



Audubon Zoo
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June, 5, 2018

Audubon Zoo Welcomes Critically Endangered Sumatran Orangutan

9-year-old Reese joins two other females: Feliz and Menari

(New Orleans, La.) – There's a new arrival at Audubon Zoo that could result in a bit of good news for one of the planet's most endangered species. Reese, a 9-year-old critically endangered Sumatran orangutan, is settling nicely into her new home in New Orleans.

Her recent move from Albuquerque BioPark Zoo in New Mexico is an essential element in a much larger plan to help bolster the population of the species.

Reese joins two other females: Feliz, 29, and her offspring, Menari, who will celebrate her 9th birthday on June 10.

In Albuquerque, Reese learned valuable lessons in raising offspring through experiencing the birth of her brother, Pixel.

"These are very important skills that she brings into the Sumatran orangutan population once she is old enough to breed," said Courtney Eparvier, Curator of Primates at Audubon Zoo. "Orangutans learn everything from their mothers which sets these animals apart from many other species.

"We are excited to welcome Reese to Audubon. She is a very intelligent, inquisitive animal and has been watching Feliz and Menari ever since she arrived. We look forward to the females settling in well together very soon."

Reese was born on October 2, 2008, at Albuquerque BioPark Zoo.

"Reese has been an amazing sister to Pixel, her younger brother," the Albuquerque BioPark Zoo primate team said. "We are excited for Reese to continue her life at Audubon Zoo where she will continue to be a wonderful ambassador for her species. We are confident that Reese's charismatic personality will win the hearts of the staff and visitors to Audubon Zoo."

Reese is behind the scenes for now, being monitored by Audubon Zoo animal experts. After this brief quarantine period, it still may be some time before the new orangutan group will be introduced to the public. Reese, Feliz and Menari will be brought together carefully, in a structured introduction process that ensures they bond socially. Animal care experts say this is a key step toward establishing a cohesive unit.

The comings and goings at Audubon are part of a strategy forged with fellow accredited facilities of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) to maintain a healthy and genetically diverse population of orangutans under human care. Species Survival Plans (SSPs) serve as a safeguards for animals facing extinction in the wild.

Plans call for Audubon Zoo to welcome a male orangutan later this year.

Both species of orangutan – Bornean and Sumatran – are critically endangered due to habitat loss caused by unsustainable palm oil agricultural practices. The population under human care, which includes both species and hybrids of the two, stands at 222 at 52 AZA-accredited institutions in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Media Contact:

Frank Donze
Communications Specialist
Office: (504) 212-5335 / Cell: (504) 232-7461
fdonze@auduboninstitute.org

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