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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Audubon Nature Institute Welcomes Second Giraffe Birth of 2018 at Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center

(New Orleans, La.) - As the recent 2018 Carnival season wound down, the partnership between Audubon Nature Institute and San Diego Zoo Global received a special Fat Tuesday king cake baby delivery. And this one had four legs.

The newest reticulated giraffe calf at the West Bank campus of the [Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center](#) in Lower Coast Algiers arrived bright and early on February 13 - Mardi Gras day.

The Species Survival Center, which is closed to the public, provides animals with room to roam in large open areas designed to showcase the natural setting.

"While most New Orleanians were enjoying parades, the Audubon animal staff spent the day sitting in the woods making sure the newborn was healthy and nursing," said Michelle Hatwood, Curator of the Species Survival Center.

In keeping with Carnival tradition, the 100-pound male giraffe is named "Poco," in honor of longtime Audubon Nature Institute board member Lynes "Poco" Sloss, who reigned as 2018 Rex, King of Carnival.

"It is a fitting name for our newest addition born on New Orleans' signature holiday," Hatwood said.

Poco is the second male calf born this year as part of the groundbreaking collaboration officially known as the [Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife \(ASW\)](#). A still-unnamed giraffe calf arrived on January 9 and Audubon is holding a naming contest on its Facebook page this week.

The two giraffes followed the December 11 birth of a baby Eastern bongo, a critically endangered species of antelope battling for survival in the jungles and forests of Africa.

The two recent births bring the number of giraffe at the Species Survival Center to nine: Five females and four males.

Audubon staff didn't get to see the mother, Kippi Longstocking, deliver Poco, who was born around 6 a.m. Kippi was clearly pregnant and in the days leading up to the birth, animal staffers walked the forested, 46-acre giraffe habitat early every morning to check on the mom-to-be.

"Kippi is a very shy giraffe, so being able to hide in the forest to have her calf was very comforting," Hatwood said. "While it was more work on our part to find her, we're thrilled that the little family is living an amazing life in their beautiful habitat. It's almost magical watching the giraffe herd walk silently through the trees and disappear into its depths."

It didn't take Poco long to begin exploring his home - running and jumping with the other newborn giraffe and keeping the attentive mothers very busy.

While Hatwood and her staff had known for months that Kippi Longstocking was close to giving birth, a giraffe's 14- to 16-month gestation period can make it tough to pinpoint a delivery date.

But Audubon staff is optimistic that at least one more baby giraffe is on the way – as early as spring. "I think the two boys we just had need a sister," Hatwood said. "So I'm crossing my fingers for a girl."

The giraffe species is considered "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Kippi Longstocking is part of the Species Survival Plan administered by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The plan reviews animals at accredited facilities and recommends which should be moved where given their genetics and personalities and the needs of potential mates.

The most recent population survey of the nine giraffe subspecies in 2015 showed just under 100,000 living in the wild – a decline of about 40 percent over the last three decades.

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