



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Hand-raised kangaroo joey reunites with mob**

MELBOURNE, Fla., June 28, 2017 — After five months of round-the-clock care, a young red kangaroo with a rough start to life has defied the odds and reunited with other members of her species at Brevard Zoo.

Lilly, born in August 2016, was found on the floor of the Zoo's kangaroo habitat in the early morning hours of January 23. Stress caused by a severe storm the previous evening likely caused Lilly's mother to eject the joey from the pouch. After several failed attempts to reunite the two, animal care staff made the decision to raise the tiny, helpless marsupial themselves.

For several weeks, Lilly lived in an incubator with precise temperature and moisture levels that emulated a kangaroo's pouch. She was removed six times a day to be bottle-fed by Lauren Hinson, the Zoo's collection manager and Lilly's primary caretaker.

As Lilly grew less fragile, a fabric pouch suspended from Hinson's neck replaced the climate-controlled incubator. The joey became something of a fixture at Wednesday morning staff meetings.

"I took her home every single evening and brought her with me wherever I went," said Hinson, who estimates she conducted 1,000 bottle feedings. "It was an incredible amount of work and a lot of missed sleep, but well worth it."

Lilly has been taking supervised "field trips" to the kangaroo yard since late May, but not until this week has she stayed there permanently. Keepers will need to keep a close eye on the joey in the new space and bottle-feed her twice a day for the next several months.

Although Zoo staff hope to avoid hand-raising more joeys in the future, Hinson is more than willing to put the pouch back on if need be.

"I would do it again in a heartbeat," she said.

Photos and video:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mocolpx0j776vxn/AAAMAaAZjNpfqcYiBVXPGkLra>

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*Brevard Zoo is home to more than 800 animals representing 180 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](http://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](http://www.treetoptrek.com).*