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### **Virginia Zoo celebrates birth of endangered lesser ape**

The Virginia Zoo is thrilled to announce an endangered siamang baby made its entrance into the world on March 15, 2024, to mother Malana and father Bali. This birth marks the fourth ever siamang to be born at the Virginia Zoo and is the result of a breeding recommendation from the Siamang Species Survival Plan®, which coordinates population management for the species with the cooperation of accredited and certified facilities, as well as sustainability partners, of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Keepers arrived on the morning of the 15th to the surprise of a baby holding tight to mom. While they suspected Malana could be pregnant due to recent behavioral and physical changes, they were not able to confirm without performing invasive testing. Animal care staff have been monitoring the family dynamic closely since the baby's arrival.

"The entire Asia team is very excited about the expansion of our siamang family," says Jill Strother, Assistant Curator of the Virginia Zoo's Asia section. "Malana and the baby are doing well as the family adjusts to the new addition."

Though Malana is an experienced mother with 5 births under her belt, she is considered a senior animal at 35 years old. The median life expectancy is about 27 years, but siamangs have been known to live up to 40 years in human care.

Siamangs form extremely tight family bonds, and fathers play a significant role in raising the young, unlike many species in the animal kingdom. Keepers report that Bali and Lovejoy, the baby's father and older brother, have been calm and curious around mom and baby, taking turns grooming Malana. The whole family has been heard "singing" together, a behavior which helps solidify family and social bonds.

The Virginia Zoo's siamang family – now consisting of Lovejoy (almost 2), Malana (35), Bali (20), and the new baby – resides on the Asia: Trail of the Tiger. Following the baby's arrival, the family has been spending time bonding privately in their behind-the-scenes dens while they are monitored by veterinary and keeper staff. Keeper staff expects the group will be visible in their dayroom starting Tuesday, March 19, with the option for Malana to shift between the dayroom and the dens as she pleases.

"The birth of any endangered species is always a cause for celebration," Emily Smicker, Director of Communications at the Virginia Zoo, said. "We are thrilled to see the group bonding and supporting each other, and we feel privileged to have a front row seat as this baby grows into an energetic young siamang."

The gender of the baby has not yet been confirmed. Stay tuned on the Zoo's social media pages for updates on our growing siamang group!

**About Siamangs**

Native to the treetops in the tropical forests of Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, siamangs are lesser (meaning smaller) apes with jet black fur. A siamang's call includes "barks" and "booms," and their inflatable throat sac aids in amplifying their calls. They typically mate for life and have a song (series of calls) that is unique to the pair and can be heard more than a mile away. The species is listed as endangered due to factors such as destruction, degradation and fragmentation of their habitats, as well as hunting of the animals for their meat in some countries, and poaching of young siamangs for sale in the illegal pet trade.

**About the Virginia Zoo**

The Virginia Zoo, located in Norfolk, Virginia, is home to more than 700 exceptional animals representing over 150 fascinating species. Founded in 1901 and residing on 53 beautifully landscaped acres, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to saving and protecting the world's wildlife by inspiring a passion for nature and taking conservation action at home and around the world. The Virginia Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is recognized as a global leader in education, recreation, science, wildlife conservation, and animal care and welfare. For more than a century, the Zoo has connected adults, families and school children with the natural world and its wildlife. The Virginia Zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. with last admission at 3 p.m. For admission prices and to learn more, visit [virginiazoo.org](http://virginiazoo.org).

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