FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Linda Hardwick
VP of Marketing, Communications & Events
lhardwick@phoenixzoo.org
602.663.3254

NUDIST COLONY MOVES INTO THE PHOENIX ZOO

Twenty-four naked mole-rats, including two reigning queens, are ready to bare it all in a brand-new habitat!

PHOENIX (November 9, 2026) – Things are getting a little naked at the Phoenix Zoo and we're not covering it up! The Zoo is welcoming 24 of the world's most unusual residents – naked mole-rats! These nearly hairless, buck-toothed, underground dwelling mammals have moved into a brand-new habitat located in the Zoo's Main Plaza, where guests have an opportunity to get an up-close look at a species that's as fascinating as it is funny looking.

And while these new arrivals may not be winning any beauty contests, they're certainly winning us over with their extraordinary adaptations, unusual social structure and undeniable charm.

"We've welcomed some pretty unusual residents to the Phoenix Zoo over the years, but this might be the first time we've proudly announced the arrival of an entire nudist colony!" said Bert Castro, President and CEO of the Phoenix Zoo. "All kidding aside, these 24 little animals who make up two colonies, both with their own queen, are truly remarkable. From their unusual appearance to their fascinating social structure, they're a wonderful example of just how extraordinary the animal kingdom can be. We can't wait for our guests to meet them, learn about their incredible adaptations and discover that sometimes nature's most fascinating creatures come without fur – or a wardrobe!"

Every colony needs a leader, and these both have their own royalty! Among the two-dozen naked mole-rats at the Zoo are two queens, each reigning over her own colony. Much like bees and ants, naked mole-rats live in highly organized colonies where a single breeding queen rules the roost. The remaining colony members take on different roles, working together to maintain their underground home. This is called a "eusocial" society.

Native to East Africa, naked mole-rats spend nearly their entire lives underground, navigating elaborate tunnel systems using their prominent front teeth to dig. They're also remarkably long-lived for rodents, with some surviving more than 30 years.

Despite their name, naked mole-rats aren't completely naked, and they're not actually moles! They're rodents with a few fine hairs that help them navigate their dark underground world.

The new habitat gives Phoenix Zoo guests a fascinating window into the secret lives of these underground residents. Located in the Zoo's bustling Main Plaza, the habitat introduces guests of all ages to the unusual behaviors, social relationships and incredible adaptations that make naked mole-rats one of nature's most remarkable mammals. Whether you're fascinated by their science, charmed by their personalities or simply curious about what naked mole-rats do all day, there's plenty to discover.

MEDIA MATERIAL: Photos and video are available via this Dropbox link:
https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/j9yjrqmkdmcyazmb5csny/AF7WXfUb1CmzTX3MRTKA6kw?rlkey=2olstfta3x3yqo6ned35m96s0&st=fnetyn07&dl=0
Credit: Phoenix Zoo

About the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation
The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation operates the Phoenix Zoo. The ACNC advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

The Phoenix Zoo is the only zoo in the Valley accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a non-profit zoological park, serving 1.4 million guests annually. The Zoo is home to more than 3,000 animals, many of which are endangered and threatened species. For information on upcoming events, exhibits and activities at the Phoenix Zoo, visit phoenixzoo.org.