

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | July 21, 2017  
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Editor note: Photos and video of the neonatal exam can be found on the zoo's blog at:  
<http://blog.zoo.org/2017/07/baby-snow-leopard-instantly-improves.html>

### **More new spots at the zoo: snow leopard gives birth to a single cub *2-week-old cub is a girl!***

SEATTLE—A month ago, Woodland Park Zoo celebrated the birth of Seattle's tallest baby: a female giraffe named Lulu and her beautiful spots. On July 6, more spots appeared when 12-year-old snow leopard Helen gave birth to a single cub, a girl. The new cub is the first offspring between mom and 12-year-old Dhirin (pronounced as *dir-in*); Helen has had two previous litters with a different mate.



The mom and cub are currently in an off-view maternity den to allow bonding and proper nursing in a quieter setting. Zoo staff watch the mother and cub through a closed-circuit monitoring system to watch for normal behaviors. The zoo anticipates putting the cub with mom in the outdoor, on-view exhibit in late September. Stay tuned for updates on the snow leopard cub and a public naming by visiting the zoo's [blog](#) and checking out [Facebook](#).

As part of the exemplary animal care and health program for the zoo's thousand-plus animals, animal health staff performed a neonatal exam on June 20, the first time the newborn cub was handled. The cub currently weighs 2.6 pounds. "Our overall assessment is the cub appears to be healthy. Her eyelids are beginning to open—one eye is already open and one remains closed—the eyelids normally open around two weeks. Her belly was full of milk, which means the cub is nursing and being nourished," said Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo's director of animal health. Veterinarians will perform health check-ups every couple of weeks for weight monitoring, vaccinations, and critical blood and fecal sampling.

"Helen's track record of providing excellent maternal skills to her past cubs continues with this cub. She's nurturing her cub very well, they're bonding and the cub appears to be progressing normally," said Deanna DeBo, an animal collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo.

Parents Helen and Dhirin were paired under the Snow Leopard Species Survival Plan (SSP), a conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of snow leopards. Helen has lived at Woodland Park Zoo since 2008 and Dhirin arrived from Oklahoma City Zoo in 2014.

Cubs are born helpless, with their eyes closed; for several weeks they rely on their mothers for nutrition. To minimize disturbance, staff have minimal physical contact with the new family. Since snow leopards are solitary animals in the wild, the father lives separately from the cub; guests can see Dhirin in the snow leopard exhibit.

Snow leopards are an endangered species. The snow leopard is a moderately large cat native to the high mountain ranges of Central Asia and Russia, including in Afghanistan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan. According to the Seattle-based Snow Leopard Trust, the population of these endangered big cats in the wild is estimated to be between 3,920 and 6,390.

Woodland Park Zoo has long been a conservation partner with the Snow Leopard Trust; the two organizations are partnering with Kyrgyzstan's State Agency for Environment Protection and Forestry to protect the snow leopards of the Tian Shan mountains. Research cameras set up in the Sarychat Ertash reserve allow researchers to monitor the area's snow leopard

population, which they estimate to be around 18 cats.

Woodland Park Zoo has been caring for snow leopards since the zoo's first snow leopards arrived in 1972 from the USSR. Under the Snow Leopard SSP, 35 cubs have been born at the zoo and have helped diversify the genetic pool of the managed population. "This is a significant birth for snow leopards in zoos in North America and around the world. These majestic cats are important conservation ambassadors for their species in the wild. By experiencing these cats here, zoo guests and the community can become emotionally connected and become inspired to learn more about how to save this endangered cat that is struggling to survive in its range countries," said Dr. Jennifer Pramuk, a curator at Woodland Park Zoo.

To help ensure the future of snow leopards in their native range, the zoo asks the community to support the zoo and the Snow Leopard Trust, and pledge never to buy or sell illegal animal products on the black market. Also, come to the zoo's [Wild Asia: Asian Wildlife Conservation Day](#) on August 12 to learn more about these elusive, beautiful cats and how to protect them.

The Snow Leopard Trust was created in 1981 by the late Woodland Park Zoo staff member Helen Freeman, the namesake of Helen, the mother of the newborn cub. Through innovative programs, effective partnerships, and the latest science, the SLT is saving these endangered cats and improving the lives of people who live in the snow leopard countries of Central Asia.

Summer zoo hours: 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo's long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats through more than 35 field projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future ecological health and sustainability.

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