

NAPLES ZOO

From David Tetzlaff, Zoo Director

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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New Monkey Born on Island

As part of a national effort to preserve the species outside the wild, Naples Zoo is announcing the birth of a beautiful black and white colobus monkey. Just a few weeks old, the new infant male is being cared for by its mother on one of the islands seen by the zoo's Primate Expedition Cruise. All of the zoo's colobus monkeys are part of a Species Survival Plan®, a program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) designed to maintain genetic diversity among species outside the wild.

As with previous births, the baby is frequently seen by guests taking the Primate Expedition Cruise at the zoo. At birth, baby colobus monkeys have all white fur. Gradually over the next few months, the juvenile's coat will begin to fill in with black hair matching the adults.

Naples Zoo participates in numerous Species Survival Plans® (SSP). Among other responsibilities, SSP coordinators create a studbook with the genetic background of all the individual animals in participating zoos across the country. With these records, the coordinator of the colobus SSP makes breeding recommendations for the long-term genetic health of the species. The process can be complicated and requires great generosity and cooperation among zoos.

In 2002, the SSP recommended several monkeys join the troop at Naples Zoo. Upon arrival from the other zoos, the monkeys were housed in a separate quarantine area at the zoo. They were given routine physicals and tests to insure they did not have any diseases that could be transmitted to the zoo's current animals. This is standard procedure for all incoming animals at AZA accredited institutions. But introduction to an island habitat isn't so standard. The monkeys first experience island life from the security of an open-air enclosure on the island. This enables them to safely experience the new environment and get to meet the monkeys who were already on the island. They can also observe the various primates on the other islands and get acclimated to the different sights and sounds.

From a few days to a week or more, when animal care staff observes the monkeys are comfortable, the monkeys are allowed to explore the island firsthand. The new females reacted exactly as expected and vaulted straight into the island's trees. All signs indicated a good match and keepers and the cruise guides observed romantic behavior within just a few months and the first births occurred in 2003. The cycle continues when the resulting births are given their own SSP recommendations.

The future of black and white colobus monkeys in the wild is mixed. In some areas, they are listed as a low risk for extinction while in other areas data is simply unavailable. Their beautiful coats are still highly desired and trade in the skins and trophy mounts continues in some countries.

The colobus monkey troop can be seen daily at Naples Zoo. Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. In addition to innovative presentations like Serpents: Fangs & Fiction and Planet Predator, the Zoo offers a historic botanical garden and many rare animals. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes living in natural habitats. Admission (\$18.50 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.org or call (239) 262-5409.

Quick Facts:

Description: Colobus monkeys have a sleek, black coat highlighted by white hair around the face, a white mantle (or cape) and a long, horse-like white tail. Weight is around 7 to 14 kg (15 to 20 lbs.).

Diet: Colobus monkeys are leaf-eaters. They can consume about ¼ of their body weight in leaves a day. Somewhat similar to a cow, they have a chambered stomach with special bacteria that helps them process plant material. Excess methane from this fermentation is sometimes belched in another monkey's face as a friendly gesture.

Gestation: About 6 months

Range: Central Africa

Lifespan: About 20 years

Predators: Africa's crowned hawk eagles will sometimes grab juveniles although resident males will rush eagles to prevent this. Today, vehicles threaten some populations as monkeys run across roads too wide to cross by jumping tree to tree. Lightweight bridges created for the monkeys called "colo-bridges" have been effective in reducing the problem in coastal areas of Kenya.

