



# NEWS RELEASE

**Contact:** Winfield Danielson  
Marketing and Public Relations Manager  
Office: (757) 441-2374 ext 223  
Cell: (757) 777-7899  
Email: winfield.danielson@norfolk.gov

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Oct. 13, 2011

## THE ZOO'S GOT CHICKS

NORFOLK, Va. – Two African crowned crane chicks were recently introduced to their outdoor habitat in the Virginia Zoo's Africa – Okavango Delta exhibit, and are now accepting visitors.

"They hatched in late August, but we wait until they bulk up and are less vulnerable before putting them in the outdoor habitat," said zookeeper Dennis McNamara, who works on the team that cares for the chicks. He added that the chicks still spend the night indoors, and will continue to do so until they are nearly full grown.

The family of cranes shares their habitat at the Zoo with bongos, a large forest antelope.

Named for what appears to be a crown of golden pins on their head, which are actually modified feathers, African crowned cranes are native to the savannah south of the Sahara. The birds stand just over 3 feet tall and weigh nearly 8 pounds, with the males tending to be slightly larger. They feed on insects and other invertebrates, reptiles, small mammals and seeds.

The African crowned crane is known for a breeding dance involving bowing and jumping. They build a nest platform from grass and other plants in wetland areas, laying a clutch of two to five eggs. Both males and females incubate the eggs for 28 to 31 days. Adult cranes catch food in their beaks and hold it out for the chicks to come and take.

Although common over much of its range, the African crowned crane's habitat is threatened by drainage, overgrazing and pesticide pollution.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for people to observe the chicks' transformation into the striking adult birds," said Greg Bockheim, the Zoo's executive director.

## Zoo CHICKS



**Two African crowned crane chicks stick close to their parent while they explore their outdoor habitat in the Virginia Zoo's Africa - Okavango Delta exhibit Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2011 (Virginia Zoo photo by Winfield Danielson).**

**###**

*As an accredited Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) facility, the Virginia Zoo exhibits more than 400 animals on 53 beautifully landscaped acres. For more than a century, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to education and conservation, and offered a fun-filled day for visitors of any age. 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.*