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GIRAFFE FEEDING STATION A FIRST FOR N.C. ZOO

ASHEBORO--Imagine climbing a wooden ramp to a platform nestled in tree branches 16 feet above the ground. A reticulated giraffe peers over the edge of the platform, its liquid brown eyes staring at yours. You hold out a branch, it nudges forward and begins eating right out of your hand!

That's the experience awaiting visitors to the North Carolina Zoo with the June 6 opening of the Acacia Station, a feeding platform for the zoo's five giraffes. Located at the northern edge of the Forest Glade, a three-acre habitat for zebras and ostriches as well as giraffes, Acacia Station is a first for the N.C. Zoo, lifting visitors into the trees to greet the giraffes while offering a bird's eye view of their habitat.

The \$200,000 feeding station was made possible through a gift to the N.C. Zoological Society, the zoo's non-profit fundraising organization for the zoo. It includes a 400-square-foot treated wood platform that gives visitors an exciting new view of the Forest Edge along with the opportunity to purchase fresh "browse" to feed the giraffes.

"This will be an intimate, educational and unique experience in the state of North Carolina," observed Zoo Curator of Mammals Terry Webb.

In addition to the new feeding station, visitors will see a number of new "faces" in the giraffe collection this year. The herd grew to five members over a seven-month period beginning last September when two young males arrived—"Turbo" from the Denver Zoo and "Tafari" from the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo.

In March two more youngsters, a 10-month-old male and a 10-month-old female, arrived in Asheboro from the Dickerson Park Zoo and Cheyenne Mountain respectively. Their names, "Jitu" for the male and "Asha" for the female, were selected from among 5,000 entries in a "Name the Giraffes" contest co-sponsored by the zoo, WGHP-TV in High Point and Clear Channel Radio Stations in the Triad.

So along with two other new attractions opening this year—the Simex ! Iwerks 4-D theater and a Honey Bee Exhibit, there are plenty of great new reasons to visit the N.C. Zoo in 2009.

**By Rod Hackney
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