



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MASAI GIRAFFE CALF “PARKER” BORN AUGUST 6, 2016 AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO

- Name Chosen by Donors Hutton Parker Foundation
- Betty Lou Gave Birth to Calf at 9:38am Saturday August 6th in Giraffe Barn
- Sixth Calf Born at Zoo Since Arrival of Sire Michael in 2012
- First Giraffe Calf Ever Born in Santa Barbara During Fiesta Week
- Public Can Celebrate the Birth by Becoming Giraffe Foster Feeders

No press photography at this time.

**Calf not on view to the public.
On-view date to be announced on
SB Zoo social media.**

(Santa Barbara, CA, August 6, 2016) – The Santa Barbara Zoo’s Masai giraffe Betty Lou gave birth to a calf on August 6 at 9:38am in the Zoo’s Giraffe Barn after approximately forty-five minutes of labor. The calf has been named “Parker” by donors, the Hutton Parker Foundation. The sex of the calf will be determined at a veterinary exam tomorrow morning, August 7th.

This is Betty Lou's third pregnancy. Giraffe calves are born after a gestation of roughly 14.5 months and are typically 125 to 150 pounds and six feet tall at birth. Parker should grow approximately three feet during the calf's first year of life.

The forty-five minute labor was relatively quick, per Betty Lou's zoo keepers. The calf stood fifty minutes after being born and was nursing thirty minutes after standing up. Per the Santa Barbara Zoo animal care team, Betty Lou is a very attentive mother.

The Zoo's giraffe herd is part of the population of 120 Masai giraffes that live at 28 North American zoos accredited by the AZA. Michael, the calf's sire, is considered the most genetically valuable male Masai giraffe in captivity because he has few relatives in zoos other than his offspring born here in Santa Barbara which now numbers six. He arrived at the Santa Barbara Zoo in January 2012.

"Guests frequently ask us, 'why all the babies?'" said Zoo Director Nancy McToldridge. "Through this cooperative breeding effort, these calves serve a significant role: to help keep their species alive. Thanks to their father Michael, these calves in particular all carry rare, valuable genes that are vital to keeping the North American Masai population genetically diverse and healthy. We're proud to be able to contribute to giraffe conservation in this way."

The SB Zoo's herd now consists of Michael, females Audrey and Betty Lou, Audrey's calves Chad (born March 26, 2016) and Buttercup (born November 13, 2014), and now Betty Lou's calf Parker.

There are an estimated 37,000 Masai giraffes in Kenya and Tanzania, but a more thorough census is required. They are at risk due to poaching and habitat loss and environmental degradation. Giraffes are the tallest land mammal, and the Masai is the largest subspecies, growing up to 17 feet tall and weighing 2,700 pounds.

Iconic Species Fights for Survival

Per the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, there are nine recognized subspecies of giraffes with some subspecies numbering only a few thousand such as Rothschild's giraffe (*Giraffe camelopardalis rothschildi*), a few hundred such as Thornicroft's giraffe (*G.c. thornicrofti*) or, the case of the West African giraffe (*G.c.peralta*), only 49 remaining. According to an article from *Scientific American's Extinction Countdown*, "One of the world's most iconic and beloved animals is quickly disappearing," with overall giraffe populations having plummeted forty percent in just fifteen years in the plains and forests of Africa.

Stick Your Neck Out for Giraffes!

The public can support the SBZ herd and welcome this long-necked arrival by becoming a Foster Feeder sponsor of the giraffe calf. A donation of \$50 helps with the cost of feeding the growing giraffe family. New giraffe Foster Feeders receive a baby photo of the calf along with a certificate, giraffe fact sheet, and recognition on the Zoo's Foster Feeder board. For information, visit www.sbzoo.org.

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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](http://www.aaz.org) (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 \$17 for adults, \$13 for seniors aged 65+, \$10 for children 2-12, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$7.

Visit www.sbzoo.org.

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