

PRESS RELEASE

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See video of the newborn red pandas:

With ambient sound, no music: <https://youtu.be/XRIEBfQth9s>

With music, no ambient sound: <https://youtu.be/sbRFyxtewWQ>

Visit the zoo's blog: <http://bit.ly/redpandawpz>

Aww...zoo celebrates birth of red panda twins First birth of red pandas at the zoo in 29 years



SEATTLE—For the first time in nearly three decades, Woodland Park Zoo is celebrating the birth of red pandas: twin cubs born on June 19 to 2-year-old mom Hazel and 13-year-old dad Yukiko. The twins are the first offspring for Hazel while Yukiko has had offspring before he arrived at Woodland Park Zoo four years ago.

Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo's director of animal health, explained that as part of the zoo's exemplary animal care program, species-specific birth plans are created, which may include specialized strengthening exercises prior to breeding and birth, specialized prenatal diets, particular environmental needs, neonatal exams and necessary vaccinations, and postnatal care and monitoring to help ensure successful births.

The cubs were confirmed to be both females during a neonatal exam performed by Woodland Park Zoo's veterinary staff. Dr. Collins reported they weighed in at 5 ounces each. "These are appropriate weights at birth and a good indicator they are healthy and nursing. We will continue to perform health check-ups periodically, particularly during the first several weeks, for weight monitoring, vaccinations, and critical blood and fecal sampling," said Dr. Collins.

The mom and dad have been living in off-view indoor and outdoor exhibits. Hazel gave birth in an indoor, climate-controlled den where she is nursing and bonding with her cubs. Because red pandas are largely solitary, Yukiko will remain separated from the new family.

Mark Myers, a curator at Woodland Park Zoo, said the first month is an important time for newborn red pandas. "We're monitoring the new family via a den cam to ensure the cubs are thriving. Our animal care staff have minimal physical contact with the mom and cubs in order to minimize disturbance and allow Hazel a quiet environment. At this early stage, we're seeing great maternal care and nursing events," said Myers. "We remain cautiously optimistic but more optimistic than cautious at this point in time."

The gestation period for red pandas, between 90 and 160 days, varies widely because female red pandas have the ability to delay implanting a fertile egg. Red pandas are born extremely small and blind at birth, and rely solely on their mom for care. During the first several days of their lives, they do little but nurse and sleep. They should open their eyes at 2 to 3 weeks of age.

Animal management staff are currently discussing potential plans for putting Hazel and her cubs on exhibit for guests to see toward the end of the summer. "Red pandas are very charismatic animals. We have a large following of red panda fans at our zoo and on social media, so it's our hope we can share our new family with zoo guests in the near future," said Myers.

Hazel arrived at Woodland Park Zoo two years ago to be paired with Yukiko under the Red Panda Species Survival Plan (SSP), a conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of red pandas.

Red pandas share the name of giant pandas, but more closely resemble raccoons. Recent studies suggest they are closely related to skunks, weasels and raccoons.

An endangered species, fewer than 10,000 red pandas remain in their native habitat of bamboo forests in China, the Himalayas and Myanmar, and share part of their range with giant pandas. Their numbers are declining due to deforestation, increased agriculture and cattle grazing, and continuing pressure from growing local populations.

Woodland Park Zoo supports the [Red Panda Network](#), whose multi-prong approach aims to conserve this flagship species in Nepal. Help support the project by adopting a red panda through the zoo's [ZooParent Adoption Program](#).

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 108 Species Survival Plans, overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, these plans also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects.

Summer zoo hours through September 30 are 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.

Founded in 1899, 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. Each year, the zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives and a difference in our planet's future ecological health and sustainability. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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