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For Immediate Release

August 26, 2016

FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO ANTICIPATING BIRTH OF LION CUB(S)

Fresno, CA – Fresno Chaffee Zoo is thrilled to announce that the Zoo’s African lions, Kiki and Chisulo, are expecting their first litter of cubs together!

Ultrasounds performed recently by the Zoo’s carnivore team and veterinary staff confirmed that Kiki is expecting a litter of cubs in early October 2016.

“We used a specially designed bench to perform the ultrasounds on Kiki,” said Nicole Presley, curator at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. “When Kiki is positioned correctly on the bench, one person is able to feed her while another person can safely position themselves under her and use the ultrasound probe to get an image.”

For several months, the Zoo’s carnivore team and veterinary staff have been training with Kiki, through positive reinforcement, to be able to give an ultrasound.

“She was such a rock star throughout her training and once we had the positioning figured out, she was very accepting of the ultrasound probe,” Presley said. “Prior to using these training methods, lion pregnancy was not a known certainty unless the lion was anesthetized and an ultrasound or x-ray was performed. Now, we can take away that risk by using positive reinforcement training.”

On average, lionesses give birth to litters consisting of two to four cubs. At this time, the Zoo is unable to confirm how many cubs Kiki is expecting.

“We really don’t know how many cubs to expect at this point,” Presley said. “We are currently only able to get an ultrasound on one side of Kiki’s stomach. As we continue to monitor her pregnancy, we are hoping to be able to perform an ultrasound on the other side of her stomach.”

While this isn’t the first ever lion pregnancy at the Zoo, it is the first in nearly 50 years. The last time lions were born at the Zoo was in 1968.

Kiki, 12, came to Fresno in June 2015 from Zoo Atlanta along with her daughter, Zamaya, 2. This will be her third litter of cubs. Her first litter was born in 2008, followed by a second litter in 2013.

Chisulo, 2, came to Fresno in November 2015 from the Smithsonian’s National Zoo in Washington. This will be the first litter of cubs for Chisulo.

“We are absolutely thrilled about the upcoming birth of lion cubs,” Presley said. “We are confident that Kiki will be an exceptional mother, as she has been with her previous litters. As in the wild, the cubs will

be introduced back to Chisulo and Zamaya at a young age, which will be very exciting and sure to provide many precious and playful moments.”

African lions, *Panthera leo*, can be found throughout the South Sahara desert and in parts of Southern and Eastern Africa. Adult male lions can weigh up to 530 lbs. It is only in adulthood that male lions will have the well-known mane, after several years of growth and strength-gaining. These carnivore cats are opportunistic feeders and are known to take rodents, birds and reptiles as well as their usual large antelope or zebra prey.

Fresno Chaffee Zoo is open daily at 9 a.m. Closing times vary 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. by season (subject to change without prior notice). Thanksgiving (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.) and Christmas Day (closed). Visit www.fresnochaffeezoo.org for current hours. General admission during regular Zoo hours is \$10 for adults and \$5.50 for children 2-11 & seniors 62+. Children under 2 and Fresno Chaffee Zoo members are free. Fresno Chaffee Zoo inspires wonder of our natural world, provides an engaging learning environment, and creates a passion for conservation. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

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