

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Brevard Zoo Welcomes New Species: Okapi

MELBOURNE, Fla., January 26, 2024 — Brevard Zoo has welcomed a new species, okapi, to its Expedition Africa area.

George the okapi came to the Zoo from a fellow facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). George is currently acclimating in a behind-the-scenes space as he gets to know his new home and animal care team.

George's move is a part of the Species Survival Plan (SSP), an AZA program with the goal of ensuring healthy, genetically diverse animal populations within AZA-accredited facilities and protect vulnerable species. While there aren't plans to pair the 1½-year-old with a female okapi now, moving him to our Zoo gives his mom the space to possibly breed again.

Okapi George was named after the late Dr. George Rabb, a longtime director of Brookfield Zoo. This conservationist worked to better understand and protect several species, including okapi. He conducted studies on the behavior and mother-infant relationships of okapi and was a part of establishing the Okapi Wildlife Preserve in their natural range in the Ituri Forest in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Okapi are considered endangered due to threats from hunting and the continued loss of this habitat. This species is illusive in their natural range – helped along by their coloring. While the indigenous people of the Ituri Forest knew of okapis, this species was considered a myth by Western scientists until 1901.

Want to help okapi in their natural range? By recycling electronics, we help animals like okapi by reducing the need to mine minerals in and around their native range. You can bring in your old smartphones, tablets, handheld gaming devices, digital cameras, chargers, headphones and other small electronics to the Zoo for reclamation through our Eco-Cell program! The electronics drop-off box is located to the left of the Zoo ticket booth just outside of the Guest Services office.

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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.