

NEWS FROM...



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RE: WHITE ALLIGATOR TO SPEND SEASON IN PALM BEACH

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Friday, November 30, 2007, West Palm Beach – The snow white alligator known as “Mardi” will be spending the entire season at the Palm Beach Zoo. Because “Mardi” is one of only ten known white alligators in existence, this presents a rare opportunity for seasonal residents and visitors to see this unusual animal. Originally scheduled to be returned to his home at the Audubon Nature Institute in New Orleans at the end of September, his stay was first extended to the end of October. Now, at the request of officials in New Orleans, he will not be returned until spring. This will give the Nature Institute the opportunity to complete repairs and renovations on his habitat there. “Mardi” was brought to Palm Beach County through the generosity of the FPL Sunshine Energy Program. He is a rare, snow white, blue-eyed alligator, nine feet in length and weighing over 230 pounds, and gets his name from “Mardi Gras”, the party that New Orleans is known for.

All known white alligators are male. Eastern mythology holds the white beasts to be symbols of extraordinary good luck. No one knows for certain why these alligators were born white. In fact they are not, as most people assume, albinos. Their eyes are brilliant blue rather than the characteristic red of albino animals. Since their lack of skin pigmentation deprives them of natural camouflage, their ability to survive in the wild is severely limited. One theory is that many white alligators may have been born throughout the centuries but were too vulnerable to predators within their environment, and to the sun, to survive. Many people compare the look of their hide to “white chocolate.”



In 1987, seventeen white hatchlings were rescued by workers from The Louisiana Land and Exploration Company who spotted the unusual babies minutes after they hatched and brought them to be raised at the Aquarium of the Americas and the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans. The remaining ten white alligators are now exhibited in zoos and aquariums throughout the country.

The Palm Beach Zoo is a non profit zoological organization located at Dreher Park in West Palm Beach. Its mission is to provide an open-air classroom of living creatures to foster awareness, appreciation and respect for the natural world. The zoo is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Support for the zoo is also provided by the Palm Beach County Tourist Development Council, the Board of County Commissioners and the Palm Beach County Cultural Council.

Palm Beach Zoo is located at 1301 Summit Boulevard, just east of I-95 between Southern and Forest Hill Boulevard. Admission: Regular \$12.95, Seniors 60+ \$9.95, Children 3-12 \$8.95, under 3 years and Zoo Members are free. The zoo is open every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.) For more information visit www.palmbeachzoo.org.

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**Palm Beach Zoo • 1301 Summit Boulevard, West Palm Beach FL, 33405-3098
(561) 547-WILD • www.palmbeachzoo.org**