MEERKAT PUPS BORN AT THE CHATTANOOGA ZOO

Chattanooga, TN - The Chattanooga Zoo is excited to announce the birth of two meerkat pups. The pups were born to first-time mother, Flower, at the Chattanooga Zoo on Thursday, February 13, 2020. Mom and pups are all doing great! The successful birth is a first at the Chattanooga Zoo and is an incredibly important step towards the Zoo’s efforts to help protect these animals in the wild.

The Chattanooga Zoo has housed meerkats since the opening of its Deserts of the World building in 2012. Meerkats are a type of mongoose found in Southern Africa. The Chattanooga Zoo’s meerkat mob was placed together through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), with a breeding recommendation within our mob.

"It is always exciting to have babies born, but even more so to watch their natural parental behaviors," states Chattanooga Zoo’s Assistant Curator and Animal Health & Records Manager, Lacey Hickle. "There have been a lot of ups and downs in our meerkat mob over recent months and it is rewarding to see our mob grow with two active little pups."

Flower, the two-year-old mother, was placed at the Chattanooga Zoo by the SSP in October 2019. Flower came to the Chattanooga Zoo along with her sister, Sandy. Joining a new mob caused hierarchy conflicts between the females, ultimately leading to the relocation of Sandy through the SSP to another AZA-accredited institution and making Flower the dominant female leader of the mob. We are especially pleased with the quick success of breeding this species as this is the first breeding recommendation the Zoo has received with meerkats.

Dardenelle Long, Chattanooga Zoo President & CEO says, "I am so proud of the hard work our animal care staff put into managing the introductions to allow for another reproductive success at the Zoo. Introducing Sandy and Flower to our resident mob brought many challenges, but our animal care staff diligently worked to ensure the safety of all while allowing the mob to participate in their naturalistic behaviors."

As the meerkat pups were born inside the meerkat habitat within the Deserts of the World building, the pups will stay with their mother, and we welcome all guests to come to visit. As the pups are newborns and Flower is experiencing higher stress levels at this time with caring for her young, we do ask that all visitors are respectful of this and refrain from any intentional disturbances.

The Chattanooga Zoo invites the press to come at your leisure to get footage of the meerkat pups. However, we do ask that you contact us to schedule an appointment time. For appointment scheduling, please email Hannah Hammon at hhammon@chattzoo.org.