



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2010

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

One of Earth's most elusive animals now inches away at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Zoo biologists' work in Asia to save endangered clouded leopards brings 8-month-old cubs to Tacoma



Clouded leopards Chai Li (female) and Nah Fun (male) explore their temporary home in Point Defiance Zoo's Asian Forest Sanctuary.

TACOMA, Wash. – Two young clouded leopards will make their debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium next week, bringing one of the world's most secretive animals just inches away from zoo visitors.

The 8-month-old cats' temporary home will be in an indoor building in the Asian Forest Sanctuary with a two-inch pane of glass separating visitors from the curious cubs. The breeding pair, Chai Li and Nah Fun, are nearly full size, but still have the playful personality and inquisitive temperament of cubs.

"This is an incredible time for Point Defiance Zoo," said deputy director John Houck. "Our staff have been working tirelessly in Asia to help save these endangered animals and bring their story back to the Pacific Northwest."

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is an active member of the international Clouded Leopard Breeding Consortium. Each year, the zoo sends staff biologist Andy Goldfarb to the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand to oversee its breeding program and train their animal care staff. His work put Point Defiance Zoo in a prime position to receive clouded leopard cubs and begin a breeding program here in

Tacoma.

"It's the most challenging work I've ever done, but it's worth it!" said Goldfarb. "We want to keep these animals around for a very long time. And if this work allows us to have a breeding program here at the zoo, I'm happy to roll up my sleeves."

Goldfarb works closely with the animals on a day-to-day basis, even hand-raising some of them. This direct contact with the clouded leopards makes it possible for him to work with the animals in their exhibit at Point Defiance.

“It’s such a unique and exciting temporary exhibit,” said Houck. “The opportunity for visitors to get so close to these animals and to see a keeper’s hands-on training techniques is a once-in-lifetime experience. And it won’t last long.”

The clouded leopards will move to a new \$1 million exhibit that the zoo plans to open next summer. The exhibit, *Cats of the Canopy*, will feature a tall, tree-filled space where visitors can witness the cats’ exceptional climbing skills and an extensive behind-the-scenes holding area built specifically for breeding. Funding for the exhibit and breeding spaces will come from the Point Defiance Zoological Society’s Vision for the Future capital campaign, which has raised more than 80 percent of its goal.

“These animals are irresistible,” said Charlie Brown, Zoo Society Board President. “Once the public gets a look at them , we are sure many will want to contribute to finishing up their new home.”

“The new exhibit will showcase these majestic animals and put a much-needed spotlight on the species,” said zoo senior staff biologist Karen Povey.

Povey heads a local non-profit organization, The Clouded Leopard Project, which works to educate people living around the clouded leopards’ native habitat and those who live thousands of miles away in the Pacific Northwest.

“So little is known about these mysterious animals because they’re so secretive in the wild,” Povey said. “We need to understand them before we can take action to protect them.”

Point Defiance Zoo also received a 3-year-old female, Jao Ying, who will live behind the scenes until the new permanent exhibit is built. Staff hope to bring in a male cub to breed with her when the time is right. The zoo is also home to two 11-year-old clouded leopards, Raja and Josie, who have lived behind the scenes for 8 years.

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

###

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).