



## WE'RE EXPECTING!

ENDANGERED MALAYAN TAPIR YUNA IS PREGNANT, AND A CALF IS EXPECTED IN SUMMER 2019; IT WOULD BE THE FIRST TAPIR BIRTH AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO

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TACOMA, Wash. – Quick. What looks like a little brown-and-white watermelon, is utterly adorable and related to horses and rhinos?



**Malayan tapir Yuna explores the largest habitat in the Asian Forest Sanctuary area at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.**

Malayan tapirs are endangered. They are native to the Malay Peninsula, the island of Sumatra, southern Myanmar and southern Thailand.

“This pregnancy is wonderful news for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium,” said Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners President Andrea Smith. “It highlights the zoo’s continuing commitment to the conservation of some of the world’s most rare and endangered species. And it represents both hard work and a high-level of animal care on the part of zoo staff members.”

That would be a Malayan tapir calf, and the first one ever at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is expected next summer.

Yuna, a 4 ½-year-old Malayan tapir who arrived in Tacoma two years ago, is about four months pregnant, Zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck announced today.

Yuna’s mate, 4 ½-year-old Baku, is the father. The two were paired through a recommendation by the Species Survival Plan®, a managed breeding program that aims to ensure continuation and genetic diversity of the North American tapir population.



There are just 46 Malayan tapirs in the North American Species Survival Plan®, said Goodrowe, who holds a Ph. D. in reproductive physiology.

Yuna was born at Africam Safari in Mexico; Baku was born at Denver Zoo.

“We’re excited by this pregnancy and the opportunity to add to this small population,” said Telena Welsh, senior staff biologist in the zoo’s Asian Forest Sanctuary. Zoo veterinary and curatorial staff confirmed the pregnancy via ultrasound; Yuna has been trained to voluntarily lie still for these exams.



Though Baku has been at Point Defiance Zoo for three years and Yuna for two, keepers needed to wait for them to grow and sexually mature before introducing them to one another, Welsh said.

They have lived next to each other in the Asian Forest Sanctuary bedroom areas since the end of 2016 but were not introduced to one another for breeding until spring of this year.

Malayan tapirs generally bear only one calf at a time, although twins can rarely occur. The gestation period is about 13-14 months long, and calves weigh around 22 pounds at birth.

**Top: This Malayan tapir calf was born at Minnesota Zoo earlier this year. Photo: Courtesy of Minnesota Zoo.**

**Bottom: Adult male Baku is the father of the calf Yuna is carrying.**

For their first several months of life, tapir calves are a distinct blackish brown color with white stripes and spots or splotches on their bodies. This configuration helps the fragile newborns stay better camouflaged among the foliage. Tapir calves nurse until they are about 6 months and typically stay with their mothers until they’re 12-to-18 months old.

Adult tapirs have black heads, long black snouts and are black for about the first third of their bodies before the dark color gives way to a gray back and abdomen, with black hind quarters, sitting atop four sturdy, hooved black legs.

This odd color combination helps the nocturnal herbivores blend into moonlit rainforests and shields them from predators. They have great hearing and a wonderful sense of smell, thanks to that large, elongated nose that helps them both sniff out and snare their food. Their eyesight, however, is poor.

Adult female tapirs can grow up to about 1,000 pounds; males, the smaller of the species, can top 800 pounds. At their last weigh-in, Yuna weighed 743 pounds and Baku tipped the scales at 672; they’re both still growing.

The species is endangered, its numbers decreasing in the wild as their natural habitat is lost to human development, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium has cared for Malayan tapirs for many years. The species was new to the zoo when the Asian Forest Sanctuary opened in 2004. The zoo has supported the species’ conservation in the wild through grants from The Zoo Society’s Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation fund.

Yuna and Baku are guest favorites, especially when they spend time interacting with our primates on exhibit,” Welsh said. We hope people will join us in celebrating this conservation milestone and wish Yuna well on her first adventure into motherhood.”

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

**Contacts**

Kris Sherman, 253-226-6718 or [kris.sherman@pdza.org](mailto:kris.sherman@pdza.org)

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637; 253-278-6343 or [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)