

For Immediate Release

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Rosamond Gifford Zoo Announces Birth of Two North American River Otter Pups

Syracuse, N.Y. (April 3, 2015) – The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is pleased to announce the births of two male North American river otter pups. The pups, named Monterey and Jack, were born on March 8. Their parents are the zoo's six-year-old female otter, Brie, and nine-year-old male otter, Johann. The pups weighed about four ounces at birth and currently weigh about 1 pound each.



North American river otter pups, Monterey and Jack
(photo by Jaime Alvarez)

Otter pups are born blind. They open their eyes at four to five weeks of age and require significant care by their mother in order to survive. Due to this fact, and Brie's unsuccessful attempts at rearing offspring in the past, zoo staff installed cameras in the otter's nest box in order to monitor her pregnancy and made the decision to pull her pups for hand-rearing upon birth.

“It is always exciting to have new babies at our zoo. Our animal staff has had remarkable success over the years in hand-rearing animals. I wish them continued success with these new otter pups and commend them for their hard work,” said County Executive Joanne M. Mahoney.

“We are very pleased to welcome Monterey and Jack and look forward to their growth and development over the next few months,” says Zoo Director Ted Fox. “Their father, Johann, is extremely energetic and a guest favorite. The eventual introduction of the pups to the otter exhibit will prove to be a very exciting time for our guests and staff.”

Monterey and Jack will be introduced to the otter exhibit at a later date. For now, the zoo intends for guests to observe feedings. Further information on this will be provided via the zoo's website and social media. While the pups are being raised behind the

scenes, parents Brie and Johann can still be seen daily in the otter habitat, located in the social animal area of the zoo.

Native to Canada and the U.S. (including New York), North American river otters reside in freshwater ponds, lakes and marshlands. River otters are excellent swimmers and divers and are usually found no more than 10 yards from water. They swim by movement of the legs and tail and can remain underwater for six to eight minutes. Their small ears and nostrils can be closed when underwater.

The river otter's body is long and cylindrical, with a tail that is thick at the base and tapers at the end. The river otter's feet are flat and webbed for swimming and paddling in or under the water. Their outer fur is chocolate brown to pale chestnut in color. They have weak vision, acute hearing and a well-developed sense of smell. Their vocalizations vary from shrill chirps to screams, grunts or coughs.

Otters are active during the day and night. They are highly intelligent and extremely curious animals. Their diet in the wild consists of fish, frogs, crayfish, aquatic invertebrates, birds, rodents and rabbits. At the zoo, they are given live fish for enrichment.

FUN FACT: Otters are extremely playful, sliding in snow and down muddy banks. When traveling on ground or snow and ice, otters use a combination of running and sliding. On land, they can attain speeds up to 17 miles per hour.

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Founded in 1914, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park is among the top 10 percent of zoos in the country as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is dedicated to connecting people to the natural world by providing engaging guest experiences, exceptional animal care, and unparalleled conservation education.

The zoo actively collaborates with Friends of the Zoo to provide its guests "the best day ever," ensuring experiences that excite, memories that endure, and knowledge that inspires worldwide conservation.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults (19-61), \$4 for youth (3-18) and \$5 for seniors (62+). Children two and under are free. For more information, call the zoo at (315) 435-8511 or visit rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

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www.rosamondgiffordzoo.org

County Executive, Joanne M. Mahoney • Commissioner of Parks & Recreation, Bill Lansley
Rosamond Gifford Zoo Director, Ted Fox • Friends of the Zoo President, Janet Agostini

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