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MARYLAND ZOO WELCOMES TWO SOUTHERN WHITE RHINOCEROS

BALTIMORE, MD – The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is thrilled to announce the addition of two four-year-old Southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*) to the African Watering Hole at the Zoo. The two male rhinos arrived in November from a private facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) based on a recommendation from the White Rhino Species Survival Plan (SSP). After a mandatory 30-day quarantine, the two have spent the winter becoming accustomed to their new home and animal care team.

“These two young rhino are very agile, intelligent animals,” said Erin Grimm, mammal collection and conservation manager at the Zoo. “Since their arrival, it’s been important to acclimate them not only to their new caregivers, but also to the climate here in Baltimore. They have since had exposure to our winter weather in small increments, however it’s been far too cold this winter to properly introduce them to the full scope of the African Watering Hole. We have been eagerly anticipating warmer weather so we can familiarize them with the habitat.”

“These two have never seen zebra or ostrich before, so initial introductions with these animals has not yet begun, but will take place slowly after the rhino are acclimated to the Watering Hole,” continued Grimm. “We will be rotating animals in and out of the habitat, so it’s hard to say definitely when guests will be able to see the rhinos right now. We ask folks to be patient while we make certain that all the animals are comfortable sharing the same space on a daily basis.”

Southern white rhinos are classified as “near threatened” by the IUCN, the world’s leading conservation organization. Their numbers have improved significantly since the early 20th century when they were thought to be extinct, but their future in the wild is far from guaranteed. Southern white rhinos live almost exclusively in the country of South Africa, inhabiting the grassland and savannas.

White rhinos are not, in fact, white. In Afrikaans, a Dutch-based language spoken in many parts of southern Africa where the white rhino lives, the word for wide is “wiet.” Afrikaans speakers referred to the rhino as “wiet” because of its unusually wide, squared-off upper lip. When English speakers moved to South Africa, they apparently misinterpreted what Afrikaans speakers were saying, thinking that the Afrikaans speakers were calling the rhinos “white” when in fact they were saying “wide.”

The Maryland Zoo has housed rhinos since the African Watering Hole opened in 1992. For updates on the rhino, 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 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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