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Miller Park Zoo Excited to Announce Birth of Giant Anteater

BLOOMINGTON – Miller Park Zoo is happy to announce the birth of a giant anteater pup. This is an eventful occasion for our Zoo and the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) managed Species Survival Plan (SSP). As of January 13, 2025, there were only 90 giant anteaters reported living in 49 AZA facilities. This birth is a significant step for the population and a first for the Miller Park Zoo.

The pup was born overnight in the early hours on June 16th. The animal care and veterinary teams had been closely monitoring the mother, “Chili”, after an ultrasound earlier in the month indicated she was likely pregnant. The team arrived early Monday morning to find Chili resting calmly with her young anteater pup securely clinging to her back. Over the past week, mom and pup have been under near-constant observation and have been doing well. A neonate veterinary examination performed today determined that the pup is currently healthy, strong, and had a belly full of milk at the time of the exam. The pup is currently too young to accurately determine gender.

As both animals appear healthy, the team will manage them carefully to ensure that positive progress is maintained. The male anteater, “Arnaud”, will remain separate from the mother and pup for at least a year. While Arnaud is currently enjoying the South America habitat at the zoo, Chili and the pup will rotate having access outside in the near future. Chili has been a great mother and continues to take excellent care of her baby, who will spend most of the first year of its life riding on mom’s back. Since Chili loves to explore new things, while Arnaud is more laid back (enjoying regular naps), we are excited to see what type of personality the pup develops. Please follow MPZ’s social media for future updates on the anteater family, staying tuned to the Miller Park Zoological Society’s webpage and social media for the upcoming naming opportunity.

Chili was born at Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport and is four years old. The pup was born the day after Chili’s birthday, which the staff feels is auspicious. Arnaud was born at the Nashville Zoo and is currently five years old. This reproductive pairing was planned by AZA’s Population Management Center, which oversees all SSP programs. This is the first time for Chili or Arnaud to be part of a recommended pairing; its success benefits the population managed under human care. Giant anteaters in AZA-accredited zoos act as ambassadors for those living in native habitats and experiencing pressures to conservation. Giant anteaters are currently listed as “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List.

Miller Park Zoo contributes annually to The Institute for the Conservation of Wild Animals (ICAS) as one of our Conservation Initiatives. In their native regions of South America, giant anteaters (and other species) suffer tremendous risks from growing agriculture industries, increasing human populations, and roads or highways that fragment their habitat. MPZ supports the “Anteaters and Highways” project, where the ICAS team

conducts research and strives to improve conservation efforts for these amazing animals. MPZ supports and follows a young female anteater that ICAS is monitoring, “Jane”. Jane will be two years old in July; the research team reports that she is very cautious, and when it comes to hearing any noise or smelling unusual smells she immediately runs away. This response to people or potential danger is beneficial, as the team believes it is helping keep her safe. ICAS provides our zoo with regular updates on Jane’s location and wellbeing. The Miller Park Zoo is proud to be part of this international conservation project, with MPZ’s anteaters connecting our communities.

Thank you for your support of the Miller Park Zoo & Society, our conservation goals, and our efforts that represent the importance of maintaining AZA professional standards.

Attached photo credits: Miller Park Zoo Director, Zookeepers, Interns
Photo of Jane courtesy of ICAS