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VEGGIE CAKE, TONS OF FUN, OUR YOUNG GORILLA IS TURNING ONE!

JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND GARDENS' FIRST GORILLA INFANT CELEBRATES FIRST BIRTHDAY

February 2, 2016 – *Jacksonville, FL* – George, the first-ever Western Lowland gorilla infant at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG), will celebrate his 1st birthday on Saturday, February 6th.

Guests are invited to send George presents for his 1st birthday, too! His birthday list can be found at www.jacksonvillezoo.org/wishlist. Items including bungee balls, blocks, special gorilla-proof mirrors and even bubble bath are on his list.

The gorilla caretakers at JZG have exciting things scheduled for his birthday celebration. Decorations on exhibit, wrapped gifts, special treats and a gorilla-healthy birthday cake for the one-year-old (if the adults let him have any) are planned for 10 a.m. and Zoo guests are invited to join.

At this age, George loves to play with Patty, JZG's second gorilla infant, and the young Guereza colobus monkeys who share his exhibit. Socialization with other gorillas is a key component in developing skills for adulthood. He also loves jumping on his mother, Bulera, running around and beating on his chest, just like his father, Rumpel.

George was the first successful gorilla birth in JZG's history and what a joyous day it was. The birth of a Western Lowland gorilla is vital for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) breeding program, and his first birthday marks an important milestone in his growth and for the entire gorilla population. They face many threats in the wild including hunting, deforestation, illegal mining and the pet trade. To help curb the species decline, JZG supports the Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center (GRACE), an African-based facility where orphaned lowland gorillas receive the care they need and also learn the skills for reintroduction back in to the wild.

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens currently has three male gorillas – Lash (age 39), Rumpel (age 31) and George (age 1), and four female gorillas – Bulera (age 27), Madini (age 20), Kumbuka (age 19) and Patty (age 9 months).

Videos of George:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8hwx5nj8n9o3vix/AACnr_-J6XMRN4-Zk_3e58Mda?dl=0

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.