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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Kelly Thompson  
Marketing & Development Coordinator  
Office: 325-437-4692  
[kelly.thompson@abilenetx.com](mailto:kelly.thompson@abilenetx.com)

**Giraffe Safari delayed until spring**

ABILENE, TEXAS – The opening of the new Giraffe Safari exhibit at The Abilene Zoo has been delayed until April.

“We know people are eager to see this amazing new exhibit open. We are, too,” said Executive Director Bill Gersonde. “But we have to be cautious when animals are introduced to new facilities.”

The wet weather this year and construction delays have set the \$3.8 million project behind schedule. Completing the exhibit during the dead of winter offers challenges with installing landscaping and introducing animals to the exhibit. Giraffe cannot tolerate temperatures below 50 degrees.

Meanwhile, zoo staffers are looking ahead to ensure that the zoo’s three giraffe, a male and two females, make a smooth transition into the larger space, where guests will feed the animals romaine lettuce from an expansive feeding deck dubbed Twiga Terrace. “Twiga” means giraffe in Swahili.

“Giraffe are unpredictable and can get skittish in new environments,” Gersonde said. “We will need plenty of warm spring days and nights to get the animals acclimated to the new space. We’re all disappointed with the delay, but we know everyone is going to enjoy this new exhibit.”

Giraffe Safari also will feature red river hogs, a new colobus monkey exhibit, and a herd of tiny antelope called blue duikers. Large birds will graze the grounds, including kori bustards, crowned cranes and yellow-billed storks.

**About the Abilene Zoo:** The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 1000 animals of 250 different species. 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+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$35. [www.abilenezoo.org](http://www.abilenezoo.org). 325-676-6085. **Mission Statement:** *The Abilene Zoo is a place of learning and adventure, where families make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife.*