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CLOUDED LEOPARD TRIPLETS TO MAKE PUBLIC DEBUT FRIDAY AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM
Visitors will be able to see feedings of the 3-week-old cubs twice a day



TACOMA, Wash. -- Three endangered clouded leopard cubs will make their public debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Friday morning. Visitors will be able to watch them eagerly eating their special formula and view keepers caring for them at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. daily.

Viewing will be in the Cub Den at the Cats of the Canopy exhibit. The triplets' feeding times will change as they grow, so zoo visitors are advised to monitor the zoo's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/PTDefianceZoo, visit the zoo website at www.pdza.org or check for signs near the zoo's front gate.



The cubs, born March 30 to mother Sang Dao and father Tien, are just 3 weeks old.

And they soon will have names. Zoo staff have selected slates of four names for the two male cubs and two names for the female. People who want to help choose their names may go to www.pdza.org/cloudedleopardcubs

The proposed names, inspired by Asian herbs and spices, are Cassia and Saffron for the female cubs and Basil, Coriander ("Cori"), Chili and Masala for the male cubs.

"We are thrilled that our visitors will be able to see these rare cubs and, hopefully, walk away inspired to take action to help save clouded leopards in the wild," Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Education Curator Karen Povey said. "These animals' homes are slowly being swallowed by palm oil plantations."

Although quite young, the clouded leopard triplets already have spread the conservation message about their increasingly threatened species through the media.

That publicity helps people learn about this species of elusive, arboreal cat, which is native to Southeast Asia. Scientists know their numbers in the wild are dwindling due to poaching and destruction of their habitat, primarily for the growth of oil palm trees.

But the cats are so shy and difficult to track that no one knows for certain how many of them remain in the wild. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is one of the leaders in research to answer this question.

Zoo visitors who see adults in the Cats of the Canopy exhibit and the cubs during their feeding times in the Cub Den also help spread the word about the need for conservation of the species.

This is the first litter for Sang Dao and Tien, and the cubs are considered especially valuable members of the species because they are adding new genetic vitality to the numbers of clouded leopards in North America. The cubs' births were part of the Association of Zoos' & Aquariums' Species Survival Plan® managed breeding program.

Sang Dao came to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium from Tanganyika Wildlife Park in Wichita, Kansas. Tien was born at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Both adult cats are 3 years old.

The cubs are being hand-reared by zookeepers, who care for them around the clock and currently feed them about every four hours.

“Because clouded leopards are so rare, every cub is precious,” said Povey. “Hand-raising cubs ensures that they grow up healthy and thrive in a zoo environment.”

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is a recognized leader in conservation of the species. The Zoo Society's Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund sponsors clouded leopard research throughout Southeast Asia. Zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck and Goldfarb make periodic trips to the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand to participate in a collaborative breeding program. Education Curator Karen Povey conducts education work in Southeast Asia to help children learn about clouded leopards and the perils they face in the wild. Zookeepers in Tacoma founded The Clouded Leopard Project 15 years ago to aid in conservation of the species. And that's just a snapshot of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's contributions to clouded leopard conservation.



There are just 93 clouded leopards in 24 North American zoos that participate in the Clouded Leopard Species Survival Plan®.

Counting the triplet cubs, 12 clouded leopards live at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

People who are inspired by the clouded leopards' story and want to contribute to conservation programs on their behalf may donate to the Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund through the donation kiosk at the Cats of the Canopy exhibit on zoo grounds or through The Zoo Society at www.pdza.org/donate

The zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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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).

Photo captions:

Top: Clouded leopard triplets are just 3 weeks old in this photo, taken on Wednesday, April 20. They were born March 30 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Middle: One of three endangered clouded leopard cubs born at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium March 30 poses for a portrait on Wednesday, April 20.

Bottom: An endangered clouded leopard cub is bottle fed by a zookeeper at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Photo credits: Ingrid Barrentine/Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium