

MARYLAND ZOO

NEWS

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MARYLAND ZOO MOURNING THE LOSS OF GIRAFFE JUMA

BALTIMORE, MD – The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is saddened to announce the death of five-year-old giraffe, Juma (joo-ma). Juma, mother of 9-month-old giraffe calf Willow, had been under intense care for an unknown illness, however she died overnight in the Giraffe House yesterday. “This has been a year of ups and downs with our giraffe herd,” said Don Hutchinson, president/CEO of the Zoo. “We are feeling the loss of Juma deeply, while knowing that the staff has put their best efforts into caring for her during the past many weeks. She will be greatly missed.”

Juma began experiencing gastro-intestinal problems earlier this year, with several severe episodes. “We were able to treat her intensively and get her gastrointestinal tract moving during both episodes, but she was unable to gain weight after the second bout,” said Dr. Ellen Bronson, director of animal health, conservation, and research at the Zoo. “The Giraffe House team did an amazing job supporting her and encouraging her to consume the grain and hay that made up her primary diet, as well as the browse and produce that were her favorites, and special food items for weight gain. However, she never regained condition and continued to lose weight despite their best efforts.”

Veterinary staff have been treating her with antibiotics, probiotics, and anti-inflammatory medications in an attempt to restore gastrointestinal health, as well as calcium and other nutritional supplements to treat abnormalities detected on recent blood samples. “This has been a tough medical case for us with times of hope as well as worry,” continued Bronson. “We consulted with other veterinarians and nutritionists around the country, and instituted extensive treatment regimens over the past months. We are devastated that despite these efforts we were not able to turn her around.” A thorough necropsy (animal autopsy) will be performed; however results will not be available for several weeks.

“Willow has been weaned for a few months now, and is nicely integrated into the herd,” said Erin Cantwell, mammal collection and conservation manager. “She may initially notice that Juma isn’t there, however she will continue to be with ‘aunties’ Anuli and Kesi and we don’t expect there to be any issues within the herd structure as time passes.” In the wild, raising calves cooperatively is a natural behavior. Unrelated females form crèches, giraffe calf nurseries, in which they help care for others’ offspring.

Reticulated giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*) are one of nine recognized subspecies of giraffe. Giraffe 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 to feed upon. Sadly, the world-wide giraffe population has shrunk nearly 40 percent in just 30 years, and in 2016 all subspecies were put on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) “red list” of threatened and endangered species worldwide, calling them “vulnerable.”

[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 the award-winning Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the 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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