

## **The snow leopard cub has a name!**

### ***Woodland Park Zoo announces winning name for snow leopard cub***

SEATTLE—Nearly 2,500 community members weighed in to name Woodland Park Zoo's snow leopard cub. Now, the 7-week-old male snow leopard cub has a name: Aibek (EYE-beck), which means long living (will live for many moons).



The name was chosen through online and guest polls and beat out the other two name options: Azat (Ah-zAAt), which means free, and Jakshy ('Zh'ock-She), which means good. In addition to the online poll, members of the community were invited to attend Wild Asia: Asian Wildlife Conservation Day, on August 12, where they could vote in person and be entered to win a prize (only people who voted on grounds during Wild Asia were eligible to win the prize). The lucky prize winner—Chris Melton of Shoreline, Wash.—will have the opportunity to join a snow leopard staff member for a private, exclusive meet and greet once Aibek is a few months old.

Aibek is the first offspring between mom Helen and dad Dhirin (Did-in), both 12 years old. Helen has had two previous litters with a different mate. Helen and Aibek 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. Aibek is more mobile and spends most days outside of the den in the indoor bedroom playing with mom. Animal care staff will begin introducing him to solid foods this week.

The zoo anticipates moving Aibek with mom in their on-view exhibit in late September. Stay tuned for updates by visiting the zoo's [blog](#) and checking out [Facebook](#).

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. 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](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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