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Zoo welcomes howler monkey troop

ABILENE, TEXAS – Zoo fans may hear some wild new sounds in the park this week as the zoo welcomes a troop of howler monkeys.

The family of four is now on exhibit after arriving from the Cleveland Zoo earlier this month. Black howler monkeys are an endangered species native to Latin America, and this troop is part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plans, conservation programs that maintain healthy populations of vulnerable animals to help prevent extinction.

“Howler monkeys show lots of personality by exploring and playing, so they are fun to watch,” said Liz Kellerman, the zoo’s animal behaviorist. “And these guys are famously loud. Their howls can be heard three miles away.”



Another interesting trait is the monkeys have sexually dimorphic features. Mature males are black and have large necks and jaws for howling, while females and youngsters are petite and blond. The troop includes a breeding pair: Dante is a 7-year-old male and Springer is his 13-year-old mate. Their offspring include a 19-month-old male named Yoder, and an 8-month-old female named Hazel. Yoder’s fur will turn black as he matures. The monkeys use their prehensile tails as a fifth limb and to grip tightly to tree branches or food.

The howler monkeys inhabit the enclosure that once housed the Colobus, who have moved into new digs in the Giraffe Safari area.

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Since its founding in 1966, the Abilene Zoo has stood as a place of learning and adventure, where visitors make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife. Situated on 16 acres in the award-winning Grover Nelson Park, the zoo provides a special encounter in a lushly landscaped walkable setting with more than 1000 animals of 270 species from around the globe. The zoo serves more than 225,000 visitors per year, and offers VIP behind-the-scenes tours, as well as popular classes, camps and after-hours family events. The zoo is open 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$4.50 for children ages 3-12, \$6 for seniors aged 60 and older. Members are admitted free. www.abilenezoo.org. 325-676-6085.