FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WWW.SFZOO.ORG

CONTACT:
Lora LaMarca
Office Phone: 415.753.7081

Gwendolyn Tornatore
Office Phone: 415.753.7201 x7082
Cell Phone: 415.734.8780

***News Release***

SAN FRANCISCO ZOO SEES FIRST NEW BABY KOALA IN A DECADE
Media and Public Debut on March 10, 2011

SAN FRANCISCO (March 3, 2011) – The San Francisco Zoological Society is proud to announce the birth of a female Queensland, koala (joey). This is the first koala birth at the Zoo since 2000 and the new joey began to emerge from her pouch in January. She will make her first public debut next week.

San Francisco zookeepers confirmed the birth during a pouch check in December and caught their first glimpse of the bean-sized joey in mid-January. A small hand appeared and over the next few months, little by little, she slowly made her way out of the pouch. It wasn’t until February that the joey made it all the way out and onto her mother’s back. She is now holding on strong and preparing for her big day.

The birth is part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP), which strives to manage and conserve species from around the world. The birth mother, Zakary, is on loan from the San Diego Zoo and has been part of the San Francisco Zoo family since 2003. Travis Jr. is the father of the new joey and also comes from San Diego. He arrived in August of 2009 and is here on a breeding recommendation through the AZA SSP.

Koalas are marsupials, “pouched animals,” which means the fetus is undeveloped at birth. Gestation for a baby koala is approximately 35 days and they must find their way into their mother’s pouch and attach to one of two teats. There, they remain hidden for six months before slowly making their way out to see the world. They will start to eat small amounts of “pap” (mother’s stool), which helps prepare their digestive system for the fibrous eucalyptus leaves that make up their entire diet. Koalas seldom drink water as eucalyptus leaves are made up of 50 percent water.

The San Francisco Zoo will hold a media press event next week. Times and details will be sent as soon as possible, but we are tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 10.

###
About the San Francisco Zoo
Encompassing 100 acres, the historic San Francisco Zoo is Northern California’s largest zoological park. The Zoo is home to exotic and rescued animals from all over the world and is located across from the Pacific Ocean. The African Savanna offers a multi-species landscape with giraffes, zebras, kudu, ostriches and more. Go nose to nose with famed grizzly sisters Kachina and Kiona at Grizzly Gulch; watch lemurs leap through the largest outdoor lemur habitat in the country; visit Penguin Island; marvel at our troop of gorillas; and feed farm animals in the popular Children’s Zoo. Take rides on one of the world’s only old-fashioned miniature steam trains and the historic Dentzel Carousel. The Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is located at 1 Zoo Road, San Francisco (415) 753-7080. Visit www.sfzoo.org for more information.