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August 2, 2013

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New Orangutan is Now On Exhibit at the Zoo

Tara, the Sumatran orangutan who arrived at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo this spring, is ready to meet the public. She will be in the orangutan exhibit now through Sunday.

"Tara is amazing," says zoo keeper Angie Selzer, who cares for the orangutans. "She has adapted very well to her new home."

Tara has not yet been mixed with Tengku, the zoo's 28-year-old male orangutan, or Melati, a 28-year-old female, so she will be alone in the exhibit through the weekend. "We want Tara to become completely comfortable in the exhibit before being mixed with the other orangutans," Selzer said. So far, the three orangutans have had limited contact with each other through mesh panels behind the scenes.

"Our next step is to allow Tara to meet Melati face to face," Selzer says. That encounter will probably happen in the next few weeks behind the scenes, meaning that there could be days when no orangutans are in the exhibit. After Tara and Melati get to know each other, Tengku will join them.

Tara, age 18, has a habit of climbing up to the skylights in the orangutan exhibit, so zoo guests will have to look carefully to see the petite red ape this weekend.

Tara arrived in Fort Wayne in April from the Columbus (Ohio) Zoo. She can be distinguished from the other orangutans by her petite build and darker fur on her face, hands, and feet.

The zoo hopes that Tara and Tengku will someday produce offspring, but it is too early to predict when that might happen.

Sumatran orangutans are a critically endangered species and are managed in zoos by a Species Survival Plan (SSP), which seeks to maintain genetic diversity in the captive population. These rare apes are found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, where

their future is threatened by persistent habitat destruction as forests are converted to palm oil plantations, timber concessions, and mining operations. Zoos could prove to be the last stronghold for this species, which some experts predict could become functionally extinct in the wild within 10 to 20 years.

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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.