

News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Record Numbers Visit Naples Zoo

Improvements and Flurry of New Exhibits Draw Guests

2009 marks the 40th anniversary since the Tetzlaff family introduced the wild animals to the botanical garden. Naples Zoo's celebrations begin early with the announcement that the Zoo welcomed 260,228 guests in 2008 -- more than any other year in its long history and a jump of 20,208 guests over the previous year. "We're deeply grateful," said Naples Zoo Director David Tetzlaff. "We sincerely thank the locals for visiting and recommending their zoo to seasonal visitors."

Tetzlaff, eldest son of Zoo founders Lawrence and Nancy Jane Tetzlaff (better known as Jungle Larry™ and Safari Jane™), attributes much of the increase to all the activity at the Zoo enabled by the 2004 vote. "We opened three feature exhibits in thirty months -- African wild dogs in '06, leopards in '07, and fosas in '08." During the same time, the Zoo has added visitor amenities like paved pathways, misting fans, and drinking fountains as well as introducing a wild variety of new animals to its shows with everything from hawks to Gila monsters. "We're seeing Zoo members and Collier residents more often, plus we're seeing more young children than ever before."

Naples Zoo set record attendance for each of the first five months of 2008. "Guests fell in love with *Leopard Rock* when we opened in '07 -- getting within an inch of these big cats creates a powerful connection," Tetzlaff said. "And because it opened summer '07, it was the big new thing to see for our seasonal visitors in '08."

The July 2008 attendance when the Zoo premiered *The Fosa: Madagascar's Legendary Carnivore* exhibit even surpassed the previous July when *Leopard Rock* opened. In fact, it set an all-time record attendance for the month. And although the economic concerns dropped September's attendance to the lowest in four years, visitors were quick to rebound and show their love for animals as the month of December set another all time attendance record.



Other notable numbers from 2008:

- ☞ **8.4%** Increase in attendance over 2007
- ☞ **21,799** Number of Collier residents Naples Zoo welcomed on free Saturdays.
- ☞ **9.9%** Increase in visits by Naples Zoo Members.
- ☞ **85,425** Number of children visitors age 12 and under. A **19.5% increase** over 2007.
- ☞ **1 in 5** Number of guests the Zoo welcomed at no charge (includes programs for children, veterans, etc. plus Collier County residents on 12 free Saturdays.
- ☞ **30%** Increase in total number of free admissions provided by Naples Zoo over 2007.
- ☞ **Over 2 million** Total number of guests who visited in past 10 years.

2009 promises even more from the Zoo. Less than a year from its last major exhibit opening, the Zoo plans to open *Black Bear Hammock*, the largest black bear exhibit at an accredited zoo east of the Mississippi River. With over two-thirds of the funds raised, the Zoo launched the *Bear Essentials* campaign in December to help finish bringing the bears into their new home. Learn more at www.napleszoo.org/bear.

Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. In addition to innovative presentations like *Serpents: Fangs & Fiction* and *Planet Predator*, the Zoo offers a historic botanical garden and many rare animals. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes living in natural habitats. Admission includes all shows and the boat ride (\$19.95 adults age 13+/ \$11.95 children 3 to 12, under 3 free. Twenty-five cents of each admission goes to the *Naples Zoo Conservation Fund* to support regional and international conservation projects.) Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age.

Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. Pursuing its mission to delight guests with the wonders of the natural world to inspire the conservation of our planet's remaining wild areas and their wondrous inhabitants, the Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:00 to 5:00 with the last ticket sold at 4:00. Zoo memberships and discount tickets are available at www.napleszoo.org or call (239) 262-5409.

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