



## MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2010

### WILLIE B. CONSERVATION CENTER CLOSED AT ZOO ATLANTA

On Sunday, June 13, 2010, Taz, a 20-year-old male silver back gorilla at Zoo Atlanta, charged a glass barrier at the Willie B. Conservation Center resulting in cracks in the panel. Taz exhibited this behavior most likely because he had undergone a routine medical exam the previous day and was concerned about the presence of veterinarians in the viewing area. "Gorillas often associate their veterinarians as the ones giving vaccinations and can react nervously – much like many people do with a visit to the doctor or dentist," said Dr. Hayley Murphy, Director of Veterinary Services.

The animal management and veterinary teams immediately initiated safety procedures by quickly evacuating the Willie B. Conservation Center and bringing the gorilla group (including Taz) into their overnight holding area. "World-class animal care and the safety of our guests and staff are of the utmost importance at Zoo Atlanta," said Raymond King, Zoo Atlanta President and CEO. "We have many drills to prepare Zoo staff for various incidents and that preparation allowed us to safely return Taz to his secure holding area with no injuries to either the public or to the animal."

The gorilla exhibit is designed with a moat barrier with electric wire between the yard and the public viewing areas. The Willie B. Conservation Center where the incident occurred has several glass viewing panels that allow guests an unobstructed view. Neither guests nor staff was ever in any danger.

Taz was born at Zoo Atlanta in July 1989 and is the son of Shamba (age 51) and Rann (deceased). His surviving offspring are Kali and Kazi (age 4, by Kuchi); Macy Baby (age 4, by Kudzoo); Gunther (age 3, by Sukari); and a newborn male infant (3 weeks old, by Kuchi).

The Willie B. Conservation Center will remain closed until repairs have been completed.

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**ABOUT:** **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. An all-new carnivore complex, featuring the exciting debut of two new sun bears, open now. Zoo Atlanta is also the proud home of Xi Lan, the only giant panda

cub born in the U.S. in 2008, and the popular Boundless Budgies: A Parakeet Adventure, the largest interactive experience of its kind in the Southeast. Other highlights include the nation's largest collection 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 visit [zooatlanta.org](http://zooatlanta.org).

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