how do you get a monkey out of a tree? Keepers are teaching the primates to go in and out of transfer carriers through positive reinforcement. Zoo Director David Tetzlaff explains "Over time we work with the

primates to encourage them to get in their carrier. They receive a reward —generally an edible treat — coupled with a sound to let them know they accomplished what the keepers were after. Over time the animals know it's a safe place and they are comfortable going there. It makes moving them on short notice much better for both the animals and the staff that care for them."

This process, known as operant conditioning, is already used daily in numerous ways by Zoo staff. From administering routine medical treatments to shifting animals between exhibits, operant conditioning is a critical tool for Zoo staff to use to improve the lives of the animals in their care.

Beyond primates, other animals have special hurricane plans as well. Carnivores like the big cats and hyenas are taken into concrete block buildings with reinforced concrete roofs that were put in place by cranes. "The facilities for big cats were built with the lessons from Hurricane Donna in mind," states Tetzlaff. The Zoo's native venomous snakes are placed within two protective barriers and smaller birds and mammals are brought inside secure structures as well.

"We have a well-trained, professional staff who take their responsibility to these precious animals and the community very seriously. I am proud of the work the staff has accomplished to make sure we are as ready as anyone can be if a storm heads our way this season," said Tetzlaff.

Guests to Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples can see the new moustached monkeys on the Primate Expedition Cruise, a guided boat tour through islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes. Caribbean Gardens is one of the top 10% of American zoos accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association. The 52-acre zoo is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road in Naples across from the Coastland Center mall. In addition to the historic garden and rare animals, the Zoo features a daily variety of innovative presentations. Guests experience close up views of live animals as well as stunning wildlife clips on video screens during the Zoo's two feature shows, Planet Predator and Serpents: Fangs & Fiction. Alligator Bay offers an opportunity to touch a young gator and feedings on the weekends. Guests also get to meet the keeper at select exhibits every day. Admission (\$15.95 adult/ \$9.95 children) includes all shows and the boat ride. Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. The Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30. To learn more, click www.napleszoo.com or call (239) 262-5409.

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*For print quality **photo of moustached monkeys**, contact denise@napleszoo.com or 239.262.5409 ext. 122*