

Press Release

For Immediate Releases

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TORONTO ZOO WELCOMES TWO ORPHANED WOMBATS MILLIE & ARTHUR

Thursday, November 8, 2012, Toronto, Ontario: Today at 10:00 am, the Toronto Zoo was excited to introduce two new Zoo residents, Millie and Arthur, orphaned Southern hairy-nosed wombats (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*). The two wombats were transferred from the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, which serves as a clearinghouse for all imported wombats. Their new arrival is part of an initiative with Zoos South Australia to bring non-releasable southern hairy-nosed wombats to North American zoos in order to ensure a sustainable population. At present, there are only nine of the species living in North American zoos. The Toronto Zoo currently has one mature wombat, Hamlet, who is now thirty years old and will be introduced to Millie and Arthur on exhibit.

Millie and Arthur represent the first importation of this species to North America in several decades. It is hoped that they will breed, adding to the North American population. The Australian population of Southern hairy-nosed wombats is being threatened due to habitat loss, drought, and agricultural practices.

"We are delighted to welcome Millie and Arthur into the Zoo family and look forward to the possibility of infant hairy-nosed wombats to boost the North American captive population," said Dr. William Rapley, Zoo Executive Director of Conservation, Education and Wildlife.

The Southern hairy-nosed wombat is a solidly built animal with short but powerful legs, a robust head, and narrow, pointed ears. They have long claws which are useful for digging their complex underground tunnel systems. These tunnels can be as long as a tennis court and can have up to twenty three entrances. The most social of the three wombat species, Southern hairy-nosed wombats still like to keep to themselves. Even though between six and ten wombats may live in one tunnel system, they rarely interact with one another. They are found in the semi-arid grasslands and woodlands of southeastern Australia, Southern South Australia and southwestern New South Wales.

Wombats are fascinating creatures and we are excited to welcome Millie and Arthur to their new home in the Australasia Pavilion.

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