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**NEWS
RELEASE**

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El Paso Zoo Saves Smuggled Spider Monkeys

Partnerships with Government Agencies Strengthen Conservation Efforts to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

EL PASO, Texas—The El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens, in collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is providing critical care and shelter to two infant spider monkeys rescued from a recent smuggling attempt.

The monkeys, both between 4 to 8 weeks old, were seized at a U.S. port of entry and transferred to the zoo about a week ago.

Trafficked animals like the endangered spider monkeys are often subjected to extreme physical and psychological distress. Found in poor health, they are typically malnourished, confined in small spaces, and deprived of proper care. Thanks to the swift actions of CBP and USFWS, these vulnerable animals are now in the care of the El Paso Zoo's expert team, receiving the nutrition, medical attention, and comfort they desperately need.

The Zoo's veterinarians and animal care staff are providing specialized care, including age-appropriate food, infant formula, and a secure, warm enclosure. Once the monkeys are healthy enough, they will be transported to their native habitat in Mexico.

"Removing these animals from illegal trade is vital," said Joe Montisano, El Paso Zoo Director. "By doing so, we disrupt the financial incentives driving wildlife trafficking. This rescue also highlights the dangers of keeping monkeys as pets—while they may seem manageable as infants, they often become dangerous and difficult to care for as they mature."

Spider monkeys, like other primates, require complex social environments and specialized care that most private individuals cannot provide. Trafficked monkeys not only pose risks to themselves and their owners but also carry the potential to transmit diseases. To raise awareness, the zoo encourages the public to learn more at www.notapet.net and www.aza.org/wildlife-trafficking-alliance.

The El Paso Zoo is dedicated to conservation efforts through its network of partners, including local communities, government agencies, corporations, and nonprofit organizations. These collaborations are essential to creating a world where both wildlife and people can thrive.

In addition to the rescued spider monkeys, the zoo is home to three Geoffroy's spider monkeys, two females and one male, which can be seen year-round in the Americas section. Spider monkeys are native to Central and South America, and all species are currently listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

—more—



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About Spider Monkeys

Spider monkeys are highly social creatures that live in large, fluid groups of up to 100 individuals. They are diurnal, meaning they are most active during the day, with early morning hours dedicated to foraging. Females typically give birth to one infant at a time, carrying the young on their abdomen for about four months before switching to their back. The infant's prehensile tail helps it grip its mother for additional support. In the wild, spider monkeys can live up to 25 years, while in zoos they may reach 40 years with proper care.

About the El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens

The El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens stretch across 35-acres and house animals representing over 220 species, including critically endangered species. Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the El Paso Zoo celebrates the value of animals and natural resources. It creates opportunities for people to rediscover their connection to nature. To learn more, visit www.ElPasoZoo.org.

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