



NEWS RELEASE

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TWO KOALA “AMBASSADORS” GO ON VIEW AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO ON APRIL 28; EDMUND AND THACKORY ON LOAN FOR ONE YEAR

Two Male Marsupials to Help Bring Awareness of the Threats to Australian Wildlife and Habitats

(Santa Barbara, CA, April 12, 2018) – Two furry, eucalyptus-loving marsupials will soon take up residence at the Santa Barbara Zoo for a one-year visit to increase awareness of the challenges facing them and other native Australian species. Koala “ambassadors” Edmund and Thackory go on view in a special outdoor exhibit near the Zoo Train station beginning Saturday, April 28, 2018 during regular Zoo hours.

“Koalas are iconic animals for Australia, as it’s the only place they are found in the wild,” says Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Director of Animal Health and Care, who was born and received her veterinary degree in Australia. “But there are major challenges there that threaten koalas and other native animals and plants in Australia. Having Edmund and Thackory in Santa Barbara for a year allows our guests not only to appreciate these two little guys, but also to discover the changes affecting their native habitat.”

Dr. Barnes names habitat destruction and fragmentation, prolonged drought and other extreme weather events, and predation by feral cats and dogs as major issues affecting koalas and other native species.

“But it’s not just on land. Animals in Australia’s oceans, including the Great Barrier Reef, also face the impacts of sea level rise, ocean warming, and increasing seawater acidity, among others,” she says.

About Edmund and Thackory

Edmund and Thackory are on loan from the Los Angeles Zoo (LAZ) and San Diego Zoo (SDZ) respectively. As with all koalas in American zoos, the pair officially “belong” to Australia. In

addition to obtaining standard permits to bring them to Santa Barbara, the Zoo was required to make a formal request to the Australian government (which was approved) including details of their accommodations, plans for their dietary needs and any medical needs.

The Santa Barbara Zoo has committed \$2,500 per month during the koalas' residency to Australian koala habitat conservation as part of the SDZ's Koala Loan Program. While LAZ does not have a loan program, they have a thriving koala population and need temporary housing for young male koalas, like Edmund, to mature before moving to another zoo.

Edmund was born on September 1, 2015, at LAZ. His sire, Lincoln, was born at the Taronga Zoo in Australia. Thackory was born June 15, 2011, at SDZ and his name is the Aboriginal word for "heavy," as he was a particularly large joey when he first emerged from his mother's pouch. He has represented the SDZ Koala Loan Program at Zoo New England in 2013 and Indianapolis Zoo in 2015.



"Koalas are solitary by nature, and adult male koalas are very territorial and don't do well in groups when other males are present. So there are single males that need homes," says Dr. Barnes. "Edmund and Thackory are part of a cooperative breeding program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), but not breeding at this time. So, our zoo provides a home for them, much like we have a bachelor troop of Western lowland gorillas."

The two will be housed separately in adjacent outdoor covered enclosures, separated by a wall. They also have heaters, but the elements should not be a factor. "Santa Barbara's climate is similar to that of the east coast of Australia, part of their native range," notes Dr. Barnes.

Their food will come from a eucalyptus plantation in Arizona, where it is grown specifically for koalas, is approved by the SDZ's Koala Loan Program, and used by other zoos across the country. Their diet may be supplemented with local eucalyptus, if the proper species and sources are identified.



Though they appear cuddly, the public will not be allowed to hold these koalas. Dr. Barnes explains, "Even though Edmund and Thackory were both born in zoos, they are not trained to be held. Some koalas raised by humans become accustomed to being held, especially in Australia, including orphaned or rehabilitated wild koalas. It is dangerous for anyone other than a trained zoo professional to attempt to hold either of these two."

Other "Aussie" Species at the Santa Barbara Zoo

The Santa Barbara Zoo already houses a number of Australian species. Birds include black swans at the Zoo's entrance, laughing kookaburras and tawny frogmouths that share an enclosure in

the courtyard, a blue-faced honeyeater in the Tropical Aviary, and sulphur-crested cockatoos only visible from the Zoo Train that regularly come out with keepers to meet guests.

Of the four Australian reptile and snake species at the Zoo, three also leave their holding areas in the Eewww! exhibit for meet-and-greets with guests: blue-tongued skink, bearded dragon, and woma python. A frilled dragon is on view in Eewww!, near the entrance to Tropical Aviary.

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*Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the **Santa Barbara Zoo** is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Asian elephant, California condor, Channel Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*

The Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$18 for adults, \$13 for seniors aged 65+, \$10 for children 2-12, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$8 weekdays and \$11 on Saturdays and Sundays. Visit www.sbzoo.org.