

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BABY CHIMPANZEE DEBUTS AT THE MARYLAND ZOO**

**BALTIMORE, MD** – The newest and tiniest member of The Maryland Zoo’s chimpanzee troop made her debut on Friday, July 19.

The two-week-old female chimpanzee and her 29-year-old mother, Bunny, were introduced to the indoor portion the Zoo’s Chimpanzee Forest after spending the past two weeks bonding in a quiet space behind the scenes. The infant spends most of her time cradled in her mother’s arms, where she sleeps and nurses, however Zoo guests should be able to catch a glimpse of her as Bunny moves around the habitat.

“Bunny is of course very familiar with all areas of the Chimpanzee Forest,” said Pam Carter, Chimpanzee Forest area manager. “What we want to observe is how she uses the space with her newborn and ensure that she remains comfortable with her baby in new situations. So far we are really pleased with their progress.”

Staff continues to monitor the infant’s health visually, and without coming in direct contact, which is why her exact weight is not yet known. She’s estimated to weigh about three pounds.

“We want to be as hands off as possible to allow mom and baby plenty of time to develop their relationship. Just like with human moms, there is a steep learning curve for both the baby and the mother in the first few days as they both adjust to this new way of life,” said Erin Cantwell, mammal collection and conservation manager.

Since Bunny is a first-time mother, she is paired with smaller group of chimps for now. This arrangement allows her to focus on caring for her baby, and not have to worry about the complex social dynamics of chimp society. “As Bunny becomes more confident and the baby becomes stronger, more members of the troop will be introduced to them,” said Cantwell.

There are currently 13 chimpanzees in The Maryland Zoo’s troop including the newborn. For the first few weeks, Bunny and her baby will spend short amounts of time in the indoor habitat. There will be periods where they are behind-the-scenes.

Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) are classified as endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Red List. One of the greatest threats to the wild chimpanzees is loss of habitat, the African forest, from commercial logging, agriculture and fires. Poaching and disease also put the wild population at risk.

The birth is the result of a recommendation from the Chimpanzee Species Survival Plan (SSP) of 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 population and the health of individual animals.

“We are so excited to see Bunny flourish as a mom,” said Cantwell. “It’s great to watch an animal we care so much about experience this next step in her life. And, chimp babies are really quite adorable. We can’t wait to watch the baby grow up and achieve her own life milestones!”

Developmental milestones are similar to those for human babies. The care team will monitor the baby for important successes, such as the ability hold her head up on her own, for her to use her fingers and toes to grasp things, learning vocalizations and facial expressions, and teething.

The Zoo's Chimpanzee Forest team is currently in the process of coming up with name options for the newest addition. Next week, the Zoo will announce the names and offer public voting in an online naming contest. For updates, please visit [www.marylandzoo.org](http://www.marylandzoo.org) and [www.facebook.com/marylandzoo](http://www.facebook.com/marylandzoo).

In honor of the big debut, the Zoo will offer "Everyone's a Kid Day," Friday, July 19 through Sunday, July 21. All Zoo tickets will be sold at the children's price of \$17.99. Promotion available only at the Zoo's Main Gate.

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

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