



NEWS RELEASE

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NZINGA AND BANGORI NOW ON VIEW! **TWO NEW WESTERN LOWLAND GORILLA BROTHERS FORM NEW “BACHELOR TROOP” AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO**

- Two Brothers from Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas
- Nzinga (18 years old) and Bangori (12 years old) Form Bachelor Troop
- New “Training Wall” Allows Viewing of Interactions with Keepers
- Western Lowland Gorillas Highly Endangered in Wild
- “Support the Troop” With Foster Feeder Donation

(Santa Barbara, CA, August 31, 2016) – Brothers Nzinga and Bangori, two Western lowland gorillas, the new “bachelor troop” at the Santa Barbara Zoo, are now on view intermittently between 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Those hours will change as the gorillas adapt to their new surroundings. They arrived at the Santa Barbara Zoo on July 27 and have completed the mandatory 30-day quarantine required of all new animals.

“They are getting used to their new home, so we are taking it slowly,” said Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Director of Animal Care and Health. “Bangori, the younger gorilla, is settling in well but his older brother, Nzinga, has found the transition more challenging and is finding it harder to acclimate to his new keepers and new environment. Their personalities are very different and we are still getting to know them. It’s an exciting time for us and for them.”

Born and raised at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas, the pair are young silverback males weighing approximately 350 pounds each. Nzinga (pronounced: in-ZING-gah), age 18, was born May 22, 1998, to Mary and Moja. His name comes from a 16th century king of the Congo who fought against slavery. Bangori (pronounced: ban-GORE-ee) is 12 years old and was born February 18, 2004. He shares the same parents as Nzinga and is named for a stream in Central Africa.

“Nzinga and Bangori had reached the age and developmental phase where it was time to leave the family and become more independent,” added Dr. Barnes. “They are not ready to be troop leaders yet, so we will provide a great home for them as a bachelor group until they are ready to be troop leaders in the next five to ten years.”

All-male “bachelor troops” play a critical role in the development of young male gorillas. In the wild, teenage males leave their birth families and join a bachelor troop until they are old enough to establish a family troop of their own. Western lowland gorillas are managed collectively among zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The Santa Barbara Zoo is among several zoos who have bachelor troops.

While the exhibit was empty over the summer, the Zoo made several renovations to provide additional behavioral enrichment for the gorillas, including newly designed puzzle feeders buried in the ground and planted bamboo for forage. Video cameras were installed for monitoring the exhibit and holding areas, and safety glass now provides additional safety for guests in the upper viewing areas. A new Training Wall allows the public to view keepers as they interact with the gorillas during training sessions; a similar Training Wall is currently in use in the Zoo’s African lion and the Amur leopard exhibits.

The Zoo’s previous gorillas, named Goma and Kivu, had resided at the Zoo since 1997 and had reached the age to lead family troops. They departed last spring to join family groups at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo in Colorado (Goma) and the Little Rock Zoo in Arkansas (Kivu). *The Forest’s Edge* exhibit first opened 20 years ago with the Zoo’s first Western lowland gorilla, Max.

About Western Lowland Gorillas

Found in the lowland tropical forests of central Africa and the Congo Basin, the Western lowland gorilla population is critically endangered. Main threats stem from human-disease transmission, poaching and habitat loss due to mining and timber industries. According to the World Wildlife Fund, even if all threats to Western lowland gorillas were removed, scientists calculate the population would require at least 75 years to recover due to naturally low birth rates.

Currently, there are 353 Western lowland gorillas who reside in 51 Association of Zoo & Aquarium (AZA) institutions throughout North America.

The species is also known by one of the more memorable the scientific names in the animal kingdom, *Gorilla gorilla gorilla*.

"Support the Troop"

The public can help the Zoo celebrate the arrival of Nzinga and Bangori by becoming a Foster Feeder sponsor for Western lowland gorillas. A donation of \$50 helps with the cost of feeding the gorillas. New gorilla Foster Feeders receive a plush gorilla (while supplies last) along with a certificate, fact sheet, and recognition on the Zoo's Foster Feeder board. For information, visit www.sbzoo.org/donate and choose *Sponsor an Animal*.

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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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