



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 7, 2010

CONTACT: Jane Ballentine
C: 301/332-1742
O: 443/552-5275

MARYLAND ZOO MOURNING LOSS OF ELDEST GIRAFFE MARY

BALTIMORE -- The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is saddened to announce the death of Mary, the Zoo's eldest reticulated giraffe and matriarch of the herd. Mary, a longtime Zoo resident was 24-years-old and mother of both Zoe and Angel. Mary was euthanized Tuesday, December 7, 2010, at the Zoo.

"This is a sad day for the Maryland Zoo and our community," stated Don Hutchinson, President/CEO of the Maryland Zoo. "Mary will be missed by all of us, including the families and children who grew up with her and have visited her over the past two decades."

Mary was a part of the Zoo's giraffe herd for 23 years. She arrived from the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1987, as a 10-month-old.

"For most of her life, Mary was a very healthy giraffe," stated Dr. Ellen Bronson, chief veterinarian for the Zoo. "About 2 ½ years ago keepers noticed that she appeared a little stiff in her right front leg, and we began to treat her for some mild arthritis. She responded very positively to the medication and although she was getting older, she seemed as comfortable as always."

"In the last few weeks however, Mary's progressive arthritis had advanced quickly and she was showing signs of discomfort on multiple limbs," continued Bronson. "For the past two years, we had been providing her with a variety of treatments to make her more comfortable; unfortunately her arthritis progressed beyond our ability to manage."

Reticulated giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*) are one of 9 recognized subspecies of giraffe. Easily the tallest species on the planet, the giraffe can browse on leaves that Africa's other grazing herbivores can't reach. Giraffes travel in loose, informal herds and can be found in eastern, central and southern Africa. They range across savannah, grasslands, and open woods in search of trees – especially their favorite, acacias – to feed upon. Giraffes are not currently threatened or endangered. They are protected from hunting in most places where they now live, but are still vulnerable to poaching and habitat loss.

"Mary was, behaviorally and physically, very true to the natural history of the giraffe species," said Kevin Murphy, assistant curator. "At 16 feet tall and approximately 1,600 pounds, she had a sort of elegance about her that contributed to her matriarchal status in our herd."

The Maryland Zoo is home to three other giraffes, including Mary's daughters Zoe (15) and Angel (13), and young male Caesar, who recently turned 4-years-old.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo's varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children's Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.