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JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND GARDENS WELCOMES BRAND NEW BABY GORILLA!

February 7, 2015 - Jacksonville, FL – The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) proudly announces the first successful gorilla birth in its history. The adorable infant was born the morning of February 6 to mother Bulera, and father, Lash. The newborn will debut on exhibit with mom on Sunday, February 8, pending weather conditions. Our vet and animal staff are closely monitoring mother and baby, but will only offer assistance if needed.

Bulera and Lash were recommended to breed by the Gorilla Species Survival Plan (SSP). The Gorilla SSP is a group of zoo professionals who cooperatively manage the gorilla population at zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). They are responsible for making science-based breeding and transfer recommendations as well as providing support and guidance on all aspects of gorilla management at AZA institutions to maintain a healthy, diverse and sustainable safety-net population for their critically endangered wild animal counterparts.

Bulera was born at the Lincoln Park Zoo in 1989, and gave birth to her first infant there, Madini (also residing at the JZG) at the young age of 7 years. Gorillas learn behaviors from others, and since it was her first birth, Bulera required assistance from another gorilla female to successfully raise Madini.

Lash was born on Christmas Day in 1976 at the Cincinnati Zoo. He lived in a bachelor group with Rumpel at the JZG for 8 years before being introduced to Bulera and her daughter, Madini.

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens currently has 2 male gorillas – Lash (age 38) and Rumpel (age 30), 3 female gorillas – Bulera (age 25), Madini (age 18) and Kumbuka (age 18). The newborn's sex is currently unknown.

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE), an African-based facility where

orphaned lowland gorillas receive the care they need and also learn the skills for reintroduction back in to the wild. GRACE also strives to provide educational opportunities for local communities to promote gorilla conservation around the Tayna Nature Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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 2,400 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.