



For Immediate Release: July 22, 2010  
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## Baby Noah and Parents Make Their Public Debut

Three Baird's tapirs are now on exhibit at Nashville Zoo. Guests can see the tapir family at their new home in the former bongo habitat near Bamboo Trail.

"We are all very excited to have Baird's tapirs in our animal collection and on view for the public," said Rick Schwartz, Zoo President. "Tapirs are endangered and Nashville Zoo is taking steps to help secure their future."

Houston and her mate Romeo arrived at Nashville Zoo from Central America in 2008 as part of a collaborative breeding program with the Houston Zoo to introduce a new genetic line, called 'founder animals' into the United States tapir population. Last year, Zoo staff confirmed Houston's pregnancy, and after a 16-month gestation period she gave birth to Noah on May 2 during Nashville's severe flooding. Noah's birth is the first offspring from founder animals in more than 30 years and helps in sustaining a genetically diverse population of tapirs.

Three species, Brazilian tapirs, Mountain tapirs and Baird's tapirs, are found in South and Central America. A fourth species, the Malayan tapir, is found in Asia. Tapirs are sometimes referred to as 'living fossils' since they have remained relatively unchanged for more than 23 million years. Though an adult Baird's tapir's coat is solid brown, baby tapirs like Noah are born with unique markings similar to a brown and white striped watermelon. Juvenile tapirs will lose these markings after about a year.

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](http://www.nashvillezoo.org).

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