



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Contacts: Julia McHugh 805 569-3303 or juliapr@west.net
or Dean Noble 805 962-5339 or dnoble@sbzoo.org

ENDANGERED CHANNEL ISLAND FOX PUP BORN AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO

- **Male Pup to be Hand-Reared Due to Mother's Inability to Nurse**
- **Birth Brings Number of Channel Island Foxes in Captive Population to 12; Six at Santa Barbara Zoo**
- **Species Added to Federal Endangered Species List in March 2004**
- **PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES ARE LIMITED**

Santa Barbara, CA, May 2, 2007 – A highly endangered Channel Islands fox pup was born at the Santa Barbara Zoo on Thursday, April 12 and is now being hand-raised by Zoo staff.

“The birth of this pup will further enhance our ability to continue to tell the conservation story of the island fox and the unique and special habitat that it lives in,” said Alan Varsik, the Zoo’s Director of Animal Programs and Conservation.

The male pup weighed two ounces at birth and has since doubled his weight. It is being fed six times a day by veterinary staff with Esbilac, a puppy formula. Its eyes opened over the weekend.

The pup was born to an eight year old female who has been at the Zoo since 2004. A previous trauma to her mammary glands has rendered her unable to nurse, but her unique genetic representation was so desirable in the captive population of this threatened sub-species (other sub-species are listed as endangered, see below) that the decision was made to allow her to breed. The pup’s sire is an approximately nine year old male who has been at the Zoo since 1999.

There is the opportunity to name the new Channel Island pup through a donation to the Santa Barbara Zoo. For information about naming, contact Development Director Jill Muchow Rode at (805) 962-5339 or jrode@sbzoo.org.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Due to the age of the pup and the hand-rearing schedule, photo opportunities are limited. Please make advance contact with Julia McHugh at (805) 569-3303 or juliapr@west.net.

Channel Island Fox and the Santa Barbara Zoo

The Zoo has two breeding pairs of Channel Island fox, all from San Clemente Island, though there has not been a successful offspring since 2002. Previous offspring are now on exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo and the Charles Paddock Zoo in Atascadero. The Zoo has a fifth fox, from Santa Rosa Island, which is housed off-exhibit due to medical conditions concerning its eyes.

The Santa Barbara Zoo has been involved with the research and care of these animals since 1999, and works closely with the National Park Service in efforts to study the behavior of the foxes and to increase captive populations. The Zoo is also active in the conservation efforts of this species in the wild and supports the National Park Service in their captive management on the islands by providing keeper and veterinary staff.

Channel Island Fox Named Endangered in 2004

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service added the four subspecies of island fox to the federal endangered species list in March 2004. The species live only on the six largest Channel Islands: San Clemente, Santa Catalina, San Nicolas, Santa Cruz, San Miguel, and Santa Rosa. (I don't have recent numbers on the island status and don't want to guess)

In the wild, the foxes face unique challenges to their survival, including predation by golden eagles, habitat destruction by feral pigs, and canine distemper. Four of the six subspecies of island fox underwent serious population declines in the 1990s. Through collaborative efforts, these populations are starting to make a recovery.

###

The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

*It 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.*

*AZA accredited zoos and aquariums are helping to preserve thousands of animals regionally
and around the world through unequalled wildlife conservation programs.*