CHATTANOOGA ZOO’S GIRAFFE HERD HAS ARRIVED

*Chattanooga, Tennessee*- The Chattanooga Zoo is elated to announce that the Zoo’s giraffe herd is here! The oldest bull of the herd arrived at the Zoo on Wednesday, May 20th, and the two younger bulls arrived two days later on Friday, May 22nd. The whole herd is doing well and acclimating to their new home.

Through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), the Chattanooga Zoo received three male reticulated giraffes from the Freeport-McMoRan Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. The three bulls, George, age 5 years old, Porter age 2 years old, and Hardee Star age 17 months old all lived together as a herd in New Orleans, LA.

All three giraffes were transported to Chattanooga by a professional carrier. Safely transporting a giraffe, especially across states, requires specialized equipment, planning, and expertise. The experienced transporter worked with both facilities to ensure the safety and comfort of the animals and carefully planned the best route from New Orleans, LA to Chattanooga, TN to avoid any low clearances or hazards. The animals arrived safely and the transport went as planned.

Reticulated giraffes are a subspecies of giraffe native to the Horn of Africa. They have a relatively limited range across northern and north-eastern Kenya, with small populations in the southern regions of Somalia and Ethiopia. There are only 15,780 individuals estimated to remain in the wild and are listed as an endangered species by the IUCN Red List. Reticulated giraffes are threatened by habitat deconstruction and poaching. The Chattanooga Zoo is proud to be part of the efforts in saving this species in the wild by participating in the Giraffe SSP. The SSP is a cooperative breeding program along with many other AZA-accredited Zoos to ensure the survival of the species.

“There are no adequate words to describe what the arrival of giraffes at our zoo means,” says Dardenelle Long, Chattanooga Zoo CEO & President. “This is by far the greatest achievement to date for the little petting zoo that I joined almost 35 years ago. Thanks to our unbelievably talented staff through the years, the leadership and guidance from the Friends of the Zoo Board and Founders, the support of our city and state, the generosity of our donors and volunteers, and the support and love of our entire community, we have achieved a towering feat which few had dreamed was possible."
Starting Tuesday, May 26th, the Chattanooga Zoo’s giraffe herd can be viewed by the public inside the newly constructed giraffe barn or in their outdoor yard. Because of their flighty nature and that they are still settling into their new home, Zoo staff will be monitoring the giraffes closely and will make changes to our public viewing as needed.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, a grand opening event will take place later in the year to celebrate the arrival of the giraffe herd and other new species to the Zoo and the Phase I opening of the new exhibit, Makazi Ya Twiga. More information about the grand opening event to come soon.

The Chattanooga Zoo invites the press to come at your leisure to get footage of our giraffes. However, we do ask that you contact us to schedule an appointment time. For appointment scheduling, please contact Hannah Hammon at hhammon@chattzoo.org or (256) 996-5788.