

Date: February 12, 2007

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## Rocco the Red Panda Newest Jackson Zoo Addition

Rocco the Red Panda has been scampering about marking his new territory as his exhibit-mate, Dana, patiently observes the new chap in her life for the past week. The Jackson Zoo became 3 1/2- year-old Rocco's new home this month after arriving from the Lincoln Children's Zoo of Nebraska.

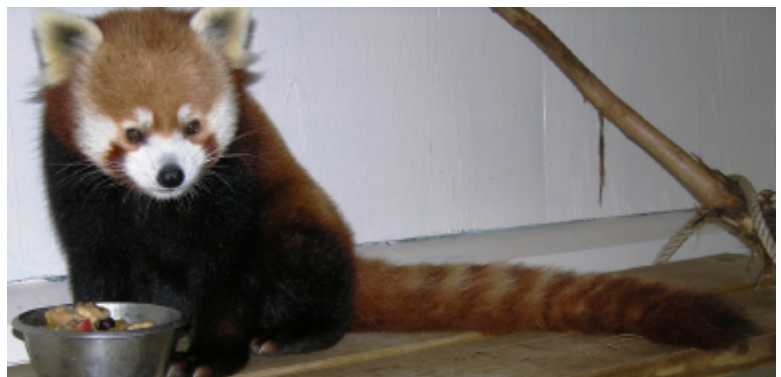
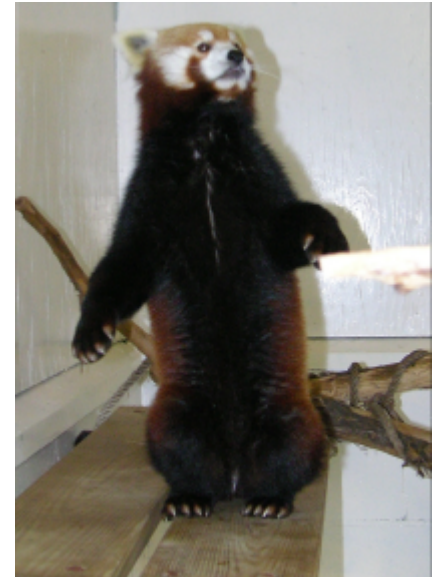
"We are so pleased to have Rocco as part of our Zoo family," said Zoo Director Beth Poff. "Red Pandas are such beautiful animals and remain among visitors' favorites."

Red pandas are found in the mountains in China. They have fully furred feet for their cold homeland and a low energy diet. They can weigh up to 11 pounds and their tails are 11-19 inches long.

Red pandas favor remote, high altitude bamboo forests and are excellent tree climbers. The red panda is crepuscular which means that it is active at dawn and dusk. They mark their territories by waddling back and forth over objects and conserve energy in very cold weather by curling up into a ball. In hot weather, they stretch their bodies along branches with their legs dangling over each side. Red pandas like to eat bamboo shoots and leaves, grasses, roots, fruits and acorns. They may also eat insects, eggs, young birds and small rodents.

Red pandas are endangered. Their natural habitats are dwindling because of deforestation for timber, fuel and agricultural land. They are also poached for pets and for their fur.

The Jackson Zoo cooperates in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for Red Pandas and 22 other animal species. The SSP is a cooperative breeding and conservation program overseen by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA members agree to manage and exchange animals in the best interests of the species. Currently, 107 SSPs covering 161 individual species are administered by the AZA



**Photos: Above- Rocco jumps up on his hind legs to reach a branch. Below - Rocco prepares to eat dinner.**

The Jackson Zoo is dedicated to its mission, to provide visitors with a quality recreational and educational environment dedicated to wildlife care and conservation. The new 4-plus acre Wilderness Mississippi was opened in 2006, and last year also marked the unveiling of a new entryway off Capitol Street and renovation of the orangutan exhibit. This year construction of a state-of-the-art Mississippi Discovery Center will begin. The Zoo also plans to make improvements to the elephant, tiger and leopard exhibits.

***Red Panda***  
***Page 2 of 2***

The Jackson Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The AZA is America's leading accrediting organization that sets rigorous, professional standards for zoos and aquariums. The AZA is building North America's largest wildlife conservation movement by engaging and inspiring the 143 million annual visitors to its member institutions and their communities to care about and take action to help protect wildlife.

The Jackson Zoo is open year round, except Christmas and New Years Day. The Zoo's hours are 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Sunday.

For more information about Jackson Zoo, please call 601-352-2581 or visit [www.jacksonzoo.org](http://www.jacksonzoo.org).

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