

Woodland Park Zoo gets a special holiday surprise *Sloth bear gives birth to two babies*

SEATTLE—In the midst of the holiday season, Woodland Park Zoo is excited to announce the birth of two sloth bears. The cubs, born December 27, 2017, in an off-view maternity den, are the offspring of 13-year-old mother Tasha and 17-year-old father Bhutan.



The mother and newborn cubs will remain off view to allow for their best possible welfare. This time is critical for maternal bonding and undisturbed nursing. Animal care staff is monitoring the new family via a live web cam to ensure the cubs continue to thrive.

“Mom and cubs are doing very well,” said Pat Owen, collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo. “The first 72 hours are the most critical for a cub. Tasha’s cubs have surpassed that mark which is a good sign, but we will continue to monitor their health for the first few months to ensure they remain healthy and continue to grow.”

Animal care staff will continue to monitor the cubs’ progress on the den cam and will perform a routine wellness and development check on the cubs if Tasha begins to temporarily shift in and out of the maternity den. Sloth bears are born extremely small and blind at birth. They open their eyes at between 3 to 4 weeks old and can walk shortly after their eyes open. Unlike other bear species, sloth bear mothers carry cubs on their back when cubs reach about 2 months. If all goes well, weather included, Tasha and her cubs could be on exhibit sometime in March.

The zoo’s sloth bears are located in the state-of-the-art exhibit complex Banyan Wilds which also features Malayan tigers, Asian small-clawed otters and tropical birds.

Sloth bears are found in the lower elevations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. They are an endangered species, less than 10,000 remain in the wild. Their survival is challenged by fragmented populations, competition with other animals (particularly humans) for space and food, deforestation, and the bear parts trade for use in traditional Asian medicines. For over 400 years sloth bears were targeted for human exploitation to perform as “dancing bears;” in 2009, the last dancing bear in India was released. Woodland Park Zoo is a participant in the sloth bear Species

Survival Plan (SSP), a cooperative breeding program under the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) that ensures genetic diversity and demographic stability among North American zoos. In addition, the zoo funds Wildlife SOS and their sloth bear research through the Wildlife Survival Fund.

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 108 SSPs, overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, SSPs manage populations in North America to maximize their genetic and demographic diversity with the goal of ensuring their long-term survival. SSPs also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects.

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. Free Wi-Fi is available for zoo guests, made possible through products donated by Cisco. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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