



*For Immediate Release*

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**TINY ENDANGERED MONKEY COULD DELIVER ANYTIME AT ZOO ATLANTA**

**ATLANTA – February 26, 2009** - She seems too small to even be fully grown, much less a mother, but her diminutive size can be deceiving. Not only is Zoo Atlanta's tiniest monkey mom – Spree, a 9-year-old golden lion tamarin – an adult, but she is also an experienced parent. And to the certain delight of springtime visitors to the Zoo, the itsy-bitsy primate will soon be a mother again.

Spree could deliver anytime in the next few weeks, according to Zoo Atlanta's Animal Management and Veterinary Teams, and it's likely the stork will make a double visit. Twin births are extremely common in golden lion tamarins, and such has largely been the case for Spree and her mate, 8-year-old Bençao, who have produced seven previous offspring.

Native to coastal areas of southeastern Brazil, golden lion tamarins are similar in size to squirrels, with adults measuring six to 10 inches long and weighing 17 to 24 ounces. Named for the vivid orange manes framing their faces, the primarily arboreal primates live in family groups composed of a breeding pair and their offspring. Adult males play key roles in the rearing of the young, which weigh just over 2 ounces at birth.

Poster creatures for the role of zoos in preserving endangered wildlife, golden lion tamarins are an example of a species brought back from the brink of extinction by collaborative conservation efforts. Zoo Atlanta has been an active supporter of the Golden Lion Tamarin Conservation Program since 1992. Conceived with the goal of conserving the species and its native habitats in Brazil, the program originally focused on enabling golden lion tamarins living in zoological settings to learn the necessary climbing, foraging and survival skills needed for eventual introduction to the wild. At the heart of the project was "Boot Camp," a seasonal program permitting the tamarins to free-range in the trees outside their indoor habitat, wearing only radio collars enabling staff trackers to monitor their locations. As a result, a number of Zoo Atlanta-born monkeys have been successfully transferred to life in the wild. Members and descendants of the last re-introduced group from the Zoo, known as the Olympia Group, have flourished there since 1998.

The wild golden lion tamarin population, which stood at an alarming 250 animals in the early 1980s, now numbers more than 1,600. The Golden Lion Tamarin Conservation Program proved so successful, in fact, that habitats have reached carrying capacity, and zoos are no longer re-introducing new animals. Zoo

Atlanta continues to support efforts to connect fragmented forest territories in Brazil to promote expansion of existing golden lion tamarin habitat.

Spree's impending delivery will be the perfect inaugural event for Zoo Atlanta's golden lion tamarin free-ranging season, which begins April 30, 2009. Zoo Atlanta is one of only two in the U.S. currently offering free-ranging programs for the species. While the program's focus is not now aimed at re-introductory efforts, Zoo Members and guests will have exclusive opportunities to observe Spree's and Bençao's family behaving exactly as they would in the Brazilian coastal forest, in one of the highly naturalistic settings that have become Zoo Atlanta's signature.

#### **About Zoo Atlanta**

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and outdoor family fun. From well-known native wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 1,000 animals from around the world. Zoo Atlanta is the proud home of Xi Lan, the only giant panda cub born in the U.S. in 2008, and the future home of the Southeast's largest parakeet aviary, an immersive experience opening in April 2009. Other highlights include one of the nation's most recognized collections of great apes and a global center of excellence for the care and reproduction of vanishing amphibians and reptiles. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or go to [zooatlanta.org](http://zooatlanta.org).

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