

PRESS RELEASE

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For photos, visit the zoo's blog: <http://blog.zoo.org/2017/08/oops-snow-leopard-cub-is-boy-not-girl.html>

Oops, snow leopard cub is a boy, not a girl! *Cub receives four-week veterinary exam*

SEATTLE—Sometimes sexing animals, particularly cats, can be more of an art than a science, like in this case. It turns out that Woodland Park Zoo's 1-month-old snow leopard is a boy, not a girl as reported two weeks ago during its neonatal exam. Today, the zoo's veterinary team performed a second veterinary exam and, in addition to discovering he's a male, gave the cub a clean bill of health.

The new cub was born July 6 and is the first offspring between mom Helen and dad Dhirin (pronounced as *did-in*), both 12. Helen has had two previous litters with a different mate.

"Male or female, we're pleased our cub remains in a healthy condition. Both eyes have opened and he weighed in today at 4.2 pounds, a healthy weight for his age," said Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo's director of animal health. Veterinarians will continue to administer health exams every few weeks until he's about 16 weeks old for weight monitoring, vaccinations, and critical blood and fecal sampling, explained Collins. The check-ups are a part of the zoo's exemplary animal welfare program to ensure each animal receives optimal health care.

The mom and unnamed cub remain in an off-view maternity den to ensure continual bonding and proper nursing in a quieter setting while staff watch the new family on a closed-circuit monitoring system. To minimize disturbance, staff have minimal physical contact with the new family. The zoo anticipates putting the cub with mom in the outdoor, on-view exhibit in late September. Stay tuned for updates by visiting the zoo's [blog](#) and checking out [Facebook](#).

Snow leopard cubs are born helpless, with their eyes closed; for several weeks they rely on their mothers for nutrition. Since snow leopards are solitary animals in their natural range, the father lives separately from the cub and can be seen by guests in the zoo's snow leopard exhibit.

A public naming poll and contest for the cub will be held later this month. Animal fans can learn more about the naming poll and how to help protect these elusive, beautiful cats in their native range by coming to the zoo's [Wild Asia: Asian Wildlife Conservation Day](#) on August 12.

"Mom is providing excellent maternal care for her cub, just like she did with her other cubs," said Deanna DeBo, an animal collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "The cub is gaining more mobility each day in the den box and is using his legs instead of crawling or scooting."

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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 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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