

NEWS RELEASE



Contact: Winfield Danielson
Marketing and Public Relations Manager
Office: (757) 441-2374 ext. 223
Cell: (757) 777-7899
Email: winfield.danielson@norfolk.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 15, 2013

MADONNA DELIVERS BABY AT THE VIRGINIA ZOO

NORFOLK, Va. – Of course we mean Madonna the squirrel monkey...

The monkey mommy delivered late Friday night or early Saturday morning, and was discovered with the new baby clinging to her back Saturday morning by zookeepers.

“Squirrel monkeys are really fun to watch and have become quite the harbinger of spring here at the Zoo,” said Greg Bockheim, the Zoo’s executive director. “Seemingly every year we have a new baby squirrel monkey when spring is on its way. This is the 19th born here since 1967.”

The tiny primate joins its mother, proud papa Jeebes and four other squirrel monkeys, though two of the monkeys are scheduled to be transferred to other zoos within the next few weeks.

Squirrel monkeys have the proportionately largest brain of all primates, with a brain to body mass ratio of 1-to-17. Humans, by comparison, have a 1-to-35 ratio. Adult squirrel monkeys range from nine to nearly 14 inches, plus a 13 to 17-inch tail, and weigh in from one to just over two pounds. The males are usually larger.

Found in the tropical forests of Central and South America, squirrel monkeys spend most of their time in trees and are primarily active during daylight hours. Unlike many other New World monkeys, their tail is not directly used for climbing, but for maintaining balance as they run and jump among vines and branches. The tiny primates live together in groups of up to 500 males and females. Squirrel monkeys are omnivorous, eating primarily fruits and insects. They live roughly 15 years in the wild, but zoo residents can reach 20 years old.

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MAMA MADONNA, 2 OF 2



A 6-day-old squirrel monkey clings to its mother's back at the Virginia Zoo Friday, March 15, 2013 (Virginia Zoo photo by Winfield Danielson).

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As an accredited Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) facility, the Virginia Zoo exhibits more than 400 animals on 53 beautifully landscaped acres. For more than a century, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to education and conservation, and offered a fun-filled day for visitors of any age. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and located at 3500 Granby Street in Norfolk. Daily admission prices are \$11 for adults, \$10 for seniors (age 62 and over) and \$9 for children ages 2-11. Children under 2 receive free admission! Visit www.virginiazoo.org or call (757) 441-2374 for more information.