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New at the Zoo: Bennett's Wallabies in Critter Encounters

Three Bennett's wallabies are the new tenants of Nashville Zoo's Critter Encounters area. One male and two female marsupials will be in an area of the petting zoo designed for limited contact with Zoo guests.

"Our guests will be able to spot the male easily because he is albino," says Connie Philipp, the Zoo's Director of Animal Collections referring to the male's all white fur. "The females have each had joeys before, and we are looking forward to possible offspring in the future."

Joeys (baby wallabies) are born after a gestation period of about 30 days and are not fully formed. After birth, they climb into the mother's pouch where they suckle for several months. Joeys may not appear from the pouch for up to six months after birth.

Bennett's wallabies (*Macropus rufogriseus*) are smaller relatives to the kangaroo, and are native to southeastern portions of Australia including Tasmania. They are also known as red-necked wallabies due to the reddish fur on the back of the neck and shoulders. Wallabies are crepuscular meaning they are most active at twilight and dusk. Bennett's wallabies have an average life span of 20 years and their conservation status is stable. Guests can learn more about wallabies and how Nashville zookeepers care for them by attending keeper talks offered throughout the week. Keeper Talk information can be found on the Zoo's website at www.nashvillezoo.org.

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 nonprofit 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, call 615-833-1534 or visit www.nashvillezoo.org.

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