

From Tim Tetzlaff, Director of Conservation and Communications

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New Home for New Joeys at Naples Zoo

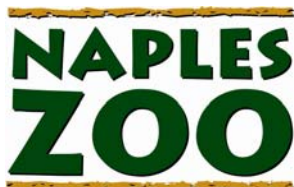
Naples, FL – Although their home was destroyed by Hurricane Wilma eighteen months ago, the Parma wallabies at Naples Zoo are doing their part to save their species. Three babies just out of the pouch are delighting Zoo visitors with their cuteness. Best of all, these small members of the kangaroo family are hopping about in a new exhibit just opened this week. Parma wallabies are one of the smallest of the kangaroo family – being more than 15 times smaller than the Red kangaroos which can be seen with two other kangaroo species at Naples Zoo.

The Zoo's wallabies are part of a Species Survival Plan, a national breeding program coordinated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). They are the most endangered of all wallaby species. Like other marsupials, Parma wallabies carry their young in a belly pouch. After just a 35 day gestation period, the joey makes its way to the mother's pouch where it remains for another seven to eight months. The new babies are now regularly out of the pouch where Zoo visitors can readily see them.

These 10 lb. marsupials were once thought extinct. Unknown to the scientific community until the 1840s, they were declared extinct just over a century later in 1957 because of over-hunting, clearing of forests, and predation by the foxes and cats introduced by Europeans. But unlike the dodo bird or Javan tiger, the tale of the Parma wallaby doesn't end sadly there.

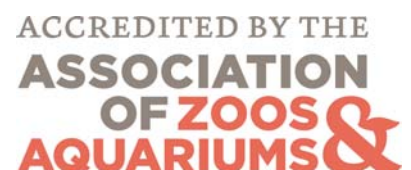
For the reason why, we turn to tiny Kawau Island, located northeast of New Zealand. In the 1860s, a wide assortment of exotic plants and animals were introduced to the island with the vision of creating a unique place for visitors. Lost to the outside world, one of those species was the Parma wallaby. Unfortunately, the wallabies began wreaking ecological havoc by contributing to the loss of hundreds of native plant species and the animals that depended on those plants. And so, not knowing what they had, the government began a systematic extermination of wallabies to preserve the island's own flora and fauna.

But in 1965, the true identity of this marsupial was discovered and the extermination efforts were put on hold while many of these endangered animals were secured from Kawau Island and dispersed to facilities around the world for breeding. The renewed interest in Parma wallabies brought about a historic surprise – much like the



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recent sighting of the formerly thought extinct ivory-billed woodpecker in Arkansas. A remnant population of secretive Parma wallabies was discovered back in Australia in the forests of New South Wales in the 1960s.

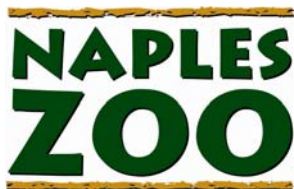
Still facing environmental issues after all these years, the New Zealand Department of Conservation determined in 2002 that all wallabies must be removed from the island and a final opportunity was given to a new generation of zoo conservationists to preserve this endangered species. Through the cooperative efforts of many institutions accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, a new group of Parma wallabies was rescued. The future of this endangered species now rests in its limited range in New South Wales and in the hands of accredited zoos that care for these amazing animals resurrected from extinction.

Breeding outside the wild is just one critical conservation role that AZA accredited institutions participate in. Each year, AZA member institutions participate in nearly two thousand conservation projects investing tens of millions of dollars in programs to help wildlife. This does not include the untold number of hours of staff time and PhD expertise directed toward these efforts. These projects typically take place in about 100 different countries annually. Every year, professionals at AZA member institutions contribute to our understanding of wildlife biology and conservation by publishing hundreds of books, book chapters, journal articles, conference proceedings papers, posters, theses, and dissertations. Locally, Naples Zoo supports projects here in Collier County all the way to countries like Brazil, Madagascar, India, and Thailand.

Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Daily presentations include Alligator Bay Feeding, Meet the Keeper Series, along with two premiere presentations: Planet Predator and Serpents: Fangs & Fiction. Both of these feature shows take place in the Safari Canyon Theater where guests see live animals from feline predators to venomous snakes along with exciting video footage. For those looking for more on the historic botanical garden, the Tropical Plant Trek offers guests a short tour led by University of Florida Master Gardeners. And one of the zoo's most popular activities is the Primate Expedition Cruise where guests embark on a guided cruise through islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes.

The all day pay-one-price ticket includes admission to both the nationally accredited zoo and historic garden along with all shows, tours, exhibits, and the boat ride. (\$18.50 adults age 13+/ \$9.95 children 3 to 12, under 3 free. Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age). **Annual memberships and discount tickets are also available online at www.napleszoo.com.** Visitors enjoy healthy meals at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. Naples Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30 and is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. To learn more, click www.napleszoo.com or call (239) 262-5409.

Print Quality Image of mother and joey available for immediate download
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