



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Baby Fever is in the Air at Audubon Zoo

Feliz, the matriarch of Audubon Zoo's Sumatran orangutan troop, is expecting!

(New Orleans, La.) - Feliz, the matriarch of Audubon Zoo's Sumatran orangutan troop joined in the festivities Sunday, during the annual Mother's Day Celebration presented by Children's Hospital and Touro Infirmary. She is expecting and due late this summer.

This is Feliz's second pregnancy — the Zoo welcomed her first offspring, Menari, in 2009. In addition to Feliz and Menari, the Zoo's Sumatran orangutan habitat is also home to juvenile female Reese.

Young female orangutans do not assist in raising their younger siblings (the way gorillas do), but they do observe their mothers and other adult females in the troop with offspring to learn how to model their behavior.

Because this will be the first orangutan birth at the Zoo since 2009, Menari has never seen a mother raise offspring before, but seeing Feliz with a new baby will help prepare her to raise offspring of her own one day. Reese witnessed her mother give birth and watched her raise her brother during her time at Albuquerque BioPark Zoo in New Mexico, so this will be additional experience to help prepare her for eventual motherhood.

"All of the work that the primate care team has done has paid off, and we could not be more excited to have a baby orangutan on the way," says Courtney Eparvier, Curator of Primates and Sea Lions, Audubon Zoo.

Audubon's goal is for Feliz to raise the offspring on her own with minimal intervention, but her animal care team are working with her to prepare her in case staff need to assist with feeding or care.

This pregnancy is the result of the successful breeding of Feliz and Jambi, Audubon's male orangutan who recently came to the zoo from Hannover Zoo in Germany. Audubon's orangutans are part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Program (SSP).

Sumatran orangutans have been assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature IUCN as threatened with extinction — there are fewer than 14,000 living in the wild and their numbers are declining, mainly due to the spread of palm oil plantations into their forest habitat.

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