Oakland Zoo Bids Bittersweet Farewell to Nikko the Gibbon, to Create ‘Blended’ Family at Santa Barbara Zoo

*White-handed gibbons are very social and monogamous - known to mate for life - and the popular Nikko, aged a mature 35 years, has been mate-less for almost a year. While he will be sorely missed at Oakland Zoo, zookeepers are confident he will be happier socially with his new ‘blended gibbon family’ at Santa Barbara Zoo.*

OAKLAND, Calif. (PRWEB) November 21, 2018 -- After 32 years at Oakland Zoo, zookeepers made the tough decision - in the best interest of Nikko’s welfare in terms of primate-to-primate social interaction - to transfer him to Santa Barbara Zoo next week. There, both Oakland Zoo and Santa Barbara Zoo staff are hopeful he will quickly bond with two of their White-handed gibbons, Jasmine (aged 40) and her adopted daughter, Jari (age 4). The move is intended be permanent, depending on Nikko's transition.

“Nikko has been beloved for his sweet, gentle nature for the 32 years he’s been with us at Oakland Zoo. The decision to move him was not made lightly – there are concerns about his ability to adjust to a new place, his ability to get along with not just one other gibbon but two, and also his age,” said Andrea Dougall, Zoological Manager at Oakland Zoo. “We won’t have answers to the first two concerns for a little while but we are optimistic that he will do well in the new setting and believe that since he still has many years ahead of him, it is worth the risk to make sure that those years are deeply enriching. We are incredibly sad to see him go, but we want to give him the chance to live his best gibbon life - and ultimately that means living with others of his species.”

Often seen and heard swinging in his habitat's trees and singing every morning, as gibbons are known to do, zookeepers noticed Nikko has been increasingly quiet in recent months. This came as no surprise as gibbons are known to sign 'duets' together in the mornings, and Nikko has been without a mate since her passing in January of this year. Since then, Oakland Zoo had been in search of a potential mate for Nikko here at Oakland Zoo, but the search was unsuccessful and eventually the opportunity for Nikko to move to Santa Barbara Zoo surfaced.

At Santa Barbara Zoo, Nikko will be slowly introduced to Jasmine, age 40, and Jari, an adolescent female, age 4. Jari, originally born at Jackson Zoo and rejected by her birth mother, was adopted by Jasmine as a surrogate mother. The two are very closely bonded and expected to be highly compatible with Nikko’s playful and outgoing personality.

Oakland Zoo zookeepers will accompany Nikko to Santa Barbara, making the drive on November 27th. Once there, they will monitor Nikko closely in his transition to the new surroundings, along with Santa Barbara Zoo’s animal care team. All three gibbons will be closely monitored in the coming weeks during introductions.

Back at Oakland Zoo, the gibbon habitat known as “Gibbon Island” will be kept temporarily vacant if it is determined that Nikko is not adjusting as expected at Santa Barbara Zoo and should be brought back to Oakland Zoo. This determination will be made within 2-3 weeks of Nikko's arrival there on November 27th.

Updates on Nikko will be given on the Zoo's social media channels, using the hashtag #dearnikko.
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