

ZOO

Baby Boom!

Zoo announces several animal births.



A koala mother and baby.

Photo by Tad Motoyama/LA Zoo

The Los Angeles Zoo is proud to announce several prominent animal births.

The Zoo's baby boom kicked off last year with the July 6 birth of a female koala. Since newborn koalas spend about six months developing in the mother's pouch, this joey has just recently begun to emerge.

Baby koalas are commonly referred to as joeys. When a koala is born, it is just three-fourths of an inch long. After birth they climb into the mother's pouch and stay there for six months. For the following six months, they are weaned from milk to eucalyptus as they stick their heads out of the pouch to eat partially digested leaves. After a year, they leave the pouch for good.

Although they are often referred to as a "koala bear," koalas belong to the marsupial family. Marsupials are mammals whose females typically rear their young in a pouch through early infancy. Other members of the marsupial family are kangaroos, wallabies, wallaroos, wombats and opossums.

Native to Australia, koalas have a very low metabolic rate requiring them to conserve energy and to sleep between 18 and 20 hours a day. They spend about three of their five active hours eating a diet that consists entirely of eucalyptus leaves. Koalas consume 2.5 pounds of leaves per day and rarely drink water due to the moisture found in eucalyptus leaves.

On March 1, two Peninsular pronghorn, one male and one female, were born. Native to Baja California Sur, Mexico, these graceful animals are mostly active at dawn and dusk. Hunting, cattle ranching and agriculture have resulted in the significant decrease of this critically endangered species.

Newborn pronghorns take their first steps within 30 minutes of birth. By the time they are four days old, they can outrun humans. After just a week, fawns can run faster than dogs and horseback riders over short distances. They are the second fastest land mammal and the fastest ungulate (hoofed mammal), clocking in at anywhere from 40 to 60 miles per hour. They can maintain this speed, without showing any sign of distress, for an hour or longer.

Typically, a pronghorn mother will have one or two fawns weighing in at around seven or eight pounds. When they reach adulthood, pronghorns weigh up to 125 pounds and reach a height of 35 inches. The females are usually 10 to 25 percent smaller than males.

On March 20, a female desert bighorn sheep was born. This species is native to the high mountains and deserts of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Preferring to live in places with rocky terrain and access to water, they completely avoid forested areas. Bighorn sheep can be seen in our local San Gabriel Mountains, though their population is threatened by many factors including drought, predators, disease and fires.

The most recognizable characteristic of the bighorn sheep is the male's massive, spiraled horns and their majestic faces. These horns may add up to one third of their total body weight when they're fullgrown. Females have much smaller horns.

The Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens is located in Griffith Park at the junction of the Ventura (134) and Golden State (5) freeways. Admission is \$14 for adults and \$9 for children ages 2 to 12. The Zoo is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. For information, call (323) 644-4200 or visit the L. A. Zoo Web site at www.lazoo.org.

Newsbrief

LA RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT:

Councilmember Dennis P. Zine and Public Works officials marked the start of construction of the LA River Greenway Project at a groundbreaking ceremony held March 10.

The project, a two-mile bikeway and parkway along the River's south bank between Vanalden Avenue and Mason Avenue, runs through the communities of Winnetka and Reseda. The project includes habitat-friendly landscaping, storm water quality improvements, solar LED lighting, decorative retaining walls, resting areas with benches, drinking fountains and par-course fitness equipment. The bikeway is an implementation project of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan designed to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities and overall quality of life along the LA River.

"I'm excited to see that the revitalization of the Los Angeles River will include a two-mile bikeway within the Third Council District that will feature fitness stations and community art and will restore natural habitats," Councilmember Zine said. "Aside from promoting a healthy lifestyle, this project will offer local residents the opportunity to enjoy recreational activities in an open space along the river."

Other project components include resurfacing and street improvements of Tampa Avenue and Winnetka Avenue between Victory Boulevard and Vanowen Street.

"We are very proud of our Bureau of Engineering staff for implementing these public improvements along the Los Angeles River as part of the Tampa Avenue and Winnetka Avenue over the LA River Bridge Widening Project," said Deborah Weintraub, Chief Deputy City Engineer. "We are pleased to augment METRO bikeway funds with Federal stimulus dollars and State funding for River revitalization."

Construction will be done in three phases, with phases one and two occurring simultaneously this spring, and completing summer of 2012. Scheduling for phase three has not been finalized.

Funding for the bikeway/greenway and street resurfacing project includes approximately \$5.7 million in grants from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The grant will enable the City to complete the long-awaited project and add jobs to the local economy. An additional \$2 million in Proposition 50 grant funding will be tapped for greening enhancements. Other funding sources are a combination of Los Angeles County METRO, Caltrans Bicycle Transportation Account funds, and the City's Proposition C.

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