

From Tim Tetzlaff, Director of Conservation & Communications

**News Release**

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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Baby Porcupine Premieres at Naples Zoo** **Appearing Now in the Planet Predator Show**

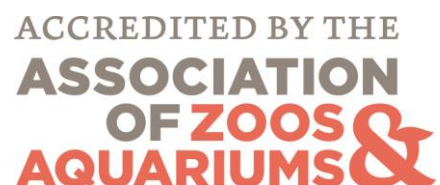
It's black and white and can make you red all over with its spiky quills but it's likely the cutest rodent you've ever seen. It's a baby Cape porcupine from Sub-Saharan Africa born at Naples Zoo just eight weeks ago. These rodents grow up fast. Born at 458 grams (about a pound), she now weighs in at 3,180 grams - about 7 times her birth weight. She can be seen in the Zoo's *Planet Predator* show presented daily at noon.

This is the first porcupine to be born at the Zoo in about thirty years. Much to the mother's benefit, the baby porcupine's quills are soft at birth and begin to harden almost immediately. Like most rodents, porcupines mature rapidly. As early as three days old, they can defend themselves like an adult by running their quills into a predator. Males can reach maturity as early as eight months. Cape porcupines live an average of ten years in the wild and about twenty outside the wild. According to the International Species Information System, only about 100 Cape porcupines can be seen in North American zoos.

The most popular myth is that porcupines shoot their quills. Their quills can grow up to nearly two feet (61 cm) and rest flat against the body most of the time. When danger threatens, however, the porcupine raises and spreads its quills and makes a warning rattle. It may also stamp its feet, click its teeth and growl or hiss. If the predator ignores this threatening posture, porcupines will charge backwards into a predator. They cannot turn their quills into flying missiles. Fine scales on the quills



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get stuck like fishhooks making extraction very difficult. Even so, some bold predators do succeed in making a prickly meal out of porcupines including birds of prey, leopards, and even pythons.

The largest of African rodents, porcupines typically weigh up to 22 to 40 lbs (11-18 kg) with large specimens reaching 60 lbs. (27 kg). Cape porcupines are mostly vegetarian. They can be voracious gnawers and will even uproot young trees. In the dry season, porcupines chew the bark off trees to eat the live tissue underneath. Researchers in Zimbabwe discovered porcupines had killed trees by completely ringbarking them. Strong claws enable them to dig up roots and tubers. They forage for fallen fruits and will also invade farmers' fields. But porcupines also eat carrion and gnaw on bones for added nutrients which explains the presence of piles of bones in their dens.

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, botanical tour (on Sundays), 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 online at [www.napleszoo.org](http://www.napleszoo.org).

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PHOTOS available for download at [www.napleszoo.org/press](http://www.napleszoo.org/press)



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