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SANTA BARBARA ZOO COUNTS DOWN TO NEW LIONS

In anticipation of new arrivals, Zoo offers a retrospective of its history of lions over the past 50 years

(May 15, 2020) Santa Barbara, CA -- As the Santa Barbara Zoo looks ahead, carefully laying out plans to safely reopen, they are looking forward to welcoming some new additions to Santa Barbara - African lions! While the Zoo remains closed, it’s taking this opportunity to reflect back on its long history of caring for lions, and offering a fun and educational retrospective for the public to enjoy, in anticipation of its new lions.

“We’re bursting with ‘pride’ to welcome these new lions to Santa Barbara. It’s during times like this that we build hope and strength in our future, and we know these new additions will bring so much joy and happiness to our community.” shared Rich Block, President/CEO of the Santa Barbara Zoo.

The Zoo’s first lion was a male named Dandylion, who arrived in 1970. He was later joined by a female companion, Dolly, in 1973. Dandylion passed away in 1984. In 1985, the Zoo acquired a pair of 10-week-old siblings from Oregon who were hand-raised by Zoo staff. A public naming contest was held and the winners were Paka (for the male) and Kali (for the female, short for Kalahari). Paka lived until 2001. That same year, construction began on the Zoo's new ‘Cats of Africa’ exhibit, which opened in March 2003. At that time, Kali was the Zoo’s only lion, so to create a new pride, two young lions, both born in 1998, were brought in: Chadwick (from the Indianapolis Zoo) and Kariba (from Zoo Atlanta) in December 2002. Kariba died in 2003 due to a pre-existing medical condition, just before the arrival of Gingerbread, from the Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City, Kansas. Chadwick and Gingerbread had two offspring, Kiki (born in 2004, now at the Fresno Chaffee Zoo) and Docha (born in 2005, now at John Ball Zoo in Grand Rapids, Michigan). Kali died at the age of 22 in 2007, one of the longest-lived lions in zoos at that time. Gingerbread died at age 18 in 2017, and Chadwick died at age 21 in December 2019.

As the Zoo approaches reopening, and looks forward to introducing the new lions, it will be sharing fun lion facts and trivia on its social media channels. The community is encouraged to visit their website sbzoo.org as well as their social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter).

Those who wish to help welcome the new lions and support the Zoo during the closure may become African lion Foster Feeders through the Zoo’s website.

About African Lions
African lions are the second largest big cat after tigers. Lions are the only truly social cats. They live in groups called prides, which consist of six to seven lions on average. All females in a pride are typically related, and outsiders of either gender are not tolerated in the wild. Listed as “vulnerable” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, their population is steadily decreasing in the wild. In just two decades, populations decreased by 43 percent, and it’s estimated that as few as 23,000 African lions remain today. Threats to lions include habitat loss, poaching, and retaliation killings by farmers attempting to protect their livestock. One of the main causes of the alarming rate at which they are losing their habitats is due to expanding human populations and the resulting growth of agriculture, settlements, and roads.

About The Santa Barbara Zoo

The Santa Barbara Zoo is currently closed due to coronavirus concerns. The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM; general admission is $19.95 for adults, $11.95 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2. Parking is $11. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and is the public’s link to helping animals in their native habitats. Visit www.sbzoo.org.