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## **Late Giraffe Billy's Last Descendent Born at Virginia Zoo**

NORFOLK, VA – The Virginia Zoo is excited to announce the addition of a newborn male to our Masai Giraffe herd, Henry. Henry, who was named by his keepers, was born to our 10-year-old female, Noelle, at the Virginia Zoo on August 24, 2023. Henry's father is our late giraffe, Billy, who was loved by many and unfortunately passed away earlier this year.

Henry is Noelle's third offspring to be born here at the Virginia Zoo with Billy. In his 20 years at the Virginia Zoo, Billy sired an amazing total of 10 offspring, making great contributions to the endangered population of Masai Giraffe.

"This calf is so special to us as a team as it is the last offspring of Billy," Emily Spence, Assistant Curator of the Africa Department said. "The loss of such a longstanding staple of the Africa department has been difficult, but we are all so happy to know that his legacy is going to live on one last time. We can't wait to share this calf with the zoo community in the near future."

In 2019, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recorded approximately 35,000 Masai Giraffe in the wild, down 50% from the last 3 decades, largely due to illegal poaching and habitat loss. Giraffe are listed as "vulnerable" under the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.

"Exciting additions like our new calf are wonderful opportunities for us to share with guests the critical role zoos play in the conservation of wildlife around the globe," Kate Reichert, Conservation Engagement Manager said. "Many of our animals are part of Species Survival Plan® programs that help monitor and manage healthy populations in human care so we can continue the critical research and education to build a stronger community of environmental stewards."

Masai Giraffe are native to Kenya and Tanzania and typically live between 10 to 15 years in the wild. In human care, their average lifespan is 20 to 27 years. Masai Giraffes have a gestation period of 15 months on average.