



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Barbara Zoo Welcomes Two New Emu Chicks in Anticipation of the Australian Walkabout Exhibit Coming Soon

(April 28, 2021) Santa Barbara, CA - [The Santa Barbara Zoo](https://www.santabarbarazoo.com) is excited to welcome two new male emu chicks, who are the first animals to arrive that will soon call the Australian Walkabout exhibit home. Currently under construction and scheduled to open this fall, this new exhibit is being designed to transport guests "Down Under," where they can walk among the wallabies, kangaroos, emus, and native birds.

The Zoo's emu chicks came from OstrichLand in Buellton, CA. "We are so lucky to be able to partner with such a great local facility like OstrichLand," shared Rachel Ritchason, the Santa Barbara Zoo's Director of Animal Collections. "Not only does this mean the transport is a short, local drive, which minimizes the stress on the chicks, but their values are very much aligned with the Zoo's, which makes them the perfect partner for us. They provide valuable expertise and support in caring for the birds, while strengthening and supporting local partnerships."

Because Zoo's Australian Walkabout exhibit is an open, walkthrough exhibit, the decision was made to bring two male emu chicks to the Zoo, since a male and female might have eventually bred and become territorial. The chicks are currently living in the Zoo's barnyard exhibit while they await the completion of the Australian Walkabout, and will be periodically visible to visitors now as they get used to their new surroundings. One of the chicks has been named Gus and is sponsored by Jackson, whose family has been longtime Zoo supporters. Naming opportunities for the other chick and the other Australian Walkabout animals are currently available, visit the [Zoo's website](https://www.santabarbarazoo.com) for more info.

Standing at around six feet tall, emus are the tallest native bird in Australia, and the second tallest living bird in the world, after the ostrich. Emus have small wings and cannot fly, but their legs are long and powerful, which help them sprint up to 30 miles per hour, and travel great distances. They are omnivores and forage for a variety of plants and insects during the day. Emu eggs are large and green in color. One emu egg is the equivalent to approximately 10 chicken eggs! Female emus are the aggressors in the species, protecting their territory while males sit on eggs and raise chicks. Emu chicks are brown and white striped when they hatch, and are precocial which means they are highly independent from the time they hatch and can feed themselves almost immediately. Emus are very vocal birds with calls that sound like drumming, grunting, and even booming, which is created by an inflatable sac in their necks which can be heard up to one mile away. The emu lifespan is 10-15 years in the wild and 20-30 years in human care.

Construction continues on the 15,000 square-foot [Australian Walkabout](#), which is anticipated to open to the public in October of this year. The new exhibit is specifically designed to put guests right in the middle of the action, exploring open pathways, beautiful landscapes, and seeing some of the most iconic and unique wildlife representatives from the continent of Australia, including emus, kangaroos, and wallabies, in addition to birds native to Australia.

About the Santa Barbara Zoo

The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 9 a.m. for members and 9:30 a.m. for general admission until 5 p.m. (seasonal extended hours on select days); general admission is \$19.95 for adults, \$14.95 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 (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.

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