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## **Rare Clouded Leopard Cubs Born at Nashville Zoo**

Jing Jai, a rare clouded leopard at Nashville Zoo, gave birth to three genetically valuable cubs on May 30 at 3 p.m. Weighing about a half of a pound each, the two male and one female cubs are all healthy and being hand-raised by zoo keepers. Jing Jai and her mate Arun are both doing fine in their off-exhibit breeding facility.

“This birth represents a significant milestone for the Zoo and our commitment to clouded leopard conservation,” says Nashville Zoo President Rick Schwartz. “These three little cubs carry a new set of genes into the captive population and will contribute significantly to the survival of this species.”

At just over three years old, this is Jing Jai’s first litter. Both Jing Jai and Arun (2 and a half years old) came from the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Chonburi, Thailand in 2008 as part of a world-wide conservation effort to save the species from extinction.

Due to deforestation, pet trade and poaching (primarily for their beautifully patterned skin), clouded leopards are now seriously endangered. In addition, the species is difficult to manage in captivity resulting in a North American population with diminishing genetic viability.

In 2002, Nashville Zoo partnered with the Smithsonian’s National Zoological Park, the Association of Zoos and Aquarium’s Clouded Leopard Species Survival Plan and the Thailand Zoological Park Organization to create the Thailand Clouded Leopard Consortium. The goal of the consortium is to develop a multi-faceted conservation program including a viable self-sustaining clouded leopard breeding and research program. In 2005, Nashville Zoo successfully imported new clouded leopards from Thailand to the U.S. for the first time in 25 years. In 2008, a second import included a pair to Nashville Zoo (Arun and Jing Jai) and a pair to the National Zoo’s Conservation & Research Center in Front Royal, VA. In

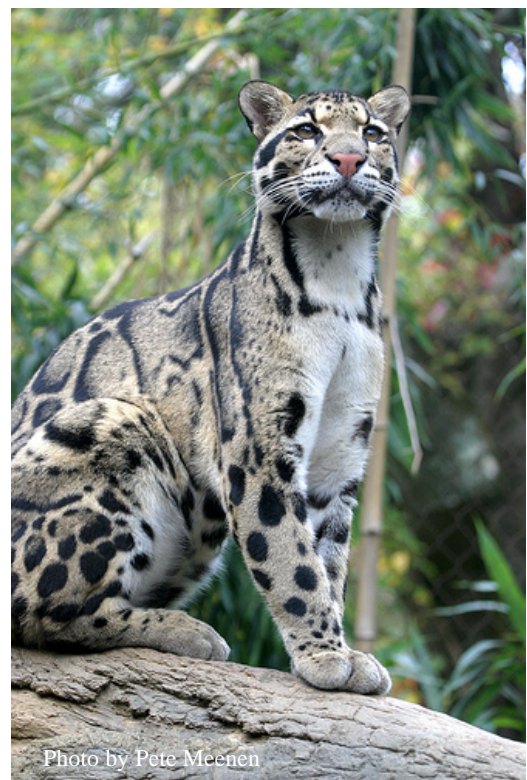
March of this year, the National Zoo's imported female gave birth to two male cubs. The consortium plans to pair the female cub in Nashville with one of the male cubs in Front Royal.

"Introducing clouded leopards to potential mates is extremely difficult due their atypical nature," says Schwartz. "Male clouded leopards are often aggressive and have been known to attack and kill potential female partners. We've learned how to reduce fatal attacks by hand-raising cubs and introducing males to mates at a young age." Because of this, Nashville Zoo made the decision to hand-raise the cubs to help with socialization and reduce the risk of infant mortality.

The three cubs are expected to open their eyes at about 10 days old. Feeding on a special feline milk diet, they will add about a half of a pound in weight each week for the next few months. At about six months of age, the cubs will be paired up with potential mates.

Clouded leopards are native to the dense forests of Southeast Asia and parts of China. They grow to about five feet long (half of that is tail) and weigh 30 to 50 pounds. With short legs, large paws and a long tail, clouded leopards are well adapted to spend much of their time high in trees.

Nashville Zoo is accredited by the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums, assuring the highest standards of animal care and husbandry. The Zoo is a non-profit organization located at 3777 Nolensville Road and is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The mission of Nashville Zoo is to inspire a culture of understanding and discovery of our natural world through conservation, innovation and leadership. For more information about Nashville Zoo, call 615-833-1534 or visit [www.nashvillezoo.org](http://www.nashvillezoo.org).



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