

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brevard Zoo Welcomes New Joey

MELBOURNE, Fla., August 24, 2023 — Brevard Zoo has welcomed a new joey, or baby kangaroo, to our red kangaroo mob. The joey is a 5-month-old female and appears healthy. Mom Lilly is doing all the behaviors a mother kangaroo would do at this stage, said the Zoo's Lands of Change area supervisor Kristen Gagnon.

"Lilly takes care of her joey by grooming it and keeping her pouch clean," Kristen said. "On hot days, you can watch Lilly lick the outside of her pouch. In the same way that kangaroos lick their forearms to stay cool, this helps to cool the inside of her pouch!"

Kangaroo pregnancy and early roo-hood is pretty unique! Kangaroos are pregnant for about a month before a 1-inch-long underdeveloped joey is born. At this stage, they have the necessary forearms to crawl from their mother's cloaca into the pouch, but their back legs are very underdeveloped. Once in the pouch, the joey latches to their mother's nipple and continues growing and developing.

Kangaroo babies hit many major developmental milestones while in the pouch. The joey just recently opened her eyes. Our animal care team has been monitoring Lilly and her baby since birth. They've worked with most of our female red kangaroos to get them comfortable with voluntary pouch checks. This lets our keepers be aware of a joey in our mob and they can begin to monitor the baby's development.

"The day that we found her joey, we had seen her grooming the outside of her pouch in the morning, which is what cued us that she may have given birth and licked her pouch to allow the joey to climb into it," Kristen said.

As always, these checks are voluntary, and keepers treat participating kangaroos with a snack. As a hand-raised 'roo, Lilly is very comfortable with her keepers – she gets fed a bottle during pouch checks.

"Who can say that they've looked into a kangaroo's pouch before? It's really special if you think about it," Kristen said.

Lilly has a unique story herself. As a five-month-old joey, Lilly was found outside of her mother's pouch after a thunderstorm. We believe her mother may have been startled and dropped her from the pouch. Lilly was hand-raised by our director of animal programs, Lauren Hinson. There's always a chance that Lilly could toss her joey, especially as a first-time mom, Kristen said. Our team has prepared for this possibility by keeping all the supplies needed to care for a young joey, including feeding supplies and bottles, artificial pouches and medical supplies.

"This will continue to be a possibility until the joey is old enough to leave the pouch and is able to hop back into it on her own," she said.

Joeys typically start leaving the pouch at about 7-9 months old. Lilly's baby isn't hopping out of her pouch quite yet, but you might see the pouch move! She's getting large enough that the pouch visibly bulges and sags.

Visit [this Dropbox folder](#) for photos or video of Lilly's joey.

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Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at www.brevardzoo.org.

Treetop Trek features five aerial obstacle courses that whisk guests above parts of the Zoo and through lush Florida landscapes. More information is available at www.treetoptrek.com.