

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | October 24, 2014  
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### Zoo celebrates the birth of three African lions

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo's lion pride just got bigger when three African lions were born yesterday on Oct. 24. The cubs represent the first litter between the mother, 5-year-old Adia (ah-DEE-uh), and 7-year-old father, Xerxes. This is the first offspring for the father. The last birth of lions was in 2012 when Adia gave birth to four cubs with a different male.

Zookeepers moved the cubs into the off-view maternity den where the new family can bond in comfortable, quiet surroundings. Before reuniting the cubs with mom, the animal health team did a quick health assessment of the cubs and determined that all three are males. The father remains separated from the cubs and mother.

Zookeepers are monitoring the new family round-the-clock. The mother and cubs are bonding and nursing, according to Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. Video and den cam photos can be seen on the zoo's blog:

<http://woodlandparkzblog.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-pride-of-zoo-three-lions-born.html>

The first 48 hours are critical, and animal care staff will be monitoring each of the cubs closely for signs of normal behavior and development over the next several weeks. "Animal management staff are closely monitoring the litter via an internal cam to ensure the mom is providing good maternal care and the cubs are properly nursing. The mom and cubs will remain off public view until they are a bit older and demonstrate solid mobility skills. In addition, outdoor temperatures need to be a minimum of 50 degrees," said Ramirez.

"The birth of the lions is very exciting for all of us, especially for Xerxes who was not represented in the gene pool for the lion Species Survival Plan (SSP) conservation breeding program," said Ramirez.

Lion cubs typically weigh about 3 pounds at birth. They are born blind and open their eyes within a week or two after birth. As part of the exemplary animal care and health program for the zoo's thousand-plus animals, zoo veterinarians will perform health check-ups every couple of weeks for weight monitoring, vaccinations, and critical blood and fecal sampling.

Xerxes arrived in the spring from El Paso Zoo to be paired with Adia under a breeding recommendation by the SSP for African lions. Adia arrived in 2010 from Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, in Ohio. SSPs are a complex system that matches animals in North American zoos based on genetic diversity and demographic stability. Pairings also take into consideration the behavior and personality of the animals.

Woodland Park Zoo's lions belong to the South African subspecies, *Panthera leo krugeri*. Known as the Transvaal lion, it ranges in Southern Sahara to South Africa, excluding the Congo rain forest belt, in grassy plains, savanna and open woodlands. These lions range in weight from 260 to 400 pounds.

The African lion is the only big cat not protected under the Endangered Species Act. As few as 32,000 African lions are estimated to remain in the wild and their future remains uncertain, particularly as the growth in human population continues to impact lion populations. There is legal hunting of lions and retaliation killing because they pose a threat to humans and livestock.

Woodland Park Zoo supports the [Ruaha Carnivore Project](#) through the Lion Species Survival Plan Conservation Campaign. To help support the project, adopt a lion through the zoo's ZooParent Adoption Program: [www.zoo.org/zooparent/lion](http://www.zoo.org/zooparent/lion).

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