

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**ST. LOUIS ZOO'S BABY ASIAN ELEPHANT WILL MAKE PUBLIC DEBUT  
ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, AT RIVER'S EDGE**

**What:** St. Louis Zoo's baby elephant makes public debut  
**When:** Friday, August 25  
**Please note:** Baby and mother will probably not be on display a full 10 hours a day. Prime viewing times will be 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.

The St. Louis Zoo's baby Asian elephant is ready to meet her adoring public! She will make her public debut at the elephant habitat in River's Edge on Friday, August 25, at 9 a.m. The three-and-a-half-week-old baby will be with her mother Ellie and aunties Rani, Sri and Donna. Raja, the father, will be on display in a separate yard. Pearl, Raja's mother, and Clara will be in a third yard.

Ellie, age 34, gave birth to the 341-pound baby girl just after midnight on August 2. She now weighs about 350 pounds. The baby has been exploring her outdoor yard in the past few days.

"Both Ellie and her baby are doing very well. Ellie is a great mother," says Curator of Mammals Martha Fischer. "We are very excited for the public to finally meet her. It almost feels as if we have welcomed a new member in our family.

"The River's Edge staff has worked so hard to prepare for this birth over the past two years," she adds. "It's almost impossible to express our happiness."

The baby received a "well baby check-up" by Zoo veterinarians within an hour of her birth. During her first days of life, she met her "aunties" who have welcomed her into the herd and are very protective and kind to the newborn. The elephant staff has been introducing her to her new habitat at River's Edge.

This is Ellie's second baby and the first for Raja, the baby's father. Raja was the first elephant ever born at the St. Louis Zoo. Now, at age 13½, he's started a new family, with another baby on the way in February.

An Asian elephant's gestation period typically lasts 612-699 days. Ellie's

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baby elephant  
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gestation lasted for 690 days. For two months before the birth, the Zoo staff was on a 24-hour pregnancy watch. They also monitored her progress with an ultrasound exam and tracked her progesterone every day. When Ellie's progesterone dropped, the Zoo staff knew she would deliver within 1-13 days.

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.

"There's no question that the Asian elephant is facing extinction," Bonner continues. "There are fewer than 50,000 left in wild. Besides working with the AZA Species Survival Plan, our Zoo also supports conservation projects for Asian elephants in Sumatra and Sri Lanka."

A naming contest is underway for the baby, co-sponsored by the Zoo and KMOV Channel 4. St. Louis Zoo elephant keepers selected five Asian names to reflect the baby's heritage. The public may submit their **vote by noon on August 28** for the following names:

Sundari (soon-dar-ee) which means "beautiful woman"  
Nisha (NEESH-ah) which means "night"  
Maliha (mah-lee-hah) which means "strong" and "beautiful"  
Sashi (SAH-shee) which means "moon"  
Jaya (JAY-ah) which means "victorious"

Votes can be cast at [www.stlzoo.org](http://www.stlzoo.org) or [www.kmov.com](http://www.kmov.com) or by mailing a "Vote for the Baby Elephant" postcard with name, age, address, daytime phone number, and one of the five suggested elephant names to KMOV, #1 Memorial Drive, St. Louis MO 63102. After the votes are tallied to determine the winning name, one winner will be chosen at random from the most selected name. The winner will receive a Zoo prize package. The **winning elephant name will be announced Tuesday, August 29**, on KMOV Channel 4 and at [www.stlzoo.org](http://www.stlzoo.org).

The St. Louis Zoo has been named America's #1 Zoo by Zagat Survey and Parenting Magazine. One of the few free zoos in the United States, the St. Louis Zoo is renowned for its natural exhibits, diverse collection of animals and dedication to conserve endangered species and their habitats. The Zoo attracts three million visitors each year and is open every day except September 17, December 25 and January 1.

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