

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 27, 2007

### **STINGRAY BAY BABIES**

FRESNO, Ca. – Fresno Chaffee Zoo animal care staff were thrilled to discover three newborn Southern stingrays (*Dasyatis americana*) this morning. At birth, the young stingrays are about six inches wide, are thin in proportion to the adult, and come out folded like a newspaper. The young pups must immediately fend for themselves. Although visitors to Stingray Bay: A Touching Experience are encouraged to touch and even feed the adult rays, a section of the 14,500 gallon pool has been enclosed to protect the young pups and provide them an opportunity to feed on small brine shrimp.

“This has been an exciting spring at the Zoo filled with lots of new arrivals” said CEO/Director Lewis Greene. “The numerous significant births and hatchings are a testament to the dedication and expertise of our animal care staff.”

Southern stingray babies are born after a gestation period of four to 11 months meaning the mother was pregnant when she arrived at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. Litter sizes generally range from two to ten stingray pups. The barbs on the young stingrays are soft and flexible and the adult’s barbs are clipped much like human fingernails, and pose no threat to visitors. The female adult southern stingray can reach up to six feet across and weigh up to 150 pounds. The smaller males grow up to two and a half feet.

With the addition of the three new pups, Stingray Bay: A Touching Experience currently houses six southern stingrays and 16 of the smaller cownose rays. Stingray Bay opened March 31 and runs through September 30, 2007. Admission to Stingray Bay is \$1 with regular Zoo admission. Fresno Chaffee Zoo members and children under 2 years of age are free.

#### **STINGRAY FACTS:**

- Stingrays, also called rays, are fish most closely related to sharks.
- A ray’s skeleton, like a shark’s, is made of cartilage rather than bone.
- The stingray’s eyes are on the top of their flattened bodies and the mouth, nostrils and gill slits are on the underbelly.
- There are about 470 species of rays in shallow coastal waters throughout the world and some freshwater rivers.
- Stingrays swim with a flying motion by undulating their body like a wave or by flapping their huge pectoral fins or “wings”.
- A ray’s wingspan, or disc-size, can range from about 12 inches (yellow stingrays) to over 20 feet (manta rays).
- Most rays eat crustaceans, clams, oysters, and some fish. Manta rays feed on plankton.
- Rays are generally inactive, staying partially buried in sand and camouflaged from predatory sharks and larger rays by their coloration.

- Rays are docile creatures; their stinger is used only for defense and consists of a razor-sharp, barbed or serrated cartilaginous spine which grows from the ray's whip-like tail similar to a fingernail.
- Some rays are viviparous, which means they bear their young live, while others lay eggs.
- Cownose rays are gregarious and make long migrations through the Atlantic Ocean.
- Southern stingrays can span 6 feet and weight up to 150 pounds.