CHATTANOOGA ZOO SET TO OPEN KOMODO DRAGON BREEDING FACILITY & ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE

Chattanooga, Tennessee- The Chattanooga Zoo is pleased to announce the upcoming opening of a Komodo Dragon Breeding Facility and outdoor exhibit, scheduled to open in late July 2018.

The Chattanooga Zoo currently houses two komodo dragons – one male, Kadal age 7, and one female, Charlie age 7. Kadal and Charlie have been placed at the Chattanooga Zoo as a recommended breeding pair by the Species Survival Plan (SSP). The SSP is a population management and conservation program created by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). This program focuses on animal breeding of threatened species by strictly monitoring the placement and propagation of selected species. Komodo dragons are listed as a vulnerable species with only 5,000 left in the wild due to mostly habitat loss. Both our male and female have reached sexual maturity and will be placed together for the first time to breed this year.

The new breeding facility will provide a safe haven for breeding, expectant mothers, and potential offspring. The facility will include a keeper work area and two large indoor den areas – one with a pond and nesting area to lay eggs and raise young dragons. This building will serve as a connector between the current indoor exhibit, the new outdoor exhibit, and outdoor off exhibit yard through shifting chutes. Additionally, it will offer better spaces for veterinarian examinations and daily care for these large lizards.

As komodo dragons do not live together outside of their breeding season, the zoo’s current public exhibit only allows for one animal to be viewed at a time. The new outdoor exhibit will allow our guests to view and learn about each of our komodo dragons at two separate exhibits in a single visit, with weather permitting. The outside space will be shared by both dragons on a rotating schedule. With having two outdoor spaces for natural sunlight and three indoor spaces with UV suplimentation, our komodo dragons will have multiple opportunities to absorb Vitamin D3 from all diverse environments to ensure their growth, fertility, and overall health.

"Komodo dragons are fascinating animals, and we are excited to provide our animals with this breeding facility and continue our work towards saving this species in the wild. This project is a result of a lot of thought and hard work from our zoo staff, thriving together to create a space that is convenient and pleasing for our animals, visitors, and zookeepers,” says Dardenelle Long, Chattanooga Zoo CEO and President. “Our hope is to provide more opportunities for our guests to connect with these animals and share our efforts to conserve wildlife.”

An official opening for the new outdoor exhibit is scheduled to take place on Saturday, July 28th for the zoo’s annual Pirates, Parrots, and Princesses Day. Pirates, Parrots, and Princesses Day is a regular zoo admission day at the zoo where guests will get to meet some of their favorite pirate and princess characters, meet and greet the zoo’s parrots and learn all about them, go on a treasure hunt, and more. All those who dress as their favorite pirate, prince, princess, or parrot will receive 50% off zoo admission. For more event information, visit www.chattzoo.org.

To learn about our daily activities and monthly events, please follow us on social media and stay up-to-date.