



September 19, 2007

## NEWS RELEASE

- for immediate release -

### ***Vancouver Island Marmots being saved from extinction – 20 pups born at the Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre this year***

The Calgary Zoo is excited to announce that this year there were a record number of births of Vancouver Island marmots at the Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre with a total of five litters and 20 pups. In September, 22 Vancouver Island marmots will be sent to Mount Washington for reintroduction to the wild from Calgary alone.

“This program is an exciting example of what can be accomplished by a network of professional zoos, government departments, organizations and private citizens when they join together their expertise and energy,” says Dr. Clément Lanthier, Interim President and CEO of the Calgary Zoo. “A species has been brought back from the brink of extinction in the past 10 years.”

The Vancouver Island marmot recovery program is a unique partnership between the four captive breeding facilities including the Calgary Zoo, Toronto Zoo, Mountain View Conservation & Breeding Centre and the Mount Washington Captive Breeding Centre as well as the British Columbia and federal governments, landowners Island Timberlands, TimberWest and Mount Washington Alpine Resort, plus more than 11,000 members of the public who have contributed to the Marmot Recovery Foundation.

“The Vancouver Island marmots are Canada’s most endangered mammal, but with continued successful breeding years ahead, their future looks very hopeful,” says Bob Peel, Curator for the Calgary Zoo’s Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre. “The birth of 20 pups at our facility surpasses our expectations.”

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Media are invited to an event at the Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre to watch the zoo veterinarians process this year's pups in preparation for their move to Mount Washington and other facilities. This is a unique photo opportunity for a behind-the-scenes peek at the teamwork required to save this species from extinction.

**WHEN:** Friday, September 21, 2007  
**TIME:** 10:30 a.m.  
**WHERE:** The Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre or the "Ranch"  
(See map attached.)

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*Please note Laurie Herron is away attending a conference.*

## BACKGROUNDER - VANCOUVER ISLAND MARMOTS



Vancouver Island marmots (*Marmota vancouverensis*) represent a distinct species that is found only on Vancouver Island. In 2003 there were fewer than 100 Vancouver Island marmots left in the world, but today through the united efforts of the Marmot Recovery Foundation and Canada's four breeding facilities the total population in the wild and in captivity including 2007 births will be between 245 and 265. The ultimate goal of the recovery program is to have 400 to 600 animals surviving in three populations on Vancouver Island.

The Marmot Recovery Foundation oversees captive breeding programs located at the Calgary Zoo's Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre, Toronto Zoo, Mountain View Conservation Centre in Langley, B.C., and Mount Washington on Vancouver Island.

The Marmot Recovery Foundation reports in 2007 there were 59 pups born in 18 litters at the four breeding facilities: Toronto Zoo – four litters; Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre, Calgary – five litters; Mountain View Conservation Centre, Langley – three litters; and Mount Washington – six litters. While the captive breeding program continues to do well, the numbers in the wild remain a challenge with an estimated 68 animals and only two litters of two pups each born in the wild this year.

There are 14 recognizable marmot species in the world, most of which live in mountainous environments. Only four species of marmots inhabit Canada – the whistling or hoary marmot that lives throughout the Rocky and Coast Range mountains and as far north as Alaska; the Yellow-bellied marmot in California and southern British Columbia; the woodchuck of "Groundhog Day" fame has the largest distribution of all the North American species, being found coast to coast; and the Vancouver Island marmot.

Vancouver Island marmots are medium-sized rodents about the size of a large domestic cat. Their predominant natural habitat is alpine meadows, though some also make use of fresh clearcuts. Their diet consists of plants, seeds, and roots. Marmots hibernate over the winter and normally have litters of one to five pups in early spring. They are most vulnerable to predators such as eagles, wolves and coyotes.

See [www.marmots.org](http://www.marmots.org) for more information.

Marmot Recovery Foundation:

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