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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AFRICAN MEGA ANIMALS: CRESTED PORCUPINES AND SPURRED TORTOISES
May 13, 2006 through Mid-September

Tallahassee, FL – A favorite of Museum visitors of all ages! The Tallahassee Museum is pleased to announce the Summer Guest Animals: a duo of **crested porcupines** and three **spurred tortoises**. Welcome the new Museum guests this Mother's Day, when all moms receive free admission!

The porcupines and tortoises that the Museum will be displaying through Mid-September are on loan from the Alexandria Zoological Garden of Louisiana.

African Crested Porcupines

The name "porcupine" is an interesting blend of the Latin word for pig and the French word for spine. Literally, "spiny pig"! Porcupines are found around the world, with both new world and old world varieties.

Native to the continent of Africa, crested porcupines are the largest of 22 species of porcupine, growing to a length of nearly four feet and weighing up to 60 pounds. The crested porcupine is best known for its formidable quills that are used to form a protective crest from the top of the head down to the shoulders.

Quills are modified hairs that are up to 21 inches long with sharp, pointed ends that can easily penetrate the skin of an attacking predator. The quills are loosely attached to their follicles and are easily released. The quills stay with the attacker and often cause serious infections that have proved to be fatal in animals such as leopards and lions.

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The African crested porcupine lives in a wide variety of habitats and has been documented living at altitudes up to 10,000 feet. They are nocturnal and herbivorous, coming out at night to feed on a variety of plants, fruits, and some insects.

Porcupines reproduce twice yearly and usually have 2-4 offspring. The young are born with soft quills that take about a day to harden. The young will go outside the den and begin to eat solid food at about two weeks of age, although they will continue to suckle for up to two months. In captivity, crested porcupines have lived up to 21 years, in the wild, about 12-15 years.

Although the crested porcupine is not listed as threatened, it has been extirpated in some parts of its range because of crop damage. Its meat is also prized by many indigenous people.

African Spurred Tortoises

Spurred tortoises live in central and northern Africa and occupy some of the same habitat as crested porcupines. They are the largest tortoise native to mainland Africa. The males can be up to 35 inches in length. These tortoises are known to live over 100 years. The scutes, or plates that form the shell have strongly defined growth annually, similar to the rings in a tree.

The spurred tortoise has several spur-like tubercles on the rear of the thighs, the heels, and the tail. They are good burrowers, like our native gopher tortoises, and eat a very similar diet of succulents, sweet grasses, ripe fruits, and other vegetation.

For more information on our Summer Guest Animals please call (850) 575-8684 or visit us at www.tallahasseeemuseum.org.

The Tallahassee Museum is a 52-acre Museum located in SW Tallahassee on beautiful Lake Bradford (3945 Museum Drive) where history, nature, and wildlife are intertwined to tell an intriguing story about Florida's natural and cultural history. This unique Museum, 1880s farmstead, historical buildings, natural habitat zoo and scenic grounds provides hands-on learning and entertainment for all ages. The Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM and Sundays from 12:30 PM until 5:00 PM. Admission Fees: \$8/Adults, \$7.50/Seniors (65+) & College Students (with valid ID); \$5.50/Children (4-15); and free for children 3 and under. ADMISSION IS FREE FOR MEMBERS. For more information: (850) 575-8684 or www.tallahasseeemuseum.org

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