



NEWS RELEASE

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NEW SNOW LEOPARD AND REINDEER ARRIVE AT THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO BIG CAT ON EXHIBIT NOVEMBER 18, REINDEER NOVEMBER 19

- **Santa Barbara Zoo Welcomes Back Snow Leopard and Reindeer**
- **World's Most Elusive Cat is a Vulnerable Species**
- **Reindeer Cookie and Peppermint Return, On View Through December 31**

(Santa Barbara, CA, November 18, 2019) Her name means “kitty” in Russian, and for a snow leopard, she’s pretty petite. Weighing in at about 70 lb., Kisa (KEY-sah) arrived at the Santa Barbara Zoo on Thursday, November 13, and currently resides in her new home near the Wings of Asia exhibit.

Eleven-year-old Kisa was born at the Denver Zoo on June 29, 2008 and came to Santa Barbara by way of Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City. She is a non-breeding female who has never produced offspring, and the move was recommended by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' species survival plan, which will make room for the breeding snow leopards at Hogle.

“It’s very exciting for us to have a snow leopard again,” said Dr. Julie Barnes, Vice President of Animal Care and Health. “At eleven years old, Kisa is a mature snow leopard, so she will likely live out her golden years with us. As adult snow leopards are usually solitary in the wild (outside of mating season or a female raising young), the Santa Barbara Zoo is a perfect option for Kisa’s new home.”

“So far, Kisa is acting a bit shy, and still getting used to her new surroundings. She has access to both her holding and exhibit areas during the standard 30-day quarantine period, so our guests may be able to see her as early as this week,” said zookeeper Kristen Weiners.

Kisa arrives just in time for the popular Snow Leopard Festival/Sledding at the Zoo event on Sunday, December 8, and is sponsored by The Notley Foundation.

About Snow Leopards

Snow leopards have a variety of adaptations that enable them to live in the extreme conditions of the high mountains in Central and South Asia, including large paws that act as snowshoes, thick fur that insulates the body in a variety of temperatures, and enlarged nasal cavities to facilitate breathing in cold climates. Despite their name, snow leopards are also adapted to thrive during the extreme heat of the summer months, including the grey-white color of their fur, which blends into the environment even when the snow is gone.

Snow leopards are designated on the IUCN Red List as a **vulnerable** species, and poaching is the number one reason for their low population numbers. A number of other factors threaten this species' survival, including overhunting of prey (like wild sheep and goats), habitat destruction, and climate change.

About Snow Leopards at the Santa Barbara Zoo

The Santa Barbara Zoo has cared for snow leopards since 2004, including most recently male leopard Everett and female leopard Zoe. "Both Everett and Zoe lived very long and full lives and were wonderful ambassadors for this species, which faces so many challenges in the wild," says Barnes.

The Santa Barbara Zoo supports the work of the Snow Leopard Trust (www.snowleopard.org), which works to better understand the endangered snow leopard, and to protect the cat in partnership with the communities that share its habitat.

Reindeer Return to Santa Barbara

Female reindeer Cookie and Peppermint have returned to the Zoo and can be seen on the lawn near the Zoo's hilltop. Winter-themed and holiday-related activities take place throughout the season, including the popular Snow Leopard Festival/Sledding at the Zoo on December 8. Santa will be available for gift requests and photos on weekends December 7–22. There is no extra charge to view the reindeer.

The two reindeer are on loan from Windswept Ranch, located in the foothills above Antelope Valley near Tehachapi, California. The facility is home to a collection of animals including camels, llamas, zebra, alpacas, sheep, goats, horses, deer, and reindeer. Many animals have been rescued or rehabilitated. For more information, visit www.capettingzoo.com.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open with the special hours of 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. It is open regular hours, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

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*The **Santa Barbara Zoo** is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; admission is \$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. Visit www.sbzoo.org.*