

Three caiman lizards born in Chicago

November 3 2005

Chicago's Shedd Aquarium has announced the birth of three caiman lizards, the first born in a North America zoo or aquarium.

Not much is known about the South American caiman lizard, but Shedd scientists told the Chicago Sun-Times the male is no slouch when it comes to courtship.

The 2- to- 4-foot-long male will reportedly chase the female, gnawing her tail for up to an hour, even as she drags him through water. When she tires, he'll eventually turn her over and the pair will mate.

Shedd's senior aquarist, Jim Watson, said the mother, one of two female lizards at the aquarium's Amazon Rising exhibit, laid eight eggs, producing the three offspring.

There are three adult caimans on display at Shedd: two females called Circle and Horseshoe, after the distinctive shapes on their heads -- and one male, referred to, simply as Male.

The newly hatched caimans will grow to 3 to 6 pounds -- or 38 to 78 times the size at birth. Their gender, now unknown, will become apparent by the color on their heads -- males display red, females more orange, Watson told the Sun-Times.

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