



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
6 November 2015

CONTACT: Jane Ballentine
O: 443/552-5275
C: 301/332-1742

NEW CHAPTER FOR LEIA THE LIONESS

-- Young lioness joining new pride --

BALTIMORE, MD – Later this month The Maryland Zoo will say goodbye to young lioness Leia, who along with her sibling Luke, was born here in October 2013. Leia will be joining a new pride of lions at the Cameron Park Zoo in Waco, Texas. “It’s a bittersweet moment for us at the Zoo,” said Don Hutchinson, president/CEO of the Zoo. “Watching Luke and Leia grow and thrive under the care of our animal care staff has been enormously rewarding. Together with their adopted sibling Zuri and father Hassan, they have created such a dynamic pride and have engaged thousands of visitors from their first forays into the yard. We knew the moment might come when she would move to become part of another pride, and we are sorry to see her leave.”

The move comes at a time when Leia is beginning to mature and needs to be placed in an unrelated pride of lions. The pride at the Cameron Park Zoo consists of an older female lion, 17-year-old Shamfa and three-year-old male Kaikane (ky-kaw-nay). “This move was recommended by the Association of Zoos and aquariums (AZA) African Lion Species Survival Plan (SSP),” stated Carey Ricciardone, mammal collection and conservation manager. “Our colleagues have a lot of experience with lions and we know that she will be well cared for there. We hope that visitors to the Cameron Park Zoo come to know her well, as she is usually very interested in what people are doing when they visit her here.”

Leia will travel to Waco by truck in a specialized travel crate with a team of senior staff members from the Cameron Park Zoo. The trip should take approximately 24 hours with several stops for wellness checks and to provide Leia with food and water. Once at the Cameron Park Zoo she will be placed in standard 30-day quarantine while undergoing a variety of medical evaluations. During this time staff members will be able to observe her and help make the transition between zoos go smoothly.

Luke and Leia’s mother, Badu was 3 ½ years old and father, Hassan was 6 at the time of the cubs’ birth. Sadly, there were complications relating to the birth and Badu died a few days after the cubs were born. Keepers stepped in to hand raise the cubs. The cubs thrived and two months later, the (AZA) Lion SSP asked if we could take in a 3rd cub, Zuri, age 3 months. Zuri was being hand-reared at Zoo Miami, but needed to be placed in another zoo where she could grow up with cubs her own age. Zuri arrived in December of 2013 and became part of the Zoo’s lion pride. The three cubs were hand-reared by staff until they were weaned from bottle feeding and could eat a regular diet and navigate the lion yard on their own.

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“It was quite a challenge to hand raise the cubs, but the staff stepped up and took charge with around the clock care for months on end,” continued Ricciardone. “We love caring for all of the animals, but certainly Leia has a special place in our hearts. We will miss her feisty attitude.”

[About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore](#)

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo’s varied natural habitat exhibits such as the brand new Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children’s Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

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