

MARYLAND ZOO

NEWS

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CHIMPANZEE BORN AT THE MARYLAND ZOO

- It's a girl! -

BALTIMORE, MD – The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is thrilled to announce the birth of a female chimpanzee, born on Sunday, December 29, 2019, to 24-year-old chimpanzee Raven.

The Zoo's animal care staff had been providing routine prenatal care, keeping a close eye on the pregnant female, and the birth appeared to go smoothly. Raven and the baby have spent their first week together bonding in a quiet off-exhibit area.

"The baby is gripping well and is very vocal," said Erin Cantwell, mammal collection and conservation manager. "Similar to many new moms, Raven needs a lot of support and encouragement. She's a first-time mom, and we are using behavior training to guide her on how to carry and nurse the baby properly."

Chimpanzee gestation is approximately 8 months long. Prenatal care begins once staff get a positive pregnancy test. The veterinary and animal care teams also performed routine ultrasounds on Raven to make sure the baby was growing appropriately.

The tiny new addition looks like a miniature version of her mom, with fluffy black hair covering most of her body. She spends nearly all of her time cradled in Raven's arms. Chimp babies usually weigh 2-3 pounds at birth. Raven is the second chimpanzee to give birth at the Zoo recently. In July 2019, the Zoo welcomed baby Lola. At 6-months-old, she still spends the majority of her time close to her mom, Bunny. The care team hopes that Raven will gain comfort and confidence in her mothering skills by spending time with Bunny and Lola.

"These two babies are essential for the long term genetic health of the chimpanzee population in human care, as reproduction in AZA-accredited zoos has been slow the last several years," said Cantwell. "They will also provide excellent baby rearing experience for not only Bunny and Raven, but for all of the chimps in our troop. It is very important for all the troop members to be around young babies so that they learn how to properly interact with them. Our guests will get the joy of watching two young chimps grow up and explore their new world together."

Developmental milestones are similar to those for human babies. The care team will monitor the baby for important successes, such as the ability to 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.

Since Raven is a first-time mother, the Animal Care team has placed her with a smaller group of chimps, including Bunny and her baby, Lola. This arrangement allows Raven to focus on caring for her baby, and not have to worry about the complex social dynamics of chimp society.

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.

There are currently 14 chimpanzees in The Maryland Zoo's troop including the newborn. While most of the troop can be seen daily in the Chimpanzee Forest, Raven and her baby will remain behind the scenes for a short period of time to allow them to continue to strengthen their bond.

For updates, please visit www.marylandzoo.org and www.facebook.com/marylandzoo.

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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