

PRESS RELEASE

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Zoo prepares for the birth of a tapir *Birth window opens and baby proofing habitat is completed*

SEATTLE—*How do you prepare for a baby tapir's home? There may not be any cabinet safety locks, electric outlet covers or furniture safety straps, but baby tapir-proofing an exhibit is done very carefully!*

In January, Woodland Park Zoo announced the joyful news that its Malayan tapir, Ulan (OO-lawn, like Mulan), is expecting her first baby. The father is Bintang. And, starting now, the birth window has opened for Ulan. This means that animal care staff are closely observing the 8-year-old expectant mom for any unusual behaviors or signs of labor. Ulan's due date is between April and June.

Like human parents who put their hearts and minds into preparing a nursery for a new baby and baby proofing their home, the zoo makes suitable preparations for animal "nurseries."

"We have to think like a baby tapir. Where can I explore? Can I squeeze my head under that fence? Ooh, a pool of water, I want to jump in!" explained Kevin Murphy, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "We walked through the outdoor habitat with a fine-toothed comb, checking every nook and cranny where a baby tapir could potentially get into trouble and harm itself."

The animal care and exhibits teams worked together to mitigate any risk a tiny tapir might encounter. "This includes making decisions on what an acceptable gap size is for under fence lines or between fence lines, walls and the like. The size of baby tapirs varies and a baby tapir grows like a weed, so we tend to err on the conservative side in terms of safety," added Murphy.

Baby tapir-proofing

- Fence line and wall gaps filled in.
- Pool water level lowered for safe swimming.
- Upgraded cameras installed in the barn to allow tapir staff to monitor mom and baby.
- Barn equipped with temperature and humidity sensors to enable staff to monitor temperatures remotely and follow trend lines. State-of-the-art sensors that allow staff to monitor barn temperatures at the baby's height.
- Safety barriers added along the perimeter of the exhibit.

"Tapirs are warm weather animals, so it's important to ensure the baby does not get chilled and we provide a safe, comfortable environment for mom and baby," said Murphy.

Some might wonder why Ulan's birth window spans three months. "The birth window is rather wide for Ulan because several breeding sessions with her mate took place and we don't know exactly when she became pregnant," said Dr. Tim Storms, an associate veterinarian at Woodland Park Zoo. "We do know through recent ultrasound sessions the calf continues to show good growth and development, and the baby appears well-positioned for normal delivery."

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.

Fascinating facts about tapirs



- 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. 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.
- Tapirs are great, fast swimmers. They often use their trunk-like snout like a snorkel!
- Malayan tapirs are the largest of the four species of tapirs and are fairly rare in zoos in North America. Tapirs are highly endangered in the wild. The Malayan tapir ranges in Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra and Myanmar. The other three species are found in Central and South America.
- Woodland Park Zoo partners with conservation projects in [Peninsular Malaysia](#) and Sumatra, where tapirs are found. 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.

Where to see the tapirs

Woodland Park Zoo is temporarily closed following state recommendations to slow the spread of the coronavirus. When the zoo reopens, the tapirs can be found during regular zoo hours at the Trail of Vines.

While the zoo is closed to the public, the exceptional animal care and veterinary teams, and other staff continue to work to provide dedicated care to more than 900 animals. As a non-profit organization, the zoo is relying on the community now more than ever to help these wonderful animals continue to thrive. Contributions, both big and small, will help creatures of all sizes.

Please visit www.zoo.org/relief to help support the animals at Woodland Park Zoo.

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