

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
St. Louis Zoo, 314/781-0900
Janet Powell, ext. 233
Christy Childs, ext. 239, Erin Meyer ext 320

MALIHA!
ZOO'S BABY ASIAN ELEPHANT NOW HAS A NAME

The St. Louis Zoo's new Asian elephant baby now has a name. Maliha (mah-lee-ha), which means "strong" and "beautiful," won the most votes in the St. Louis Zoo's Name the Baby contest, co-sponsored by KMOV Channel 4. More than 20,525 votes were tallied in the online and mail-in contest which ended Monday at noon. Maliha received 7,863 votes.

"Maliha suits her just perfectly," says Martha Fischer, curator of mammals/ungulates. "She's definitely very beautiful and strong. She is an important addition to the Asian elephant population worldwide, and we're happy that our visitors could help us select the calf's name."

The Zoo's elephant keepers were asked to select five Asian names to reflect the baby's heritage. The other choices were Sundari (soon-dar-ee) which means "beautiful woman," Nisha (NEESH-ah) which means "night," Sashi (SAH-shee) which means "moon," and Jaya (JAY-ah) which means "victorious."

One winner will be chosen at random from those who voted for the name Maliha. The contest winner will be announced at a later date. The winner will receive a Zoo prize package.

Maliha was born just after midnight on August 2 at 341 pounds. This is the second baby for 34-year-old mother Ellie, and the first for 13½ -year-old father Raja, the first Asian elephant ever born at the St. Louis Zoo. Raja and 10-year-old female Rani are expecting a calf between December 2006 and March 2007.

The St. Louis Zoo has been actively involved with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Species Survival Plan for Asian elephants. "Because Asian elephants are so endangered in the wild, the birth of this elephant is important to the conservation work we do with other North American zoos," says Dr. Jeffrey P. Bonner, the president of the St. Louis Zoo. "Together AZA-accredited zoos manage the breeding of Asian elephants to maintain healthy, self-sustaining populations that are genetically diverse and demographically stable.

- more -

Elephant name

Add one

“There’s no question that the Asian elephant is facing extinction,” Bonner continues. “There are only 35,000 left in the wild. Besides working with the AZA Species Survival Plan, our Zoo also supports conservation projects for Asian elephants in Sumatra and Sri Lanka.”

The baby is on view daily, weather permitting, in the elephant habitat at River’s Edge. Prime viewing times are 9-11 a.m. and 4-7 p.m. through Labor Day, with rest time during the heat of the day or inclement weather. Visitor lines will only be formed when baby is on display, as necessary.

Zoo’s hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily through Labor Day. Starting September 5, the Zoo’s hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day. The Zoo will be closed on September 17 for a private event.

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