

PRESS RELEASE

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A new tapir has joined Woodland Park Zoo's family—meet Binti!

SEATTLE—There's a new tapir in town at Woodland Park Zoo! Meet Binti (bin-tee), a female Malayan tapir. Binti, which means "daughter of" in Malay, will celebrate her 2nd birthday in July.



Binti arrived from Ellen Trout Zoo in Lufkin, Texas under the Malayan Tapir Species Survival Plan and will be paired with a male tapir scheduled to arrive in July. [Species Survival Plans](#) are cooperative breeding programs across accredited zoos to help ensure healthy, genetically diverse populations of select species or subspecies.

"We're getting to know Binti and she's getting to know her care team. She's curious and very friendly as she gets to know you. She likes her snacks, particularly willow browse, and being scratched," said Erin Sullivan, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "During food preparation, she squeals and whistles loudly to let us know she's ready for her breakfast. We are very happy she is here!"

Tapirs are among the most primitive large mammals in the world, changing little in appearance for millions of years. These prehistoric-looking animals are long and similar to the weight of a light horse and look 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.

Last year, Woodland Park Zoo's two remaining tapirs, Ulan (OO-lawn, like Mulan) and her 3-year-old daughter, Sempurna (sem-PER-nuh), moved to new homes as recommended by the Malayan Tapir Species Survival Plan. The zoo made the decision to delay bringing in new tapirs so it could focus on making upgrades to the tapir habitat to enhance the welfare, improve sustainability and increase the visitor experience.

The Director of Exhibits and Maintenance at Woodland Park Zoo, John Borgmeyer, spelled out several basic repairs that have been made to the tapir habitat. "To reduce slip hazards, the overall grade in the yard was improved and, for enhanced temperature control, a heat pump was installed to replace electric resistance heat, which should result in approximately 40% in electrical savings for the zoo. And as a nice added touch to the barn, the animal bedrooms were freshened up with a new coat of paint," said Borgmeyer.

Creature comforts are widely provided for animals throughout the zoo. Many elements are deftly camouflaged, for example heating coils, explained Sullivan. "The heating coils embedded in concrete pads at the windows were replaced to keep the tapirs warm and toasty during the winter so that visitors can go nose to snout with

the tapirs, and one viewpoint was reconstructed to allow zoo-goers more visual contact,” added Sullivan.

Like horses, tapirs have hooves, so foot health is paramount. Removal of the concrete floor in the barn allowed for the installation of mulch as a substrate to create softer flooring as they walk and for better weight distribution. The substrate in the yard was refreshed with a sand and soil mixture to create a softer and more appropriate surface for the tapirs.

The tapir habitat is located in the zoo’s Trail of Vines, which is also home to orangutans, siamangs, François’ langurs and Visayan warty pigs. “We’re thrilled to bring tapirs back to the zoo after a 10-month absence and to introduce Binti to our community. She and her future male companion will be wonderful ambassadors for their cousins in the wild as visitors learn about the fascinating adaptations of these prehistoric mammals,” said Sullivan.

As Binti adjusts to her new home, she may not always be viewable. “If you don’t see Binti, walk around the zoo, enjoy other animals and circle back to the tapir habitat—she may surprise you!” said Sullivan.

Tantalizing tidbits 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. They use their short, prehensile nose to pluck leaves and fruit.
- Tapirs are excellent, fast swimmers and 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 with only 37 Malayan tapirs currently living in North American zoos.
- 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. Fewer than 2,500 Malayan tapirs remain in the wild.
- 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. Protect tapirs and the forests they live in by making informed purchasing decisions and buying products with certified [sustainable palm oil](#) and choosing [Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC\)](#) certified paper and wood products.

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