

News

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RARE AMUR LEOPARD BORN AT SAINT LOUIS ZOO!

Little cub will be hand-raised in Children's Zoo



A litter of two critically endangered Amur leopards, a male and a female, were born at the Saint Louis Zoo on May 10. The male was stillborn. The female cub was removed for hand-rearing from Big Cat Country to the Zoo's veterinary hospital because her mother failed to demonstrate proper maternal care. Similar to other cats, it is common for a first-time leopard mother to have problems raising her first litter.

For the past month, little Sofiya (so-FEE-ah) which means "wisdom" has been cared for by the Carnivore unit and veterinary staffs. Since she has made good progress in her development and gained weight, Sofiya has been moved to a nursery at the Emerson Children's Zoo today, June 12, at 10 a.m. Zookeepers will continue bottle feedings until she is weaned at about three months of age. The first few months of life are the most critical for any newborn.

Sofiya's mother, Mona, who is four years old and born at the El Paso Zoo, came to the Saint Louis Zoo in February, 2007. Erskine, the 15-year-old father, was born at the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, Canada and came to St. Louis in 2006.

Less Than 40 Left in the Wild

The Amur leopard is considered one of the most endangered cat subspecies in the world. It is believed that fewer than 40 Amur leopards remain in the coniferous forests of Primorye Province in far eastern Russia. Loss of habitat due to logging activities, human encroachment and poaching are some of the threats to their survival in the wild.

However, small population size and lack of genetic diversity are the most detrimental factors facing these cats today. The population of Amur leopards in zoos around the world, which numbers about 300 individuals, has become a critical reserve for this subspecies.

The Saint Louis Zoo's Amur leopards are part of the Association of Zoos and

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Amur leopard
add one

Aquariums' Amur Leopard Population Management Plan, which is responsible for maintaining a genetically healthy population of Amur leopards in North American zoos. The birth of this rare Amur leopard cub in St. Louis represents a valuable genetic contribution to the North American Amur leopard population.

The normal litter size for an Amur leopard is two or three cubs, which are born after a gestation period of approximately 100 days. In the wild, cubs stay with their mother for about one and a half years. Young females may continue to share the mother's territory as they mature; however, young males must establish their own territories elsewhere. The Amur leopard mainly preys on wild deer and pigs in its natural habitat but will also feed opportunistically on small mammals and birds, as well as livestock, which often results in the leopards being destroyed.

Sofiya can be viewed daily in the nursery at the Children's Zoo. The Children's Zoo is free from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. each day this summer and \$4.00 per person from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Children under two are free. Admission to the Saint Louis Zoo is free. The Zoo will close at 5 p.m. on June 20, July 23 and August 27.

The Saint. Louis Zoo has been named America's #1 Zoo by Zagat Survey and Parenting Magazine. For more information about the Zoo, visit www.stlzoo.org.

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