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Cincinnati Zoo Giraffe Expecting Again!

CINCINNATI, OH (March 11, 2014) - Tessa, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's six-year-old Maasai giraffe is pregnant again, and due in the next few weeks. Tessa, and father "Kimba," are both doing well and can currently be seen at the Zoo's Giraffe Ridge exhibit. Due to the overwhelming response during the last birth, the Zoo (@CincinnatiZoo) will again be live-tweeting leading up to and during this birth as well. Make sure you follow #giraffebirth for the latest updates.

(NOTE TO MEDIA: Video of Tessa and her second calf can be downloaded here -

<https://www.hightail.com/download/eINMV0o4NnIcWNSYzhUQw>)

"We're incredibly excited to announce that Tessa is expecting again," said Thane Maynard, Executive Director at the Cincinnati Zoo. "Over the last month, we've been preparing the indoor stall and the outdoor yard for the arrival of this calf and naturally, monitoring Tessa closely to ensure another smooth pregnancy and delivery."

The Cincinnati Zoo's history with giraffe births dates back to 1889 when it became the first zoo in the Western Hemisphere to have a giraffe born in captivity. This will be Tessa's third calf, her last calf "Lulu" was born on October 12, 2012. This spring, Lulu will be leaving the Cincinnati Zoo to join a new family just up the road at [The Wilds](#), in Cumberland, Ohio.

Inter-zoo moves like this are guided by scientists at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) Population Management Center. The Center works closely with accredited zoos throughout North America, drafting recommended Species Survival Plans (SSP) for roughly 340 species. These moves and breeding recommendations are made to preserve a species' genetic diversity as well as make sure there are enough new births to keep the population's size stable.

"Often, the best match for breeding requires an animal to move from one zoo to another, a recommendation that is taken very seriously," said Maynard. "And not every move is about breeding – many are designed to meet the social needs of animals that live in groups. While Lulu will most definitely be missed by both the visitors and the staff here at the Cincinnati Zoo, this move takes her long-term

health and happiness into consideration, which is always our top priority. And fortunately, The Wilds is just a short road trip for our visitors.”

As of Wednesday, March 5, a dedicated team of Zoo Volunteer Observers (ZVO’s) are keeping an eye on Tessa around the clock. Volunteers are taking 3-4 hour shifts watching Tessa, looking for behavioral changes that might indicate labor. Signs such as Tessa starting to pace and perhaps even showing the first signs of a birth - the baby’s small hooves emerging for the first time - are what the ZVO’s are on the lookout for. Protocols have been developed to cover almost any situation, although the Zoo hopes that after four hours of labor Tessa will give birth on her own.

After nearly 15 months of gestation, at birth a baby giraffe drops to the ground head first, about a 6-foot drop! The fall and the landing do no hurt the calf, but they do cause it to take a big breath. The calf is expected to both nurse and stand within an hour of delivery. To prepare for the birth, in Tessa’s indoor stall, keepers have added 6-8 inches of sawdust and hay on top of large rubber mats to cushion the calf’s fall and to provide excellent footing for the calf once it begins to stand. Giraffe calves typically weigh around 125 pounds at birth and are approximately six feet tall.

Tessa, who currently weighs 1,660 pounds, came to the Cincinnati Zoo in 2008 from the Houston Zoo for the opening of Giraffe Ridge. The father, “Kimbaumbau” (Kimba) also came to Cincinnati in 2008, from the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island. Both Tessa and Kimba can be found at Giraffe Ridge, which is a 27,000 square-foot exhibit complete with an elevated viewing platform, which provides an amazing interactive experience, bringing guests eye-to-eye with giraffes.

Although their numbers have decreased in the past century, giraffes are not currently endangered, but listed as “lower risk” with fairly stable populations. Unlike many species, there is no true breeding season for the Maasai Giraffe and females can become pregnant beginning at just four years of age. In the wild up to 75% of the calves die in their first few months of life, mainly due to predation.

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The world famous Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden was rated the #1 attraction locally and one of the top zoos in the nation by Zagat Survey. It was recognized by Parents Magazine as #7 on the “Top 10 Best Zoos for Kids.” It has also been recognized by Child Magazine as one of “The 10 Best Zoos for Kids.” Over one million people visit the Zoo’s award-winning exhibits, and more than 500 animal and 3000 plant species annually. The Zoo is an accredited member of the American Zoo & Aquarium Association (AZA) and the American Public Gardens Association (APGA), is internationally known for its success in the protection and propagation of endangered animals and plants, and engages in research and conservation projects worldwide.