

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | January 17, 2020
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Editor note: Visit the zoo's blog for more photos and video at <http://bit.ly/SeattleWatermelon>

Baby Malayan tapir on the way! Expectant mom due this summer

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is proud to announce that Ulan (OO-lawn, like Mulan), an 8-year-old female Malayan tapir, is expecting her first baby between May and June this summer. The last tapir born at the zoo was in 2007.

The expectant father is 19-year-old Bintang, who was born at Woodland Park Zoo. Bintang has sired two offspring when he lived at other zoos before he returned to Woodland Park Zoo in 2014.

Tapirs are among the most primitive large mammals in the world, changing little in appearance for millions of years. This prehistoric-looking animal looks like a massive pig with a long snout. However, because they have an odd number of toes (four toes on each front foot, three on each back foot), their closest relatives are horses and rhinos.

A newborn tapir looks like a watermelon on legs due to its reddish-brown coat dappled with white and cream-colored spots and stripes. This color pattern works wonders as camouflage in bamboo or reed jungles. The striped pattern begins to fade after a few months and the calf begins to look like a miniature adult at about 5 to 8 months old.

The gestation period for tapirs is approximately 13 months; the average weight for calves at birth is 22 pounds. Calves are born with their eyes open and can stand within one or two hours after birth.

The average weight for adult Malayan tapirs is 750 pounds, although they can weigh up to 900 pounds. The front half of an adult's body and its hind legs are black and the rear half above the legs is white.

Malayan tapirs are the largest of the four species of tapirs and are fairly rare in zoos in North America. "Not only are tapirs uncommon in zoos, they are highly endangered in the wild. Visitors are always amazed when they encounter these animals for the first time at our zoo, and tapirs typically evoke the wow factor because of their unique physique. Imagine being able to use your nose like a snorkel!" said Kevin Murphy, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo.

"Our pair of tapirs is recommended to breed based on their genetic makeup, so we are very excited to have Ulan become pregnant," added Murphy. "We are very hopeful for a successful birth and look forward to sharing this special baby with our community."

Zoo-goers can encounter the tapirs in the award-winning Trail of Vines habitat.

As part of the zoo's excellent animal care program, the animal care and health teams work together to create birth management plans, which cover a scope of activities including pre- and post-natal care. To help ensure a successful pregnancy and birth, the pre-natal care includes regular veterinary check-ups leading up to the birth, a diet created by a nutritionist, supplemental vitamins to help Ulan maintain a healthy weight for a normal delivery, and regular ultrasound exams to monitor progress of and ensure healthy development of the calf.



The tapir keepers have dedicated many hours to training the expectant mom to participate voluntarily in these non-invasive ultrasound exams.

“Training Ulan to participate in her own pre-natal care is very important and a part of the zoo’s customized birth management plan,” said Dr. Tim Storms, associate veterinarian at Woodland Park Zoo. “By conditioning Ulan to offer trained behaviors and tolerate ultrasound exams and check-ups, we’ve eliminated the need for anesthesia at such an important time in the baby’s development. Ulan is given the choice to participate or not participate. In fact, she eagerly munches on her favorite veggies and doesn’t seem to care much that I have an ultrasound probe on her belly.” Ulan has been having these stress-free ultrasound exams on a monthly basis.

The Malayan tapir is the only Asian species among the four tapir species. This endangered species ranges in Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Myanmar.

Woodland Park Zoo partners with conservation projects in [Peninsular Malaysia](#) and Sumatra, where tapirs are found. By investing in land protection and habitat management, the work the zoo is doing helps to protect tapirs in their current habitats. “One of the greatest threats to tapirs is loss of habitat. By protecting land for tigers, orangutans and hornbills, the zoo is also protecting land for tapirs,” said Woodland Park Zoo Vice President of Conservation Initiatives Peter Zahler. “Everyone can join our efforts too. By making informed purchasing decisions and buying products with certified [sustainable palm oil](#), you’re protecting tapirs and the forests they live in.”

Ulan and Bintang were paired for breeding under the Malayan Tapir Species Survival Plan, which is a cooperative, conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of tapirs.

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 111 [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.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.

Winter zoo hours through April 30: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily. Save 30% off summer admission rates now through March 31: www.zoo.org/visit.

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