

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

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Sneak peek of zoo's 2½-month-old snow leopard cub *Cub introductions to outdoor exhibit begin September 19*

WHAT: Aibek (EYE-beck), a 2½-month-old male snow leopard cub born at Woodland Park Zoo, is getting bigger and feistier, so it's time for his close-up! The press is invited behind the scenes to meet the beautiful cub during a weigh-in. Following the sneak peek, animal care staff will open the door for Aibek to take his first steps into the public outdoor exhibit.



Over the next few weeks, Aibek is scheduled to have access to the outdoor exhibit from noon to 3:00 p.m. daily. Visibility will largely depend on where the cub chooses to be in the exhibit, so viewing may be initially limited as he adjusts to his new surroundings.

Helen and Aibek have been living in an off-view maternity den for bonding and proper nursing in a quieter setting. During the past few weeks, Aibek has been spending time in the den's outdoor area and has recently begun sampling solid foods. Stay tuned for updates by visiting the zoo's [blog](#) and checking out [Facebook](#).

WHEN: **Tuesday, September 19**
Weigh-in and sneak peek: 11:30 a.m.–noon
Introduction to outdoor exhibit: noon

WHERE: Behind the scenes at Woodland Park Zoo's snow leopard exhibit. Meet PR staff at the West Entrance on Phinney Ave. N. between N. 55th & N. 56th Sts.

INFO: Aibek, which is Kyrgyzstani for "long living" (will live for many moons), was born July 6 and is the first offspring between mom Helen and dad Dhirin (*did-in*), both 12. Helen has had two previous litters with a different mate. Like snow leopard fathers in their natural range, the dad does not live with his cub.

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 were reclassified from endangered to vulnerable. They are still at high risk of extinction. Scientists disagree on population estimates for this elusive cat. Woodland Park Zoo's commitment to saving this species doesn't change; more extensive research and data are needed. Woodland Park Zoo will continue its important work with long-time conservation partner, 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.

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.

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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