

NEWS RELEASE



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BOUNCING BABY BONGO AT THE VIRGINIA ZOO

NORFOLK, Va. – A baby bongo born at the Virginia Zoo Saturday, Nov. 2, 2013 is now accepting visitors.

Callie, a female calf, is the fourth baby for mother Juni, but the first for father A.J., a 2-year-old bongo that arrived at the Virginia Zoo in December 2012 from the Jacksonville Zoo in Florida.

"We're all very excited about the new baby bongo," said Greg Bockheim, executive director of the Virginia Zoo. "The Zoo has had a successful bongo breeding program, and we hope this birth is evidence that A.J. will help us maintain that tradition."

The bongo breeding program is part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan, which strives to preserve endangered species. As part of the effort, the Virginia Zoo sent one of its captive-born calves to Africa in 2004, to create a herd with other bongos from North American zoos.

Wild bongos live in dense forests in Kenya and other regions of Africa. The wild population is rapidly diminishing as its habitat is destroyed by human encroachment, and the animals are over-hunted for meat and for their horns.

Bongos are the largest and heaviest type of forest antelope, standing over 50 inches tall at the shoulder and weighing around 450 to 550 pounds. Their chestnut coats with white stripes provide camouflage in the forest shadows. Herds are comprised of females and calves, while males are more solitary. Bongos are most active at dawn and dusk. Females give birth to one calf per year and the gestation period is nine months.

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BOUNCING BABY BONGO, 2 OF 2



Callie, a female bongo calf born at the Virginia Zoo Nov. 2, 2013, curls up among the brush in the bongo habitat Sunday, Nov. 3, 2013 (Virginia Zoo photo by Alexandra Zelazo-Kessler).

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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 admitted free! Visit www.virginiazoo.org or call (757) 441-2374 for more information.