



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **TINY HANDS, TINY FEET, NEW FRIENDS FOR YOU TO MEET**

Norfolk, Va. – Two new baby squirrel monkeys are now receiving visitors at the Virginia Zoo’s Exhibit Building.

Monkey mommies Marie and Madonna gave birth to Cheetah and Babalu Jan. 8 and 12, respectively. The tiny primates join their mothers, proud papa Jeebes and another adult female named Elvira. They are the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> squirrel monkeys born at the Zoo since 1967.

“We won’t know the babies’ sex for a couple of months yet,” said zookeeper Linda Brandt. “They cling onto their mothers’ backs when they are very young, and we find it’s less traumatic for them if we wait until they are running on their own a little before we try and sex them.”

Volunteer R.J. Mercure added that the adult squirrel monkeys rarely stay still. “It can be a wild ride for the baby,” he said.

“The squirrel monkeys really are a joy to watch,” said Zoo director Greg Bockheim. “They are highly intelligent for their size.” Bockheim added that squirrel monkeys have the proportionately largest brain of all primates, with a brain to body mass ratio of 1-to-17. Humans, by comparison, have a 1-to-35 ratio.

Adult squirrel monkeys range from nine to nearly 14 inches, plus a 13 to 17-inch tail, and weigh in from one to just over two pounds. The males are usually larger. Squirrel monkeys are found in the tropical forests of Central and South America. They spend most of their time in trees and are primarily active during daylight hours. The tiny primates live together in groups of up to 500 males and females. Squirrel monkeys are omnivorous, eating primarily fruits and insects. They live roughly 15 years in the wild, but can reach 20 years old in captivity.

## NEW FRIENDS



**A baby squirrel monkey sleeps on its mother's back at the Virginia Zoo Jan. 27, 2011 (Virginia Zoo photo by Wyn Hall).**



**A baby squirrel monkey clings to its mother's back while the mother climbs a rope at the Virginia Zoo Jan. 27, 2011 (Virginia Zoo photo by Wyn Hall).**

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*As an accredited Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) facility, the Virginia Zoo exhibits over 350 animals, beautifully manicured grounds and offers a fun-filled day for all. For more than a century, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to wildlife, conservation and education. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and located at 3500 Granby Street in Norfolk. Daily admission prices are \$11.00 for adults, \$10.00 for seniors (age 62 and over), and \$9.00 for children ages 2-11. Visit [www.virginiazoo.org](http://www.virginiazoo.org) or call (757) 441-2374 for more information.*