

Real-life Rafiki—a Baby Mandrill—Born at Disney’s Animal Kingdom

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., (June 15, 2011) — After six and a half months of waiting, Disney’s Animal Kingdom is welcoming a “colorful” addition to its animal family. A male baby mandrill was born May 30 to first-time mother, Kelley and is the third one born at Disney’s Animal Kingdom. Mom and baby are doing very well.

Native to Africa, mandrills are among the largest species of monkey in the world and are considered endangered. They’re known for their bright coloration, furry head crests, manes, and beards. Adults also have thick purple and blue ridges along their noses, big red lips and golden beards. Fans of Disney’s animated movie “The Lion King” might recall Rafiki, who was not only a colorful character, but a mandrill as well.

So far, Disney’s animal care experts are encouraged by the bonding between mother and infant. The baby spends most of his day nursing and sleeping, and is under close observation by the animal care team. The baby and mother are starting to make short forays into their habitat on the Kilimanjaro Safaris, joining other members of the mandrill group.

“The new mom is very relaxed but protective,” said Barb Weber, primate zoological manager at Disney’s Animal Kingdom. “We’re pleased another young female mandrill, Scarlett, has taken a keen interest in the newborn. This is a great experience for her because she is learning from the baby’s mom how to be a good mom herself.”

Preparations for motherhood began long before the baby mandrill was born. For example, primate keepers worked with Kelley during pregnancy to pick up objects which helped simulate holding her baby after birth.

With the new baby, the number of mandrills that make their home at Disney’s Animal Kingdom has grown to 12. Disney’s Animal Kingdom is part of a breeding program coordinated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) that is focused on sustaining the mandrill population.

Fun Facts:

- Typical mandrill babies weigh between one and two pounds at birth.
- Adult female mandrills weigh an average of 30 pounds. Adult males are larger and average 60-100 pounds.
- The average life span of a mandrill is approximately 20 – 30 years.