



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE ANNOUNCES LOSS OF FEMALE CHEETAHS

BALTIMORE, MD -- The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is saddened to announce the death of nine-year-old female cheetah siblings Tuli and Teep from veno-occlusive disease, a genetic, cheetah-specific liver disease that was diagnosed from liver biopsies in late December. Both had been under intense care by veterinary and animal staff at the Zoo for the past several weeks and had initially been responding to medications. Unfortunately this disease, which is rarely diagnosed in living cheetahs, claimed the life of Teep this week, while Tuli was humanely euthanized due to her extremely poor long-term prognosis.

“Various medical tests over the past couple of months led us to this specific diagnosis which is an infrequently seen disease in cheetahs, and very rarely reported in other animal species,” said Ellen Bronson, head veterinarian at the Zoo. “Veno-occlusive disease leads to slowly progressive loss of liver cells and scarring of veins throughout the liver. The disease cannot be reversed, so our treatment focused more on palliative care. Little is known about effective treatments for this disease in cheetahs, so we were in somewhat uncharted territory for developing a medical management plan.”

Tuli and Teep came to The Maryland Zoo in July 2015. According to the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the median lifespan for cheetah is 11.3 years, putting these two cheetah in the older segment of the zoological population. “Because wild animals mask symptoms of illness so as not to appear vulnerable to attack, they usually don’t appear to be in ill health until late in the disease process,” continued Bronson. “We are doubly sad to lose both cheetah within days of each other, but we hope that what we have learned from treating this disease and what we will learn from the necropsy can be used to help the cheetah population in the future.”

Cheetah live in small, isolated populations mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. Many of their strongholds are in eastern and southern African parks. Due to human conflict, poaching, and habitat and prey-base loss, there are only an estimated 7,500 to 10,000 cheetahs left in the wild. The International Union for Conservation of Nature considers cheetahs vulnerable to extinction.

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 Penguin Coast 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.

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