



# PRESS RELEASE

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## CHILEAN FLAMINGO CHICK HATCHES AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO

- **One Chick Born; Eight Eggs in Nests; One Egg in Incubator**
- **Downy Gray Chick Will Become Pink in Several Months**
- **Other News: Five Humboldt Penguins Added to Crawford Family Penguin House Exhibit; Coatimundis and Toco Toucans Return to Improved Exhibit Spaces**

*Santa Barbara, September 5, 2006* – A downy gray chick has emerged from an egg at the Santa Barbara Zoo’s exhibit of Chilean flamingos and there is the possibility for nine more as eggs hatch during the next several weeks. This species, renowned for their bright pink plumage, are on exhibit directly across from the lemurs. The chick has emerged from the nest and is often visible.

Keepers noticed breeding activity several months ago when the birds began their ritualized breeding display of stretching, wing salutes, parading, “flagging,” in which the birds extend their necks and turn their heads in unison. Animal staff had prepared the nesting area by creating mounds to which the breeding birds added more mud.

The first chick was born on Wednesday, August 23. An abandoned egg, believed to be fertile, was removed from the exhibit and placed in an incubator several days later.

The last successful breeding of Chilean flamingos was in September 2003 when five chicks were produced. Keepers have used various methods since then to encourage breeding in the pink-hued birds. Last year, the flock was increased by six new birds, to make a total of forty adults. Keepers also erected a temporary barrier to segregate the male and female birds, hoping that absence would “make the heart grow fonder,” but there was no breeding that season. This year, shade cloth was installed on one side of the exhibit to give additional privacy during breeding season.

Female flamingos lay one elongated chalky-white egg, which is incubated for 27-31 days by both parents, taking turns. The new chicks have downy gray plumage, straight red beaks and thick, swollen red legs (which disappears after a few days).

### **News About Penguins, Coatimundis, & Toco Toucans**

Five additional Humboldt penguins have joined the flock at the newly opened Crawford Family Penguin House, making a total of 14 birds in the exhibit, which offers both above-ground and underwater viewing in a 42,400 gallon pond. Two of the new birds came from the Oregon Zoo, another two from the Philadelphia Zoo and a single bird from Sea World.

This species of penguins like it “Chile, not chilly” as they hail from coastal desert regions along the Pacific Coast of South America from Peru to Chile. They are highly threatened in their native regions and the Santa Barbara Zoo has made a financial commitment to assist conservation efforts by Acorema in Peru.

Two nearby exhibits have reopened after undergoing improvements during the construction of the new penguin exhibit. The Zoo’s three young coatimundis are now again on view across from the Penguin House. Their exhibit has been covered with a transparent mesh, allowing for good viewing while ensuring that these active creatures, related to raccoons, are contained.

The adjacent Toco toucan has new landscaping and mesh, the birds’ perching opportunities have as been enhanced and a new nest log has been installed. This fall, the Zoo’s male toucan will be exchanged for another male from the Knoxville Zoo as part of a cooperative breeding program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

### **About Chilean Flamingos**

Chilean flamingos range from Central Peru southward along the Andes to Tierra del Fuego and are also found along both coasts of South America and in the pampas of Argentina. Flamingos are social birds and live in colonies, often near salt lakes.

Their coloring depends on its diet, since the pink tinge of its plumage is the result of its consumption of the colored matter in the minute crustaceans that it eats. In captivity, shrimps or other coloring are obtained for the flamingos, otherwise their plumage becomes white.

The beak has an adapted filtration apparatus which functions like a comb. The filter has thousands of tiny filaments that allow the water to pass through but which dredge out the tiny food particles. In order to feed, they shake their heads from side to side to sieve the food from

the water. They have webbed feet, are good swimmers, and can feed with their heads submerged while swimming.

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*The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for children 2-12 and seniors 60+, and children under 2 are free. The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).*

*AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats.*