(November 24, 2020) Santa Barbara, CA -- On November 5, the Santa Barbara Zoo’s African lion, Felicia, gave birth to her first cub, a female named Pauline. Pauline is a meaningful family name selected by her Premier Foster Feeder sponsors, the Mozilo family. The Mozilos also sponsor the cub’s parents, Felicia and Ralph.

On November 19, the cub became critically ill as she was not getting enough milk from her mother (and became hypothermic and hypoglycemic), so the Zoo’s animal care team made the decision to move her to the veterinary hospital for intensive care, where she has been in the incubator, receiving fluid therapy, and has been learning to nurse formula from a bottle.

“The first month of a lion cub’s life is precarious in terms of survival, particularly when born to a first-time mother,” shared Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Vice President of Animal Care & Health. “Felicia is a young first-time mother and this situation that has occurred with her cub is not uncommon with inexperienced mothers. We are very happy to report that the cub has been responding well to treatment and is now successfully nursing from a bottle. The cub will remain in the hospital for a little longer and then she will move back to the lion holding area so that she can be in close proximity to her parents, Felicia and Ralph, but will continue to be bottle-fed until she is weaned.”

“We’re happy and relieved to know the cub has recovered and is doing well,” shared Rich Block, President & CEO of the Santa Barbara Zoo. “I’d like to acknowledge our incredible animal care team who expertly handled the birth and the cub’s critical care needs, and continue to provide around-the-clock care for the cub. This is just the kind of warm and fuzzy news we think everybody can appreciate right now, and we look forward to introducing the new cub to everyone soon!”

The Zoo’s animal care staff were strongly suspicious Felicia was pregnant based on her physical changes and fecal hormone analysis. Lion pregnancies are only approximately 110 days and although pregnancy can be determined by measuring hormone levels in the female’s feces, this is not done until 60 days after mating due to the possibility of a pseudo-pregnancy. If the hormone levels are still elevated 60-70 days after mating, then the female is confirmed pregnant.

“We were encouraged from the very beginning to see how quickly and easily Felicia and Ralph bonded, and observed them breeding frequently as soon as they were introduced,” said Barnes. "As lion
populations have been steadily declining in the wild, we’re proud to be a part of the conservation efforts of these majestic animals and to know that these lions are a successful breeding pair.”

This is the first cub for both Felicia (two years old) and Ralph (five years old), who arrived at the Zoo this past May. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) recommended the pairing of Felicia and Ralph as part of its Species Survival Plan to maintain a sustainable population of lions in North America. As part of the AZA’s cooperative breeding program, the Zoo started the planning process to bring in new lions even before the passing of longtime beloved lion, Chadwick, in December of 2019.

Felicia and the cub will remain behind the scenes for approximately eight weeks before making their official public debut. The Zoo will share viewing information as soon as it becomes available, but in the meantime, the public is encouraged to tune in to the Zoo’s social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) for updates.

**Support the pride!** The public is invited to help welcome the new lion cub by becoming a Foster Feeder sponsor of the African lion. New Foster Feeders at all levels will receive a personalized digital Foster Feeder certificate (includes honoree’s name and lion photo), and recognition on the Foster Feeder board at the Zoo. Various donation levels are available on the website with different, wild benefits! For more information or to become a Foster Feeder, click here: [https://sbzoo.pivvit.com/african-lion](https://sbzoo.pivvit.com/african-lion)

**About African Lions**

African lions are the second largest big cat after tigers and are the only truly social cats. In the wild, 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. 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 remain today. Threats to lions include habitat loss, poaching, and retaliation killings by farmers attempting to protect their livestock. One of the main causes is the alarming rate at which they are losing their habitats due to expanding human populations and the resulting growth of agriculture, settlements, and roads.

**About The Santa Barbara Zoo**

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open with limited capacity. Online ticket reservations are required for all guests, including Zoo Members, available at [www.sbzoo.org](http://www.sbzoo.org). 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 more than 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Masai giraffe, California condor, island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. As a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements. Visit [sbzoo.org](http://sbzoo.org).

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