



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Endangered Indian Rhinoceros Calf Born at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo

Rare Birth First for Zoo; Fewer than 60 Indian Rhinos in AZA North American Population

TAMPA, Fla. (July 10, 2009) – An endangered Indian rhinoceros (also known as the great one-horned rhinoceros) was born Tuesday evening, July 7, at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo to first-time mother "Jamie," in her night house within the Zoo's Asian Gardens exhibit area. The Indian rhino birth is the first for the Zoo and a significant conservation milestone for the species in captivity with only a few documented births each year.

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Indian Rhinoceros Species Survival Plan (SSP) maintains a record of all captive specimens of that species in North America. According to the SSP's most recent report in June 2009, there were a total of 54 Indian rhinos among 17 AZA-accredited institutions in North America, with just nine animals born in the last three years. Indian rhinos are listed as an endangered species, with an estimated wild population of about 2,000.

"The Indian rhino birth at Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is a significant event not just for Florida, but for the species throughout the world," said Randy Rieches, Species Survival Program coordinator for rhinos. "For an endangered species such as this, each new birth is an important step taken toward saving this species."

"No one zoo can do all the work of conservation," said Craig Pugh, Deputy Director, Acting CEO, Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo. "Here in Tampa, we can manage animals of Asia outdoors, year-round to do what we can for conservation of endangered species. We are fortunate to have committed staff members who have the expertise for animal management and who share the collaborative spirit of SSP partnerships."

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Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is home to a breeding pair of Indian rhinos known as "Arjun," an 11-year-old male and "Jamie," an 8-year-old female and the new mother. In recent weeks, zookeepers and veterinary staff monitored the rhino's pregnancy closely for signs of pending delivery after a nearly 16-month gestation. The moment all had waited for occurred Tuesday at approximately 7 p.m.

As a first-time mother, Jamie appeared to have a swift delivery and has responded extremely well to the newborn calf, discovered to be a female. The calf stood on her own within one hour of birth. Zookeepers are currently monitoring the new mother and calf around the clock, and have observed very attentive behaviors and established nursing.

The Indian rhinoceros is one of five species of rhinos worldwide and one of three species found in Asia. It is native to the remote, swampy grasslands of India, Assam and Nepal. Weighing several thousand pounds on average, the Indian rhino's most distinct feature is a single horn on the end of its muzzle (three species have two horns), which is composed of keratin – the same protein that forms human fingernails and hair. The species has a unique upper lip, known as a prehensile lip, which acts as a hook to grasp onto plants and food in its herbivore diet (grass, twigs, bamboo shoots, water hyacinths and various produce). Indian rhinos have been described with "armor-like skin" due to the presence of skin folds, however the skin is actually supple due to frequent wallowing in water and mud.

The gestation period for Indian rhino pregnancies is approximately 16 months. When born, calves normally weigh in the range of 75-100 pounds and will nurse throughout their first two years. They are normally able to stand just hours after being born.

It is anticipated that the Zoo's mother rhino and calf will spend time together off exhibit for the newborn's safety and privacy in bonding. The father will be separated from the calf for the time being. While mother and baby are adjusting, Zoo staff will be busy "baby proofing" the main exhibit which previously has housed only adult rhinos.

"We are very pleased to be part of an international effort to support the captive propagation of this endangered species," noted Dr. Larry Killmar, the Zoo's director of collections. "The efforts of our staff to ensure the successful breeding and the resulting birth of a healthy calf are evidence of their hard work and dedication. That combined with strong community support will enable Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo to continue our long term conservation objectives for species like the Indian rhinoceros."

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo participates in 40 Species Survival Plans (SSPs), cooperative breeding and conservation programs managed by AZA to carefully maintain a healthy, self-sustaining captive population.

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About Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo

Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is operated by the Lowry Park Zoological Society, an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to excellence in education, conservation and research. Tampa's Lowry Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), and has been named the No. 1 zoo in America by both *Parents* magazine (2009) and *Child* magazine (2004). The Zoo is located at 1101 W. Sligh Avenue in Tampa, one mile west of I-275 (exit 48) and is open seven days a week, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with extended hours on select nights during the summer. Parking is free. Visit LowryParkZoo.com or call (813) 935-8552 for information. Also find the Zoo on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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