



NEWS RELEASE

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SANTA BARBARA ZOO REVEALS “MYSTERY ANIMAL” AS BRADLEY THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER, THE ZOO’S FIRST AMBASSADOR DOG

- Ten-Month-Old Pup is in Training to Meet the Public, Take Part in Education Programs, Appear at Keeper Talks, and More
- Facebook Clues Hinting of the New Arrival Spur 300+ Comments
- Adopted from a Northridge Family, Lives at the Zoo
- Being Trained Using Positive Reinforcement
- To Access Video Interviews & B-Roll: <http://tiny.cc/z2663y>
- For High Resolution Photos: <http://tiny.cc/w3663y>

Santa Barbara, CA. March 19, 2019– Santa Barbara Zoo has ended weeks of online speculation about the identity of a “mystery animal” with the announcement today (3/19/19) that it is a Golden Retriever named Bradley, who is in training to be the Zoo’s first Ambassador Dog.

Bradley has an official Zoo job description as Ambassador Dog, which states that his overall duty “is to connect with Zoo guests so they can understand and care about all animals, especially those in the wild animals.”

“Bradley can connect with people in ways many of our other animals can’t,” said Dr. Julie



Barnes, the Zoo’s Vice President of Animal Care & Health. “If people care about animals, then they are more likely to want to save them in the wild by preserving habitat, making sustainable choices, and other actions we talk about here at the Zoo.”

Dr. Barnes reports that Bradley is still young, so the training is takes place at his pace and is going quite well.

If it goes as hoped, Bradley will eventually participate in keeper talks on subjects like responsible pet choices and animal training using positive reinforcement. He may be involved in education programs such as Zoo Camp. He might provide outreach to local schools, retirement homes, hospitals, and elsewhere.

“Though they might catch sight of him with his handlers and wearing his ‘In Training’ vest, Bradley is not ready to meet the public,” adds Barnes. “Currently, we tell people not to make a special visit to the Zoo just to see him. He’s rarely visible and not on a regular schedule.”

Facebook Clues Inspire Guesses

More than 300 comments were made on Facebook after the Zoo posted two photographic clues. The first, posted March 1, showed a close-up of Bradley’s black nose. The second ran on March 10 and was a paw print in muddy ground.



Popular guesses on Facebook as to the identity of this “mystery animal” were polar bear, red panda, kangaroo, beaver, wolf, and coyote.

About Bradley’s Training

As with the Zoo’s other animal residents, Bradley is trained using positive reinforcement, meaning he is rewarded for good behaviors and following instructions, and ignored or redirected for negative behaviors. The Zoo has retained a professional dog trainer who works with Bradley most days and is training specific staff to work with him as well.

“The goal is to guide him into making the right choices on his own,” says Dr. Barnes. “The training is currently going well, but will last as long as needed. Some training will continue indefinitely, to keep Bradley engaged as an ambassador dog.”

About Bradley

Bradley is an English Cream Golden Retriever who was born on May 12, 2018. The “English Cream” refers to the light color of his fur. His original family lived in Northridge and had him as a young puppy. A family member’s unexpected medical development made it impossible for them to care for a puppy. The Zoo adopted him when he was nine months old.



“Zoo staff spent six months visiting dog rescue facilities and following leads for a dog with the right temperament to be trained as our ambassador,” said Dr. Barnes. “Bradley has what we were looking for.”

Bradley lives at the Zoo. It is hoped that he will eventually make visits to local schools, retirement homes, hospitals, and community events, but that depends on his training.

His sleeping area is in a heated office. The Zoo’s security guard checks on him several times during the night and gives Bradley toilet breaks. Bradley has a fenced exercise and play area on Cabrillo Lawn, across from Cats of Africa. There he is allowed to run free and play, and have play

dates with specially selected dogs. During breaks from training, Bradley also has “Sniff Time” while on the leash, when he is allowed to follow his nose and explore the Zoo.

“Zoo animals are not unfamiliar with dogs, as service dogs sometimes accompany guests,” says Dr. Barnes. “However, his presence does help reinforce that the sight or smell of a dog is normal. So far, Bradley has responded well to zoo animals by remaining calm in their presence. Acclimating him to the other animals that live at the zoo is part of his training.”

Bradley is sponsored by a local family that wishes to remain anonymous and is recognized at the Zoo simply as “Jackson and Alaia.”

Dogs in Zoos

Ambassador dogs are not uncommon in zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). The Oklahoma Zoo debuted canine animal ambassador Max, a two-year-old terrier mix, in summer 2018. Other zoos with ambassador dogs include the Denver Zoo, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium (Tacoma, Washington) and Rosamond Gifford Zoo (Syracuse New York).

While dogs are sometimes used as companion animals for specific species, Bradley does not go into any animal enclosures.

The Santa Barbara Zoo provided dog companions for African lion cub Kiki when she was being hand-raised in 2004. The San Diego Zoo, Indianapolis Zoo, and Metro Richmond Zoo, among others, have had companion dogs for cheetah cubs.

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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.*

Visit www.sbzoo.org

The Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission \$18 for adults, \$13 for seniors 64+, \$11 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2. Parking is \$11.

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