



Press Release  
January 27, 2017

Contact: EJ Rivers  
601-352-2580 ext. 228  
[ejrivers@jacksonzoo.org](mailto:ejrivers@jacksonzoo.org)

### Endangered Pygmy Hippo Born at Jackson Zoo

**Jackson, Miss.**— The Jackson Zoological Society is excited to formally announce the birth of an endangered Pygmy hippopotamus in the zoo’s African Forest area, offspring of four-year-old male, “Ralph,” and eight-year-old female, “Clementine.” Listed as *endangered* on the International Union for Conservation of Nature List of Threatened Species (or IUCN Red List), this particular offspring has been anticipated for years. Jackson Zoo staff has named the young female “Zemora,” which means “praised” or “song.”

Jackson Zookeepers practice non-invasive animal care protocol with almost all the resident species, allowing them as natural an existence as possible. There were indications that Clementine was pregnant, but there are no current testing methods available. Most experts theorize gestation is anywhere from 190 to 210 days, any time of year. Keeper suspicions were confirmed when they arrived in the early morning hours of December 25<sup>th</sup> (the only day the zoo is closed to the public), and discovered the infant female resting comfortably with its mother.

“Births at the zoo are always exciting, and we are especially excited about the birth of a Pygmy hippo,” said Executive Director Beth Poff. “This species is one that breeds well in captivity, which means the survival of the species is more assured than in the wild. This is an example of zoos making a difference!”

Zemora weighed 11 lbs. at birth, and now registers at 31 lbs. going into her second month. She is already imitating her mother in foraging behavior, is very inquisitive regarding her surroundings, and swimming at every opportunity. Animal care staff do not believe that Clementine will want to bring her young out into the exhibit with Ralph for a couple of months, hoping to have her visible to guests mid-spring.

Native to the forests and swamps of West Africa (primarily Liberia), *Choeropsis liberiensis* is one of only two extant species of hippo, the other being their more common larger cousins. Pygmies are semi-aquatic like their kin (using water to moisturize their skin and regulate their temperature), but they are far more nocturnal and reclusive. They are difficult to locate in the wild, much less study. In fact, most of what humans have learned about this species is primarily via research in zoos and sanctuaries.

Both of the parent Pygmy hippos at the Jackson Zoo have been part of this research effort. They are subjects of an ongoing project directed by Dr. Gabriella Flacke of the University of Western Australia, who collects samples from zoos all over the world. Her study is focused on the overall health of pygmies in captivity, with special emphasis on kidney disease and reproductive health. Dr. Flacke visited the Jackson Zoo staff in February of 2016 to see Ralph and Clementine after many years of receiving scientific data, and discussed her most current findings with keepers and zoo guests. The details of Zemora’s birth will be entered into the Jackson Zoo’s next data submission to further all studies.

###

*The Jackson Zoo is accredited by the Zoological Association of America, and certified by the Better Business Bureau. The mission of the Jackson Zoo is to provide visitors with a quality recreational and educational environment dedicated to wildlife care and conservation. For more information, visit The Jackson Zoo at <http://jacksonzoo.org/>.*

