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World's Smallest Cranes Move in with Tiny Kangaroos

Naples, FL — Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens has just introduced its newest arrivals, a pair of Demoiselle cranes, to the also recently premiered Parma wallabies. Of the fifteen species of cranes, Demoiselles are the smallest at less than a fifth the weight of the heaviest crane and half the height of the tallest crane. Although small for their kind, these cranes tower over the Parma wallabies, one of the smallest members of the kangaroo family.

Why the unique combination? It's all part of the Zoo's behavioral enrichment program for the animals. While Naples Zoo's professional staff regularly create new activities to provide interesting or challenging stimulation for the animals, enrichment also includes exhibit design itself as well as other animals to intermingle with.

Because of this benefit, the Zoo already features combined animal exhibits. Near the cranes, Naples Zoo guests can see three varieties of kangaroos together with several muntjacs, a small Asian deer that barks and eats meat. The newest island on the Primate Expedition Cruise features several lemur species and *African Oasis* allows guests to see different species of antelope and zebras interact.

But what about those animals that are harder to combine – like lions? Zoo Director David Tetzlaff explains, "For the carnivores, we provide stimulation by placing other animals nearby so they can see or smell each other. So the lions smell duikers, the hyenas see antelope, and the tigers peek in on the new cranes and wallabies."

As part of a new master plan, the Zoo wants to take advantage of its South Florida climate to care for some of the planet's most endangered tropical animals. "Our national accreditation by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association and the quality of our carnivore program has earned us the privilege of caring for Indochinese tigers, the rarest tigers in America, as well as African wild dogs that are even more endangered than tigers. Now we hope to do the same with rare birds."

Demoiselle Cranes

The spectacular bird is pale blue-gray with a black head and neck. It was named when the species was first brought to France from Russia. Queen Marie Antoinette named the crane for its delicate

and maiden-like appearance. The French word demoiselle means young lady or damsel. (It's assumed the Queen wasn't privy to the birds' diet of large insects, worms, plants, and lizards.)

Demoiselle cranes are renowned for their spectacular and elaborate dances. During this graceful display, birds circle each other while leaping and calling, head-bobbing toward one another, and bowing with spread wings. While often associated with courtship, it is believed that cranes use dancing as part of motor development and to thwart aggression, relieve tension and strengthen bonds between pairs.

Demoiselle cranes are monogamous and breed in the Eurasian steppes and winter in India as well as Sudan and other parts of eastern Africa. They migrate long distances reaching altitudes up to 26,000 feet as they cross the Himalayas. During this strenuous journey, many cranes die from fatigue, hunger, and predation. Fiercely protective, parents will attract predators away from their nests, even faking a wing injury to make themselves look like easy prey. Once they lead the predator far enough away, they escape and fly back to the family.

The Demoiselle cranes' range has decreased considerably during the last 150 years. Demoiselle crane populations are in decline, and the North Africa and Turkey populations are near extinction. Habitat loss is the main threat to the Demoiselle cranes although hunting and poisoning take a heavy toll on some populations.

Parma Wallabies

Three Parma wallabies including a baby just out of the pouch have been on view for just a few weeks. They are at Naples Zoo as part of a national breeding program to ensure the future of this endangered species. Parma wallabies were once thought extinct in the wild.

Naples Zoo at Caribbean Gardens is nationally accredited by the prestigious American Zoo and Aquarium Association. The Zoo is located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road in Naples across from the Coastland Center mall. In addition to innovative presentations like Serpents: Fangs & Fiction and Planet Predator, the Zoo offers a historic botanical garden and many rare animals. Guests board the Primate Expedition Cruise to glide by islands inhabited by monkeys, lemurs, and apes live in natural habitats. Admission (\$15.95 adult/ \$9.95 children) includes all shows and the boat ride. Visitors can also pick up a healthy lunch and snacks at the SUBWAY® Cafe and shop for wild gifts at tame prices in The ZOO Gift Shop. The Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30. To learn more, click www.napleszoo.com or call (239) 262-5409.

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Photo available via e-mail from denise@napleszoo.com