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INTRODUCING SAFFRON, MASALA AND CORIANDER

Names chosen for two male and one female clouded leopards at Point Defiance Zoo

TACOMA, Wash. – Zookeepers have selected names for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s clouded leopard triplets, just a few days after their one-month birthday: Saffron, Masala, and Coriander (“Cori” for short).

Saffron is the female; Masala and Cori are the males. The triplets, born March 30, are the first litter for mother Sang Dao and father Tien.

Zoo staff proposed a slate of names inspired by Asian herbs and spices -- Cassia and Saffron for the female cub and Basil, Coriander, Chili and Masala for the males. People could help choose the names by voting on the zoo’s website.

Visitors can take a peek inside the Cub Den at the cubs, which are being hand-reared around the clock by zookeepers.

Their diet of a milk formula for cats is supplemented by a bit of baby cereal with rice, said staff biologist Andy Goldfarb, who has worked with exotic cats for more than three decades and is a world-recognized expert on clouded leopard cubs.

The cubs weighed around a half-pound at birth. Now each weighs about 3 pounds. Their blue eyes have been open for a couple of weeks and they are moving around more.

Their personalities are emerging too. Saffron is a “spitfire who holds her own with her brothers,” said Goldfarb. “Masala is more mellow and focused. Cori is high-energy and the first to start the wrestling and playtime.”

All three are inquisitive, curious and very vocal. The three cubs are so eager to eat at feeding time they emit squeaking sounds and their tiny paws are in continual motion as they try to grab their feeding bottles.

“Because clouded leopards are so endangered, every cub is precious,” said Zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck. “Hand-raising them ensures that they stay healthy and thrive in a zoo environment.”

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® program.

Clouded leopards are facing increasing pressure from poachers and habitat destruction in their native ranges. The animals are so reclusive and difficult to spot in the wild, it's not known how many of them remain.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is a recognized leader in conservation of the species. The Zoo Society's Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund supports clouded leopard research throughout Southeast Asia. Goodrowe Beck and Goldfarb make periodic trips to the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Thailand to participate in a collaborative breeding program. Zoo 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.

The zoo is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Daily feeding times are posted on the zoo's web site at www.pdza.org

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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).