



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 6, 2012

Contact: Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)

## **Two endangered clouded leopard cubs born at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium**

*Tacoma zoo is one of only three zoos in the country breeding endangered clouded leopard cubs*

Tacoma, Wash. – An endangered clouded leopard at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium gave birth to two healthy cubs – a male and a female – this morning.

“The cubs are eating well and sleeping soundly,” said staff biologist Andy Goldfarb who has cared for exotic cats for over 25 years and was present at the cubs’ birth. “There is nothing more adorable than clouded leopard cubs,” he added.

The cubs weigh about a half-pound each. Zoo staff will hand-raise the cubs for the cubs’ safety and will invite the public to vote on the cubs’ names once the cubs are more settled.

Point Defiance Zoo is one of only three zoos in the country that is breeding endangered clouded leopard cubs, along with Nashville Zoo and Smithsonian Institution’s National Zoo. This is the second litter of cubs for Chai Li (pronounced Chai-Iye) and her mate Nah Fun (pronounced Nah-foon). The clouded leopards gave birth to their first litter, Taji and Sumalee, last June.

In a few weeks, the cubs will move into the zoo’s cub den, where visitors will be able to see them up close and watch staff feed and care for them. The cub den is a key feature in the zoo’s Cats of the Canopy exhibit, which opened last summer.

“We designed the cub den so our visitors can bond with these cubs when they are tiny and watch them grow,” said general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck.

Clouded leopards live mostly in the forest of Southeast Asia. But massive clear-cutting to make way for the expansion of oil palm plantations has threatened their populations. Exactly how many clouded leopards exists is unknown because the cats are so difficult to study.

With clouded leopards vulnerable to extinction in the wild, zoo staff emphasized the importance of the new pair of cubs to the species as a whole.

“These cats are very rare in zoos and in the wild,” said Goodrowe Beck. “We hope our visitors will fall in love again with these cubs and get inspired to help save clouded leopards in the wild.”

Point Defiance Zoo participates in the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ clouded leopard Species Survival Plan (SSP®), which oversees the clouded leopard populations in zoos worldwide and makes

breeding recommendations based on the genetics of each cat. Fewer than 65 clouded leopards live in 24 accredited North American zoos.

The zoo has two other pairs of clouded leopards. Jao Ying and Chee Wit live in the Cats of the Canopy exhibit. Josie and Raja, who produced two cubs at Point Defiance Zoo in 2003, live behind the scenes at the zoo's Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater.

**Photo caption:** An endangered clouded leopard cub at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is fed Tuesday. (Courtesy of Seth Bynum, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium)

###

*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined 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).*