



NEWS RELEASE

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Press Contacts:

Julia McHugh 805 569-3303 or jmchugh@sbzoo.org

Dean Noble 805 962-5339 or dnoble@sbzoo.org

SANTA BARBARA ZOO'S ELDERLY AFRICAN LION GINGERBREAD HUMANELY EUTHANIZED AFTER ILLNESS

(Santa Barbara, CA. February 18, 2017)– Gingerbread, an African lion that lived at the Santa Barbara Zoo for 13 of her 18 years, was humanely euthanized on Friday (2/17/17) after a prolonged illness.

Born at the Indianapolis Zoo on May 29, 1998, Gingerbread was considered geriatric at age 18 years, 8 months. The median life expectancy for African lions under human care is 16.8 years, meaning that half the population don't live to be 16.8 years old, and the other half live longer.

“Gingerbread has been dealing with health issues for the past several months, and we've been working with a number of specialists to treat her condition,” says Director of Animal Health and Care Julie Barnes. “Most recently, we had a veterinary internal medicine specialist return to assist with performing more tests, including an ultrasound and biopsies. Gingerbread's spleen appeared abnormal, and her blood results were getting worse. Though she recovered from the procedure, she had declined rapidly since her last examination. Friday morning she was extremely lethargic and did not respond to keepers. Based on her serious medical condition and advanced age, the decision was made for humane euthanasia.”

A necropsy will be performed to determine the cause of the elderly lion's illness; results will not be available for several weeks.

“She lived a very long and full life,” added Dr. Barnes, “was loved by everyone who looked after her at the Zoo, adored by our guests, and had a lifelong companion in our male lion Chadwick.”

Dr. Barnes notes that animals under human care are now living longer due to the high quality of geriatric care now available. The Zoo's Animal Care staff had been closely monitoring Gingerbread for months and adapted her care as her illness progressed. Her diet was changed to include more of her favorite foods in order to maintain her body weight, for example, and palliative care was provided for arthritis and a jaw condition. Chadwick, aged 19, also receives special care related to age and poor vision.

Gingerbread arrived at the Santa Barbara Zoo in 2003 from the Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City, Kansas, to take up residence at the new Cats of Africa exhibit. She and male lion Chadwick had a breeding recommendation from the Association of Zoos & Aquarium's (AZA) Species Survival Plan, a cooperative effort that manages captive populations of key species.

The pair produced only two living offspring, from two different litters. Kiki, the first African lion ever born at the Zoo, was born on February 3, 2004. A male cub, Docha, was born April 10, 2005. Both cubs were hand-reared, and examinations showed that Gingerbread produced very little milk. As part of the AZA Species Survival Plan, Kiki was recommended for breeding first at Zoo Atlanta, where she had two litters. In June 2015, the AZA program recommended that she and one of her female offspring, Namaya, be moved to the Fresno Zoo. She gave birth to a male cub, Kijani, in October 2016. Docha lives at the John Ball Zoo in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Zoo's other two African lions, sisters Kadi and Neema, arrived from the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. in November 2012 as part of an AZA breeding recommendation with Chadwick. Over the years, the animals have indicated that they prefer to live separately, so the two females alternate being on view with Chadwick at the Cats of Africa exhibit.

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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, island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*

It is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission \$17 for adults, \$13 for seniors 64+, \$10 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2. Parking is \$7.