



HELP NAME OUR TAPIR CALF!

Public asked to choose a name for new baby Malayan tapir at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

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TACOMA, Wash. – He’s thriving, growing and exploring the pool: The endangered Malayan tapir calf born July 12 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is nearly ready to meet his adoring fans.

But before he does, he needs a name.

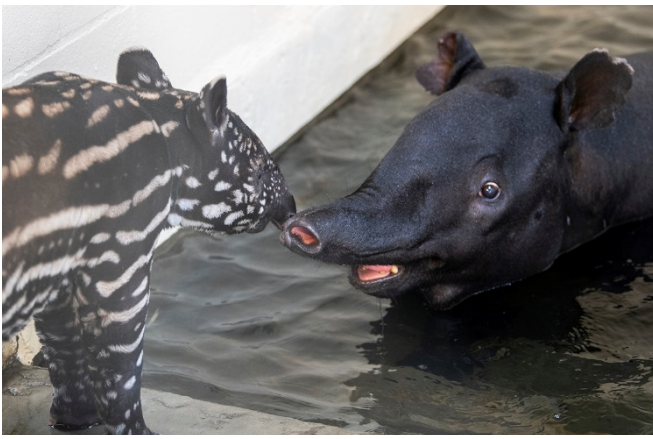
Members of the public are invited to vote on one of five names chosen by keepers in the Asian Forest Sanctuary, where the calf has been living behind the scenes with his mom Yuna.

The slate of names is inspired both by the Japanese names of his parents Yuna and Baku, by Asian food items and two Western names. It includes:

- Kazu (“first” in Japanese – the tapir calf is the first-ever born at the zoo)
- Mochi (a sweet Japanese rice cake)
- Taro (an edible root from Asia)
- Oliver (“fruitfulness,” “beauty,” “dignity”)
- Alfie (“wise counselor”)



The tapir calf explores his pool.



The tapir calf with mom Yuna.

The naming contest can be found at www.pdza.org/tapir-calf, and runs until Aug. 28.

Since his birth, the calf has been nursing, growing and getting accustomed to people behind the scenes. He is now nearly ready to explore the outdoor habitats. Now weighing 68 lbs, he is still nursing but adding new foods like banana, apple, pear, yam, carrot, romaine and grains to his diet.

He has also been exploring a small pool. Tapirs are good swimmers, even using their long nose as a snorkel, and each of the five habitats in the Asian Forest Sanctuary has a water feature.

“We want him to be comfortable around water before he goes into those habitats,” said Telena Welsh, senior staff biologist for the Asian Forest Sanctuary.

The calf, like all of his species, was born with white spots and stripes, a little like a watermelon – an adaptation that camouflages and protects young tapirs in their native jungles of Southeast Asia.

Adults, with their long black noses, thick bodies and relatively short legs look more like pigs than the horses and rhinoceroses to which the species is related. Their heavy bodies are deep black on their front legs, head and about the first third of their torsos; grayish-white in the middle; and black again on the hind end and back legs.

The species is listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Only an estimated 2,500 remain scattered in Thailand, peninsular Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Malayan tapirs once were found throughout the lowland rainforests of Southeast Asia. But the species’ numbers have declined dramatically due to human-animal conflict, including deforestation of their natural habitat.

The calf’s birth came as the result of a breeding recommendation for Yuna and Baku by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ Species Survival Plan® (SSP) for Malayan tapirs. The SSP looks at the genetic makeup of each prospective parent before recommending a pairing; this helps ensure diversity of Malayan tapirs in North American zoos.

“Nothing in our mission to practice and promote effective conservation on behalf of the world’s wildlife is more important than the births we’ve witnessed at the zoo this spring and summer,” said Alan Varsik, director of Zoological & Environmental Education for Metro Parks Tacoma.

For more information, go to www.pdza.org/tapir-calf.

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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. A member of the [Metro Parks Tacoma](#) family, the zoo creates a legacy of sustainability for future generations through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities; it also embodies Metro Parks’ mission of creating healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). [The Zoo Society](#), a 501(c)(3) organization, is an instrumental partner in the conservation, animal-welfare and education initiatives.

Contact

Denette Cowan, 253-677-8721 or denette.cowan@pdza.org