



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT

Cheryl Piropato
Education & Communications Director
260-427-6803 cheryl@kidszoo.org

Red Panda Cub Born June 3 Does Not Survive

A red panda born at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo on Monday, June 3, has died.

"Our staff is truly saddened by this news," said Animal Curator Mark Weldon.

The male cub was born to female red panda Xiao (pronounced JOW), age 3, and her 4-year-old mate, Junjie.

"Our daily visual checks did not reveal any problems with the cub," Weldon said. The cub was seen curled up in the nest box, which is normal behavior. The cub was scheduled for a full physical exam today.

This was the second litter of cubs to be born at the zoo since 1997. Two cubs were born to Xiao in 2012, but neither cub survived. About half of red panda cubs born in zoos die within the first month of life. In 2012, 30 red panda cubs were born in North American zoos. Fifteen of those cubs survived.

A necropsy conducted by the zoo's veterinary staff revealed that the cub had not ingested any milk. This could mean that the cub did not nurse, or that Xiao did not produce any milk.

"Raising animals in zoos is not an exact science," said Weldon. "Our preference is always for animals to raise their own young, rather than hand-rearing them. Mother-raised babies always become better parents when they have their own young. It's a fine line to know when to intervene."

Mary Noell of the Cincinnati Zoo serves as North American Regional Studbook Keeper for red pandas and maintains data on all red pandas in United States and Canadian zoos. "This is not an unusual situation," she said of the cub's death. "Xiao is still a very young panda." In general, young mothers are less successful in rearing young.

"There is a genetic line within this subspecies where [the females] do not produce enough milk," Noell said. "Unfortunately we don't know this is a possibility until a cub dies."

Noell said that Xiao's future as a breeding red panda will be evaluated. Recommendations for breeding and transferring animals among zoos are made annually. Both Noell and Weldon noted that either Xiao or Junjie could be moved to another zoo to find a new mate in the future.

Zoos continually share information on best practices and advances in husbandry for red pandas and all animals. A new air-conditioned nest box was installed in the red panda exhibit this spring. It includes a side window that allowed keepers to peek into the box once a day and view the cub. "We tried to disturb mom and the cub as little as possible," Weldon said. The zoo pathway leading to the exhibit was closed off when Xiao began nesting on Monday.

The breeding of red pandas is overseen by the Species Survival Plan (SSP), a program of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA). The goal of the SSP is to maximize genetic diversity in captive populations of endangered animals.

Red pandas are native to the forested foothills of the Himalaya Mountains in China and Nepal, where they feed primarily on bamboo. Though they share a name with the famed black-and-white giant pandas, the two are not closely related. The name "panda" comes from the Nepalese word *ponya*, which means "bamboo-eater."

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About the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo: The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 500,000 guests annually. The zoo was voted Indiana's #1 "Gotta-Do Summer Attraction" and is consistently named one of the nation's **Top Ten Zoos for Kids** by national media outlets.

The zoo is a conservation leader, contributing \$50,000 annually to local, regional, and international efforts to protect wild animals and habitats, and participating in cooperative management programs for 15 endangered species.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo receives no tax dollars for operations. The zoo's operations are funded entirely by earned revenue and donations.

The zoo is open April 20-October 13, 2013. Admission is \$13.50 for adults; \$10.50 for seniors age 60+; and \$8.50 for children ages 2-14. Babies age 1 and under and Zoo Society Members are admitted free.