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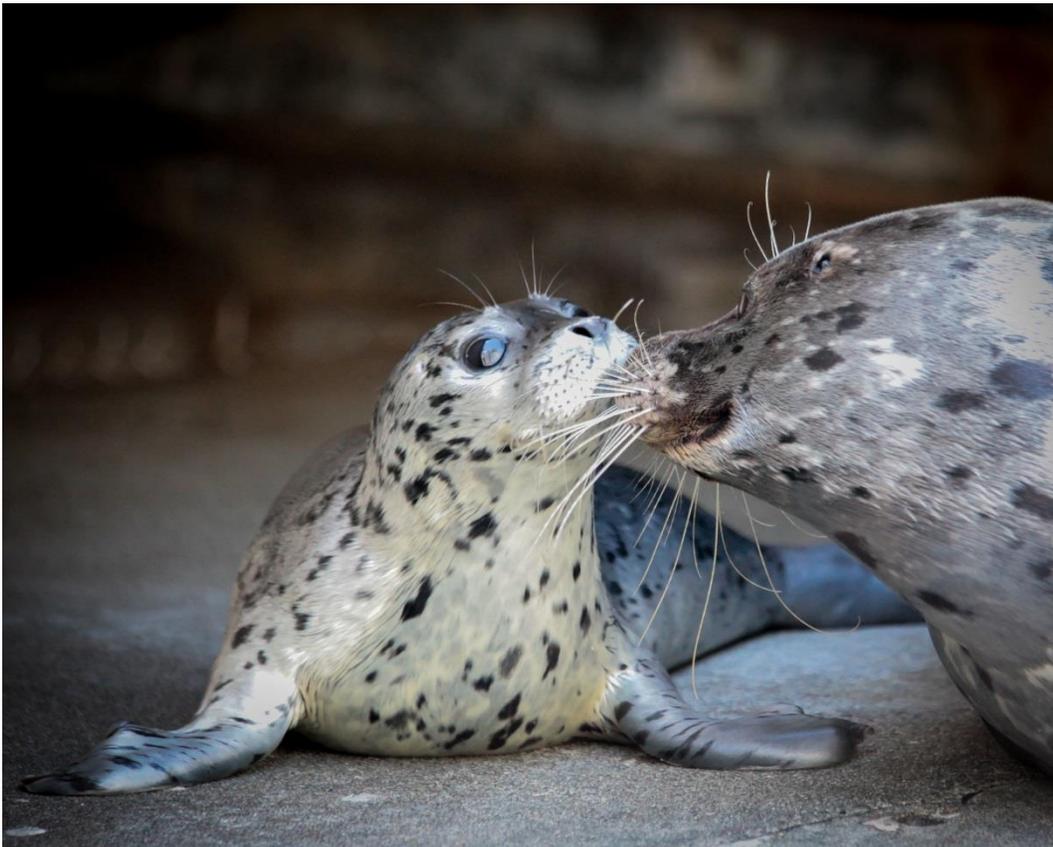
SECOND HARBOR SEAL PUP THIS MONTH BORN AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Mother Qilak and newborn are doing well and bonding behind the scenes in the zoo's Rocky Shores area

TACOMA, Wash. – Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium welcomed its second Pacific harbor seal pup in two weeks on Monday.

The pup, a 22.6-pound female, and its mother, 9-year-old Qilak (pronounced Kee-lak), are doing well in a behind-the-scenes space in the Rocky Shores area of the zoo, said Neil Allen, curator of aquatic animals.

Shila and her pup, a male born June 2, are in the same behind-the-scenes area. They are continuing their bonding process, and the pup is growing, Allen said.



“Shila’s pup is already becoming quite a swimmer,” he added.

New seal pups need time to bond with their mothers, nurse and gain a blubber layer so they can regulate their own temperatures, zoo general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck said shortly after Shila gave birth.

Pacific harbor seal Qilak and her pup, born on Monday.

“Qilak is being very protective of her pup,” Allen said. “She and Shila are both good mothers. They’re taking wonderful care of these newborns.”

It’s too early to say when the pups will make their public debuts, but it could be a couple of weeks. The zoo will let local media know and make announcements on its Facebook page and website.

Neither pup has a name yet.

The pups’ father is Q, a 14-year-old male, who spent about 14 months at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium as part of a cooperative Species Survival Plan breeding program. He returned to Seattle last month to be one of the stars in that aquarium’s new harbor seal exhibit.

Harbor seals’ gestation period is 9 to 11 months and involves delayed implantation of a fertilized egg.

Males can grow from 150 to 375 pounds and 5 to 6 feet long; females generally weigh between 100 and 200 pounds and are 4 to 5 feet long.

In the wild, they live up to about 25 years.

Pacific harbor seals are found north of the equator in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. On the West Coast, they range from Alaska to Baja California. They live in near-shore coastal waters and frequent rocky islands, sandy beaches, mudflats, bays and estuaries.

These marine mammals are abundant in the waters of Puget Sound and other areas of Washington.

They are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium now has six harbor seals: Blackie, 37; Louise, 36; Shila, Qilak and the two pups.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and 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).