



**For Immediate Release: August 4, 2008**  
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## **Nashville Zoo Welcomes First Rhinoceros Hornbill Chick**

Nashville Zoo welcomes its first rhinoceros hornbill chick. Avian Curator Joe deGraauw and his team are hand-rearing the chick that was born May 30.

Nashville Zoo's rhino hornbill chick is the first in the nation to be artificially incubated and hand-reared. Just 12 days after the mother laid the egg, deGraauw and Nashville Zoo's avian keepers took over incubation to ensure the egg's survival.

deGraauw and his team are keeping the chick healthy with regular feedings four times a day, which include bits of fruit and crickets. "The term 'eats like a bird' doesn't really apply here," said deGraauw. "This chick eats 50 percent of its body weight a day."

As the captive population of rhino hornbills ages, fewer chicks are born, and as a result, the captive population becomes less diverse. Nashville Zoo's chick is a genetically valuable contribution to the population and the Species Survival Plan (SSP). When mature, depending on recommendations from the SSP coordinator, the chick will either join Nashville Zoo's rhino hornbill on exhibit along Bamboo Trail or find a more suitable mate at another zoo.

Rhinoceros hornbills are native to southeastern Asia. The species is best known for the large, banana-shaped casque perched atop their beaks, which makes them easily recognizable. The casque is most likely used to make the bird's call more resonating for mating and locating family members. Rhino hornbills are under no imminent threat, but habitat alteration could harm populations in the future.

Nashville Zoo is accredited by the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums, assuring the highest standards of animal care and husbandry. The Zoo is a non-profit organization located at 3777 Nolensville Road and is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The mission of Nashville Zoo is to inspire a culture of understanding and discovery of our natural world through conservation, innovation and leadership. For more information about Nashville Zoo, please call 615-833-1534 or visit our website at [www.nashvillezoo.org](http://www.nashvillezoo.org).



Photo by Charlie Doggett

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