

It's a girl,girl,boy,girl...! Baby boom at two-zoo partnership

July 27 2018, by Janet Mcconnaughey



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a sable antelope, born May 13, is seen at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped when they created the forested paddocks: being fruitful and multiplying. Seven antelope have given birth, at least one more female is pregnant and others may be.

The small herds wander in 3- to 46-acre (1.2- to 19-hectare) swaths of forest, marking a partnership between the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans and San Diego Zoo Global. The zoos' Alliance for Sustainable Wildlife is aimed at preserving endangered species and producing popular species for zoos.

It's housed at the Audubon Nature Institute's Species Survival Center in New Orleans, where the first hoofed animals arrived last spring and summer.

"Because we're closed to the public, it offers a place that's a lot quieter" than zoos, and large enclosures allow more natural, larger herds than most zoos can keep, said Michelle Hatwood, the center's curator.

So far, seven baby antelope have been conceived and born at the center: two sand-colored sable antelope, two shy eland, two striped bongo and a yellow-backed duiker. All but the sable are females. One giraffe has gotten pregnant since arriving, while three arrived pregnant and delivered healthy boys. The four antelope species have 6- or 9-month gestations, but it will be a while before the next giraffe calf—their pregnancies can last up to 15 months.



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a giraffe calf, born May 17, nuzzles with its mother Sue Ellen, 15 years old, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

In addition, another sable [antelope](#) is pregnant and some bongo and eland may be, Hatwood said.

The two older giraffe youngsters, born just a month apart, hang out together, at times so close they almost appear to be one two-headed animal. The youngest is still nursing but sometimes tags after the big kids.

Endangered okapi, the giraffe's only living relative, are the only non-

participants in the baby boom. The female just reached sexual maturity, and there hasn't been a chance to introduce her to either male, said Hatwood.



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a giraffe calf, born May 17, foreground, shows its curiosity for the clicking camera, standing near its mother Sue Ellen, 15 years old, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Since both sable babies are males, they'll grow up black, with tricolor Mohawk manes, long, backward-curving horns, and white faces with a black stripe down the middle. At present, they're a pale tan that blends into undergrowth. The older one's horns were just starting to bud in late June; the younger was still being kept hidden by his mother.

The eland tended to hide out in the woods, their tall pale forms blending into the branches.

The bongos are Eastern bongo, a critically endangered subspecies.



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a giraffe calf, born May 17, tries to get milk from its mother Sue Ellen, 15 years old, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

"For a long time they were extinct in the wild. But because zoos kept them alive, there are currently 100 Eastern bongo in Kenya," Hatwood said.

Where the babies go will depend on the species survival plan the Association of Zoos and Aquariums has for each animal, Hatwood said in an email. Genetics, medical history and behavior are among considerations when the plans' managers decide if an animal will be used for breeding or just for exhibits, and where they'll go.

If any reach breeding age before that decision, they'll be moved to a different paddock to prevent inbreeding, she said.

"We are lucky to have a lot of space and different enclosures that are suitable to house a variety of species, so we can move animals between herds easily," Hatwood wrote.



In this June 20, 2018 photo, Poco, left, born Feb. 13, T'Challa, center, born Jan. 9th, 2018, and Roth, 2, left, are seen at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, T'Challa, born Jan. 9, and Poco, born Feb. 13, foreground, are seen at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, mother giraffe Sue Ellen walks with her unnamed baby, born May 17, from left, Poco, born Feb. 13, and T'Challa, born Jan. 9, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a baby female Bongo, born May 2, nuzzles with her older sister Tabasco, born Dec 11, 2017, right, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, an unnamed baby female bongo, born May 2, stares from under her father Kibo at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a baby female bongo, born May 2, runs at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a baby giraffe licks its nose at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a baby sable antelope, born May 13, nuzzles his mother at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a baby sable antelope, born May 13, cleans itself at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, veterinarian Dr. Priscilla Joyner, center, and two students look at giraffes including a newborn calf, born May 17, at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, a newborn female yellow-backed duiker, less than 12 hours old, lies behind a log where its mother tucked it for hiding at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



In this June 20, 2018 photo, two female eland calves, both born March 1, from two separate mothers but one father, huddle against each other at the Audubon Species Survival Center in New Orleans. About a year after moving into spacious new digs in New Orleans, African animals are doing just what officials from two zoos had hoped: being fruitful and multiplying. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

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