



PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

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TWO YOUNG MASAI GIRAFFES DEBUT APRIL 15

Santa Barbara Zoo Celebrates Accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)

WHAT: The debut of two young female Masai giraffes, who join Sulima, the Zoo's Baringo giraffe in the African Veldt exhibit. Kris Vehrs, Executive Director of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), presents Zoo officials with official recognition of their AZA Accreditation for another five years.

WHEN: Thursday, April 15, 10:30 a.m., African Veldt exhibit

WHERE: Santa Barbara Zoo

WHO: Audrey and Betty Lou, Masai giraffes; Sulima, Baringo giraffe
Kris Vehrs, AZA Executive Director
Rich Block, Santa Barbara Zoo CEO, Nancy McToldridge, Santa Barbara Zoo Director, members of the Zoo's Board of Directors, and Zoo supporters

WHY: The Zoo is making a transition from exhibiting Baringo giraffes to showcasing Masai [mah-SIGH] giraffes, as part of a regional giraffe management program with other West Coast zoos including those in Los Angeles and San Diego. This allows the zoos to maximize the genetic diversity within the sub-species, while minimizing distances giraffes have to be transported.

Audrey and Betty Lou arrived in Santa Barbara on March 10, 2010, from the Los Angeles Zoo. Betty Lou was born at the San Diego Zoo on August 2, 2007. Audrey was born on February 6, 2008 at the Los Angeles Zoo. The two were housed together at the Los Angeles Zoo beginning in October 2009. Though Audrey is younger, she is currently taller than her companion. Both giraffes are still growing, and could top 17 feet in height. The Masai is the largest subspecies of giraffes.

Aged 20, Sulima [sue-LEE-mah] is considered quite elderly, for a giraffe, and will live at the Santa Barbara Zoo for the remainder of her life.

A young male Masai giraffe joins the three females in summer 2010. These Masai giraffes will breed once they reach maturity.

The Santa Barbara Zoo first received AZA accreditation in 1982 and was the 51st zoo or aquarium to do so. Less than 10 percent of the approximately 2,400 USDA-licensed wildlife exhibitors achieve AZA accreditation.

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