



MEDIA ADVISORY

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WORLD'S LARGEST RODENTS "INVADE" SANTA BARBARA WHEN CAPYBARAS RETURN TO THE ZOO ON JUNE 7

- Capybaras Share Exhibit Near Train Station with Female Giant Anteaters
- Two Females Born in August 2018 at Greater Vancouver Zoo
- Four Years Since Capybaras have been at Zoo
- **PRESS ACCESS 10 A.M. TO NOON ON FRIDAY, JUNE 7**

(Santa Barbara, CA, June 6, 2019) It may sound like the premise from a sci-fi movie, but it is true – the world's largest rodents will "invade" Santa Barbara, specifically the Santa Barbara Zoo, on June 7 when two young capybaras go on view. This marks the return of the world's largest rodents to the Zoo after a four-year absence. The sisters, who are less than one year old, will share an exhibit near the Zoo Train Station with the Zoo's three female giant anteaters. **PRESS ACCESS: FRIDAY, JUNE 7 BETWEEN 10 A.M. AND NOON. CONTACT JULIA TO ARRANGE.**

The two female capybaras were born August 5, 2018 at the Greater Vancouver Zoo, where they were hand-raised after their mother passed away. A total of five siblings were hand-raised.

"They don't have names yet, but do have personalities," said Melanie Story, the mammal keeper who has cared for them during their 30-day quarantine. "The one that is currently lighter in color is more comfortable around people and braver in new situations, even though they were both hand-reared. But they are still not mature and it will be exciting to see how they change as they grow."



A temporary fence currently separates the capybara from the giant anteaters, and keepers are making careful introductions in hopes that the two species will co-inhabit the exhibit in the future.

"Capybaras have always been a favorite with our guests and we have been asked repeatedly over the last few years when will get them back," said Dr. Julie Barnes, Vice President of Animal Care and Health. "Having a mixed species exhibit can be very enriching for the animals, provided it can be done safely. But it always depends on the individual animals as to how well it works."

The Zoo's adult female giant anteater Anara is currently on exhibit with her female twins, Fancy Nancy Drew and Maria Luisa, who were born at the Zoo in November 2017. The Zoo's male giant anteater Ridley has his own quarters but will soon return to the adjacent exhibit, which was most recently occupied by two koalas who were on a one-year loan. Adult male giant anteaters do not interact with females unless they are breeding.

The sister capybaras, like many of the animals at the Zoo, can be sponsored and even named by making a donation to the Santa Barbara Zoo's Foster Feeder fund which covers the cost of the animal food bill at the Zoo each year. For more information, contact the Zoo's Institutional Advancement Department for details at 805-962-5339 or visit www.sbzoo.org.

About Capybaras

They have been called “swamp hogs” and “water pigs,” but capybaras are more closely related to guinea pigs than actual pigs – they are rodents. Adult capybaras can weigh as much as 150 pounds and stand as tall as 2.5 feet. They come from Central and South America where they live near standing water like riversides, ponds, and marshes.



Capybaras are most active on land, but are also skilled and graceful swimmers. Their feet are partially-webbed (like otters' or beavers') which allows them to dive deep and swim underwater for long distances. Water is also where capybaras prefer to defecate; they rarely “go” on land.

Just like fellow rodents such as porcupines and squirrels, capybaras' long front teeth continue to grow throughout their lifetime. The teeth tend to wear down from chewing food, but some older capybaras end up with very long teeth. Like camels, they chew from side-to-side, and like cows, they regurgitate their food to re-chew it.

Animal experts generally agree that in recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find this shy and sometimes nocturnal animal in the wild. Deforestation and habitat destruction are factors, and until recently, hunting and poaching as a food source contributed to their decline. New captive farming programs have helped relieve poaching.

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The Santa Barbara 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. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](http://www.aazoo.org) (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats.

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