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## **JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND GARDENS ANNOUNCES BIRTH OF THEIR FIRST COWNOSE RAY PUP**

**And you thought Nemo's face was cute!**

*Jacksonville, FL – June 29, 2015* – The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is excited to announce the birth of its first Cownose Ray pup at Stingray Bay! The exhibit has been open since 2009, but the rays had yet to produce offspring until this year when the Zoo welcomed a male, Rocky, on June 6.

"We are beyond thrilled for the birth of our Cownose Ray pup!" explains Hilary Register, Senior Stingray Bay Keeper, "The first 2 weeks of his life were critical as he was learning to swim properly and eat on his own. He is adjusting very well and is eating like a champ! We are building a bond with him, and he is already swimming in between our legs and staying close to our feet. We couldn't be more proud of the progress he is making!"

Cownose rays produce eggs that hatch and develop inside the mother's body. Usually only one pup is born each year, averaging about a foot in width at birth. Newborns have a mortality rate of 30% in the wild mainly due to predation, but are born with a barb ready for protection, since they do not receive any maternal care.

Once the little guy was acclimated to swimming and eating, keepers recorded a few vital statistics including his weight (1.5 lbs) and his wingspan (13.4 inches). At maturity, the average size varies by geographical location, with females typically growing larger than males. The largest female on record was almost 3 ½ feet wide.

These animals live along the eastern coast of the United States and south to Brazil. They live off the coast of Jacksonville and can occasionally be seen near shore. They are considered a migratory species that move south in the fall and north in the spring traveling in schools ranging from hundreds to thousands of individuals.

The new pup can be seen happily swimming in the Zoo's Stingray Bay exhibit everyday, so come see his cute little face.

### **About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit [JacksonvilleZoo.org](http://JacksonvilleZoo.org).