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Endangered Sumatran tiger at Point Defiance Zoo is pregnant, cubs due in August

Tacoma, Wash. – Jaya, an endangered Sumatran tiger at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, is pregnant and expected to give birth in late August. Zoo staff have performed ultrasounds on the female tiger to confirm that at least one cub is present but have not been able to determine the number of cubs.

“Jaya’s pregnancy is very exciting news for Point Defiance Zoo visitors and for our global efforts to save this critically endangered species,” said zoo general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck. Only five Sumatran tiger cubs have been born this year in accredited North American zoos and fewer than 380 live in zoos around the world, according to Goodrowe Beck.

This is the second pregnancy for nine-year-old Jaya who gave birth to a pair of cubs in May 2010 and is the first litter fathered by Malosi. Malosi, 3, came to Point Defiance Zoo in February from Honolulu Zoo to breed with Jaya.

Staff are carefully preparing for the cubs’ arrival. According to Goodrowe Beck, those preparations will include a 24-hour watch beginning several days before Jaya’s due date, continuous video monitoring and hand-rearing supplies at the ready.

“Jaya has already shown us that she is a wonderful mother,” said Goodrowe Beck “But we will be prepared to quickly step in and help her if anything goes wrong.”

Jaya and Malosi can be seen on exhibit in the zoo’s Asian Forest Sanctuary.

A typical tiger pregnancy lasts about four months. After the birth, the cubs will remain behind the scenes until they are old enough to make their way around in the exhibits. If all goes well, the cubs will make their public debut in early fall.

With Jaya and Malosi, Point Defiance Zoo has four Sumatran tigers: two-year-old Bima and his father Bali.

This tiger sub-species is native to the Indonesian island of Sumatra. But poaching and habitat loss have caused the wild tiger population to dwindle to about 300. Breeding tigers is vital to sustaining the zoo-based population, raising awareness about the plight of tigers in the wild and engaging the public in conserving tigers in the wild.

Goodrowe Beck coordinates the North American Sumatran tiger Species Survival Plan as part of a global effort to ensure the long-term sustainability and health of zoo-based tigers by creating the best possible breeding pairs. Point Defiance Zoo, through its Conservation Fund, is also a key supporter of the Tiger Conservation Campaign to raise awareness about wild tigers and funding for their conservation. (www.mnzoo.org/tigerSSP/conserResearch.html)

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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).