

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**6<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

## **A Madagascan Valentine's Day**

### **Kirindy the Madagascan Giant Jumping Rat finds new love**

Love may be in the air at the Isle of Wight Zoo for Madagascan giant jumping rat Kirindy.

Kirindy has been single for two years after her mate Menabe passed away, and staff at the zoo hope the time is right for her to find love again. At the beginning of February she was introduced to a new potential mate, and signs are good that the pair will fall for each other.

A lot is at stake, as there is a good chance that they will breed. The jumping rats are only found wild in Madagascar, where their forests are being destroyed, and they are officially classed as an endangered species. Scientists have predicted their extinction within twenty years if the habitat loss continues, and so it is vital that zoos maintain a population outside Madagascar.

The breeding programme for the jumping rats is coordinated by the Durrell World Conservation Trust, and is spread across seventeen institutions internationally. They breed well in zoos, and Kirindy has been a mother before, so hopes are high for a baby!

The jumping rats are large rodents, approximately the size of a rabbit, and in times of stress they are able to jump up to three feet in the air to avoid predators. They are shy animals with very sweet natures, and so far the new couple have responded well to each other. During the day they have been snuggling up together in their nest box, and when out and about in their enclosure they can often be seen together.

Education and Conservation Officer Tracy Dove said "Giant jumping rats are among the most endangered mammals on the island of Madagascar. We are proud to be involved with breeding programmes for these and several other endangered Madagascan animals. The IOW Zoo is also an active member of the conservation organisation 'Madagascar Fauna Group' and we currently fund a field project at Ivoloina that is working to reduce habitat loss."



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Notes to editors:

Isle of Wight Zoo aims to promote the survival of endangered species through first class educational and recreational experiences, exemplary animal management, conservation and research. The Zoo is best known for its work with exotic cats. As a centre for surplus or rescued big cats, all have come to the Zoo at different stages of their lives and from a variety of backgrounds. The Zoo strives to encourage the social development and natural behaviour of each cat in their care. Every species of big cat residing at the Zoo is currently under considerable threat in its natural habitat. Isle of Wight Zoo is currently home to 9 tigers, 4 lions and 2 jaguars.