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Contact: Sheelah McCaughan, 253-404-3636 or sheelah.mccaughan@pdza.org
Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

Tiger cubs make their public debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium this weekend

Cubs advance critically endangered Sumatran tiger population



Two 8-week-old Sumatran tiger cubs made their public debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, Wash. on Friday, July 23. Zoo visitors can see the cubs on exhibit with their mother Jaya at estimated times every day.

Tacoma, Wash. – Two 8-week-old Sumatran tiger cubs made their public debut today at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. The cubs, born on May 25, will be on exhibit intermittently with their mother Jaya starting Friday, July 23.

“Jaya is a fantastic first-time mom,” said staff biologist Andy Goldfarb. “She’s done a great job raising her cubs behind the scenes, so they’re ready now to explore their new home out on exhibit.”

The male and female cubs, weighed about 2 lbs. at birth and have grown to more than 14 lbs. and 13 lbs. respectively.

“They just keep getting cuter and cuter!” Goldfarb said. “Of course they were adorable as newborns, but now they’re big enough to really toddle around and show off their personalities.”

Goldfarb noted their similarities and differences saying, “The’re both very curious about their new environment, but she is much more timid than he is. He acts like a typical male tiger, stomping right out there and acting like he owns the place. The female, on the other hand, tends to wait and see what will happen to her brother first.”

Though the cubs are old enough and active enough to explore their outdoor exhibit with their mother on a daily basis, staff say the family won’t be viewable all day long.

“We will have them in their exhibit for short periods of time at first and gradually get them used to being out all day,” Goldfarb said. “They really need their naps and down time with Jaya because if they don’t, they wouldn’t have enough opportunity to nurse.”

Estimated viewing times will be updated daily on the zoo’s website www.pdza.org.

“We’d love to be able to say exactly when they’ll be in their exhibit,” added Goldfarb, “but it’s ultimately up to their mom, Jaya.”

The two new cubs bring the total number of Sumatran tigers in North American zoos to 74. With fewer than 300 left worldwide and only two litters born in North America this year, zoo staff stress the significance of the cubs to the species as a whole.

Goldfarb noted, “They’re sure to be crowd pleasers, but they’ll also be educational ambassadors, bringing a note of optimism about their species directly to Northwest families.”



“Sumatran tigers are among the world’s most critically endangered species,” said general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck. “These cubs not only add to the overall population, but they also provide invaluable genetic diversity to the Sumatran tiger breeding program.”

Point Defiance Zoo participates in the Sumatran tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP®), coordinated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The SSP manages the Sumatran population in North America.

The SSP made the recommendation that Point Defiance Zoo breed Jaya with the cubs’ father, Bali, last summer, and he was transferred to Tacoma from the San Francisco Zoo in the fall.

The zoo is holding a naming vote for the cubs through Wednesday, July 28. The staff biologists who care for the tigers came up with five options for each cub, and the public is invited to pick their favorites at www.pdza.org. The chosen names will be announced on Thursday, July 29.

For more information about Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, visit www.pdza.org or call 253-591-5337.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo & aquarium, is located in Tacoma’s beautiful Point Defiance Park, 5400 North Pearl Street. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).