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A PHOTO ESSAY ABOUT THE SUPERSTARS HANGING OUT AT FRANKLIN PARK ZOO

# LET'S GO TO THE ZOO

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If you think really hard about it, it's kind of nuts that there are hundreds of giant wild animals that live right in the middle of the city. But that's exactly what's happening with the Franklin Park Zoo, a 72-acre section of Boston that's home to everything from scarlet ibises to white tigers. And because Zoo New England (the nonprofit that runs Franklin Park and its sister, the Stone Zoo) is really nice to us and everybody loves cute animals, we got up early one day and hopped over to Franklin Park to take some pictures while singing that Simon & Garfunkel song. Prepare for cute overload in 3 ... 2 ...

Cleo the pygmy hippo lives in the zoo's Tropical Forest section. Yes, she's as cute as she sounds. Lookit her lil' face! ❤️

ZOO FACTS: • 680,000 VISITORS COME TO FRANKLIN PARK AND STONE ZOO EACH YEAR



**Keepers Christina and Laura** have to wear masks when preparing food for the gorillas, who are so closely related to humans that we can exchange common colds. Franklin Park's eight gorillas eat romaine and maple leaves, which they have to get out of various feeders (like the ones above) in a process called "enrichment," that stimulates the skills they'd learn in the wild.



**Fenris, the four year-old barn owl**, prepares to get weighed by Joe the keeper. Barn owls can live up to 20 years, and Fenris's dad is actually on display in the barn exhibit. But while Fenris is snuggly and gets weighed every day, the daddy owl doesn't like being touched. (He came in at 445 grams, by the way, which is pretty normal).



▶ **When Cleo** gets annoyed of her griffon vulture roommates, she goes underwater. Part of the reason the word Hippopotamus is derived from the Greek "river horse."



▶ **The giant anteater** is a threatened species, but we have to save it because it is my favorite animal and it has a nose-mouth. It eats ants, obviously.



▶ **Franklin Park** has a whole giraffe family. Beau is the male, Jana is the female, and their baby is Henrietta, born in November of 2012.



▶ **Many of the birds** in the zoo's Tropical Forest habitat are free-flying, and can go into whichever exhibit they feel like checking out.

• THE YOUNGEST GORILLA IS KAMBIRI, WHO IS 2. • THE OLDEST GORILLA IS GIGI, WHO IS 41.



▶ **Red pandas** look like a mix of a raccoon, a panda, a cat, and our wildest animal snuggling dreams. But they're kind of a taxonomical nightmare and currently belong to their own family, Aluridae.



▶ **Franklin Park** participates in Species Survival Plan, an advanced breeding program that promotes genetic diversity in captivity animals. Twin baby lemurs were born this year as part of it.



▶ **The African Pygmy Falcons** are the teeny tiniest birds of prey. They ferociously tore their beaks into the flesh of the full mice that they were fed. It was so cute!



▶ **The capybara** is the world's largest rodent. This one was particularly camera-shy and hid throughout our entire stay.



**The keepers mentioned that when the gorillas** are released into their exhibit each day, one of their favorite activities is checking out the people who are there to see them. Gigi, the oldest gorilla at 41, is particularly fascinated by kids in strollers. She seemed pretty unamused by the keepers, though.



**Carys is a one-year and two-month-old red panda** who came from another zoo. Keeper Melissa has been working with her since Carys was eight months old, in order to teach enrichment commands like "up" and "touch." These prepare animals for stress-free veterinary care, as a healthier alternative to sedation. "I'm running out of ideas for her because she's learning so fast," Melissa told us.

- THE FRANKLIN PARK ZOO SITS ON 72 ACRES. • MASAI GIRAFFE TONGUES ARE 18" LONG.
- OUT OF THE ZOO'S 8 GORILLAS, THREE ARE MALES, AND ONLY ONE, KIT, IS THE SILVERSACK.