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

**MARYLAND ZOO ANNOUNCES BIRTH OF COQUEREL'S SIFAKA**  
*-Fifth sifaka born at the Zoo since April 2011-*

**BALTIMORE, MD --** The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is pleased to announce the birth of a Coquerel's sifaka (CAHK-ker-rells she-FAHK) born on Tuesday, October 25, 2015. "We are so excited to have this new baby join our sifaka troop," stated Erin Cantwell, mammal collection and conservation manager. "Mom and baby have spent the past weeks bonding in a quiet off-exhibit area and we have been gradually introducing them to the exhibit in the Chimpanzee Forest with Gratian and older sister Leo."

This is the fifth offspring for The Maryland Zoo's sifaka pair, Anastasia, age 12, and Gratian, age 14. Offspring Otto and Nero, born approximately nine months apart in 2011, moved to the Duke Lemur Center in 2013 and Max, born in 2013, moved to the Los Angeles Zoo in 2014. Leo, born in 2014, remains at the Maryland Zoo with her parents and new sibling.

"It's exciting to have another baby at the Zoo and contribute to the population of this species of endangered lemur," continued Cantwell. "Ana is a very good mother and the baby is growing rapidly." The gender of the baby has yet to be determined.

Sifaka are born with sparse hair and resemble tiny gremlins. In time, white hair soon grows in and they begin to resemble their parents. Newborn sifaka ride on their mother's belly for the first month, then graduate to riding on her back. "By December, the baby should begin to sample solid food and crawl on Ana's back periodically," Cantwell said. "Before the New Year when the baby is six to eight weeks old, he or she will begin to venture a few feet away from Mom, which is always nerve-racking for us, but exciting for guests to watch." Sifaka males do not closely assist with the childrearing, although Gratian has taken a little interest in his previous offspring.

Coquerel's sifaka (*Propithecus coquereli*) are lemurs; native only to the island of Madagascar off the southeastern coast of Africa. Sifaka spend most of their lives in the treetops in two protected areas in the sparse dry, deciduous forests on the northwestern side of the island. As with many species of lemur, Coquerel's sifaka are endangered. Habitat loss due to deforestation is the leading threat to sifaka, as is the case with many species of lemur. Sifaka have a unique brown and white coloration, and are distinguished from other lemurs by the way that they move. They maintain a very upright posture and, using only their back legs, leap through the treetops. They can easily leap more than 20 feet in a single bound. On the ground, they spring sideways off their back feet to cover distance.

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This birth is the result of a recommendation from the Sifaka Species Survival Plan (SSP) coordinated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). SSPs provide breeding recommendations to maximize genetic diversity, with the goal of ensuring the long-term survival of the captive population and the health of individual animals. The Maryland Zoo is one of only ten accredited zoos that house the 63 Coquerel's sifaka in the U.S.

During the winter, Zoo visitors can see Ana, Gratian, Leo and the new baby in the sifaka exhibit inside the Chimpanzee Forest. "The sifaka will remain in their indoor habitat until mid-Spring when they will move to their outdoor habitat on Lemur Lane," concluded Cantwell.

#### **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](http://www.marylandzoo.org).

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