

**Media Release from
Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples**

One of the top 10% of the nation's zoos accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association.

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New Monkey Birth Result of Cooperation of Five Zoos

As part of a national effort to preserve the species outside the wild, Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples is announcing the birth of a beautiful black and white colobus monkey. Just a few weeks old, the new baby is being cared for by the mother on one of the islands seen by the zoo's Primate Expedition Cruise. The birth is the result of a recommendation by a program of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). The new baby's arrival was made possible by the cooperative effort of five AZA accredited zoos.

The colobus monkeys live on one of the islands seen by guests taking the Primate Expedition Cruise at the zoo. The guides on the cruise were the first to see the new baby on December 19. 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. Mom has been keeping a close hold on the newborn and keepers are not yet sure if it's a boy or girl. The juvenile will remain with the troop until it nears maturity. Females will be mature by age 4 and males by age 6. In the wild, a young male will eventually leave the troop while the female offspring will remain. Inbreeding in the wild is unlikely as a resident male frequently loses his troop to new outside males within a few years.

All of the zoo's colobus monkeys are part of the Species Survival Plan® (SSP), a program orchestrated by the AZA. 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. Five zoos were involved in just this one case. Sunset Zoo in Kansas provided staff and resources to analyze the genetic data. Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado, Utah's Hogle Zoo, and The ZOO in Gulf Breeze, Florida provided monkeys. And Caribbean Gardens provided the location for the breeding.

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Upon arrival from the other zoos, the monkeys were housed in a separate quarantine area at the zoo. They are given routine physicals and tests to insure they do not have any diseases that can 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 male who was already on the island. They can also observe the other primates on the islands and get acclimated to the different sights and sounds.

After a few days, 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.

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 monkeys can be seen daily at the 52-acre Caribbean Gardens: The ZOO in Naples. A variety of innovative presentations and activities are offered all day. Small troops of lemurs, apes, and monkeys including the colobus live in natural habitats on the islands visited by guided catamarans on the Primate Expedition Cruise. In addition to the historical plantings dating back to 1919, the garden features a variety of animals from apes to zebras and is the only zoo in Florida to feature all four of Africa's top predators. Located in the heart of Naples at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from Coastland Center, the zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For more info, call the Caribbean Gardens ZooLine at (239) 262-5409 or click www.NaplesZoo.com.

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 that too wide to cross by jumping tree to tree. Lightweight bridges created for the monkeys have been effective in reducing the problem in coastal areas of Kenya.

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