

Baby Land at Zoo Atlanta

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GRANT PARK — Babies do have a way of arriving when there are more than 1,500 animals involved, but 2013 has produced an unusually big bumper crop of high-profile new arrivals at Zoo Atlanta. From bright-eyed baby apes to twin giant pandas to an endearingly clumsy rhino calf, the year's string of exciting births presents a unique opportunity for Atlantans to enjoy the largest array of adorable youngsters the Zoo has seen in recent years.

A productive year began with the arrival of Pongo the Sumatran orangutan, born on January 10 to first-time mother Blaze. Eight-month-old Pongo, who is as famous for his hair as he is for his heartwarming success story, is on exhibit now with Blaze and his father, Benny.

In a second success for Zoo Atlanta and the Orangutan Species Survival Plan, Miri the Bornean orangutan gave birth to her third infant on September 14, marking the sixth orangutan birth in the SSP program in North America this year. Miri and her newborn are now on exhibit in the Asian Forest with the infant's big brother, Satu, 9.

Two more infant great apes have also arrived in The Ford African Rain Forest, home to North America's largest collection of gorillas. Lulu the western lowland gorilla gave birth to a female infant, Andi, on March 14. Lulu's half-sister Sukari gave birth to a second female infant on August 30. Both infants are granddaughters of the legendary late Willie B. and are important ambassadors for the wild their famous grandfather left behind. The family group, led by silverback Taz, is on exhibit daily.

Historic news arrived on August 17, when Andazi the eastern black rhinoceros gave birth to the first rhino calf ever born at Zoo Atlanta in its more than 124-year history. Guests may enjoy sightings of the 1-month-old calf, who weighed 190 pounds the first time he was weighed on September 13, exploring his outdoor habitat with his mother between the hours of 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., weather permitting.

Finally, the city's most celebrated twosome arrived on July 15, when Lun Lun the giant panda gave birth to the only surviving set of twins ever born in the U.S. The cubs, which will go on exhibit in late fall, have once again drawn the world's attention to PandaCam presented by EarthCam, where their milestones may be seen live 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The mammals aren't the only ones contributing to the 2013 baby boom. As of earlier this year, a total of five Guatemalan beaded lizards have hatched at Zoo Atlanta. The world's rarest lizard species, the Guatemalan beaded lizard is believed to number fewer than 200 individuals in the wild; Zoo Atlanta houses the world's only zoological collection outside Guatemala.

"We're thrilled to welcome so many babies in the space of just a matter of weeks and months, and we hope everyone will take advantage of a truly one-of-a-kind opportunity to see so many Zoo babies at one time. They do grow up fast," said Raymond B. King, President and CEO. "The universal appeal of baby animals helps us to draw important attention to the species and wild places they represent."

Join the new parents and their offspring for a special lineup of family activities this weekend; stay tuned for more details, or visit www.zooatlanta.org.

— Keisha Hines for Zoo Atlanta.

