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Adopt-a-Lion Program Unveiled at Grand Canyon National Park

Grand Canyon, AZ. – Adopt a plush lion and you can help preserve and protect Grand Canyon wildlife. That is the idea behind the Grand Canyon Association’s new Adopt-a-Lion program.

Launched last week, this program will raise funds for much-needed research into the day-to-day lives and behaviors of animals like humpback chubs, Abert’s squirrels, mountain lions, Grand Canyon rattlesnakes, in fact, into any and all of Grand Canyon’s native species of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians and reptiles. The goal of the program is to support the research necessary to help biologists and park managers better preserve and protect the wildlife that is one of the park’s valuable resources. With a better understanding of unique characteristics like a species’ range, habitat and dietary needs and how that animal interacts with other species and with the Grand Canyon ecosystem, biologists hope to ensure healthy populations of native species in a park environment where people and wildlife can coexist.

For years, wildlife biologists and park supporters dreamed of a program that would raise funds to pay for more wildlife research in Grand Canyon National Park. The 2007 death of Grand Canyon wildlife biologist Eric York, himself a proponent of programs that would increase funding for wildlife research, acted as a catalyst to turn dreams into reality.

The Grand Canyon Association (GCA), with the help of park staff, coalesced the many ideas on how to raise funds into a simple plan to allow visitors to adopt a plush animal toy representative of park wildlife and then donate the net proceeds from the adoptions to wildlife research in the park. The lion was chosen as the mascot for the program in part because of the animal’s significance as a symbol of wilderness and as today’s top predator in the Grand Canyon ecosystem.

Adopting a lion costs only \$25. In return for the investment, **visitors** receive a twelve inch plush lion (“They’re really cute!” has been the universal opinion.), a personalized adoption certificate that will arrive in the mail within four weeks, and the knowledge that more than half of their \$25 “adoption fee” will go to wildlife research programs within Grand Canyon National Park.

Grand Canyon Association Executive Director Susan Schroeder is pleased that visitors are responding so well to the concept. “In 1932, the Grand Canyon Association was created to support scientific research and visitor education within the park. Today, we are also the park’s primary fund-raising partner; and this is one of our first programs designed with fund-raising in mind. We are thrilled by initial public response, and hope that this program will not only continue to raise much-needed funds well into the future, but will act as inspiration for future fund raising efforts.”

“Prospective parents” may adopt a lion at any GCA outlet within Grand Canyon National Park or on the Association’s web site at www.grandcanyon.org/lion.asp.

For more information on the Adopt-a-Lion program, please contact GCA Director of Public Relations and Marketing, Helen Thompson, at 928-638-7033.

To learn more about the Grand Canyon Association or to adopt your own lion, please visit their web site at www.grandcanyon.org. To start learning about Grand Canyon National Park's wildlife, please visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/grca/naturescience/animals.htm.



GCA employee Virginia Martin tells park visitors about the adopt-a-lion program.