



Media Release
30th March 2011

Baby Gorilla Born in Dublin Zoo

Just in time for Mother's Day

Dublin Zoo is delighted to announce the arrival of a bouncing, baby western lowland gorilla. Proud mum, Lena, gave birth to a healthy, baby gorilla at 4.15pm on Sunday 27th March. The newborn weighs only 1.81kgs and so far keepers are unable to tell if it is a boy or a girl because Lena is keeping the baby close to her chest.

Lena, who was born in 1984, is an experienced mother and this is her fifth baby. She has a very close relationship with the baby's father Harry the dominant silverback of the Zoo's group of gorillas.

Ciaran McMahon, team leader responsible for the gorillas said, "The youngster is doing very well, within minutes the baby was feeding from mum Lena which is a very good sign. We can tell that the infant is strong because there are a lot of head movements."

Ciaran also said, "Lena is a great mother and so far she hasn't let go of her newborn. She will continue to cradle the baby in her arms non stop for the next two to three months. When she does eventually let the toddler out of her arms to explore, the youngster won't go far because Lena will not allow the baby go more than an arms length away."

Dad Harry was born in 1986 and is an experienced, relaxed male and an excellent father. Harry stays close to Lena and the newborn keeping a protective eye on them at all times. As the leader, Harry is responsible for the group's well-being.

The baby gorilla, yet to be named, will join two brothers Alfie (born 2003) and Evindi (born 2006) and Mayani, a female gorilla who moved to Dublin Zoo from Stuttgart Zoo in 2005.

Evindi, who is the second youngest gorilla is curious about the new arrival and is staying close to mum and baby. Keepers have noticed that every so often he tenderly touches the baby's head or tummy.

Ciaran McMahon, said, "We are over the moon with the birth of the baby gorilla. The new arrival is a great success for Dublin Zoo as part of the European breeding programme for these critically endangered primates. We are one of a few zoos to have

a gorilla family living together and we can see that the bonds between the group are very strong.”

He continued, “It’s an exciting time for our gorillas as they will soon be moving to their new state of the art home, the ‘Gorilla Rainforest’. Their new habitat, which will be ready in September, will be a spacious naturalistic habitat of 12,000 square metres and dense vegetation which will provide our troop of gorillas with a stimulating and spacious environment.”

Western lowland gorillas are classified as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. The numbers of these primates living in the wild is expected to fall by over 80% between 1980 and 2046 with commercial hunting and a highly contagious virus called Ebola being the two main threats facing their survival.

As a celebration of this gorilla birth and for Mothers Day, Dublin Zoo will have a range of fun activities taking place this weekend such as special keeper talks focusing on mums in the Zoo, face-painting and arts and crafts. Extra gorilla keeper talks will take place on Mother’s Day at 12pm, 2.15pm and 3.30pm.

Visitors can see gorilla mum and baby and rest of the western lowland gorilla group at Dublin Zoo today.

The Zoo TV series crew was there to capture the beautiful first moments of the baby gorilla's life and all the loving care with which Lena took care of her new born. You can watch the whole story on The Zoo on Friday April 15th at 7.30pm RTE 1.

For further information check out Dublin Zoo on Facebook
www.facebook.com/dublinzoo or www.dublinzoo.ie.

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Notes to Editor:

Dublin Zoo is easily accessible by bus, LUAS, and train and is open everyday with the exception of Christmas Day and St. Stephen’s Day (26th December). Admission prices

and opening times can all be found on the website. Dublin Zoo is accessible by the less-abled and manual wheel chairs are available on request.