



Photo by Christian Sperka

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Nashville Zoo Welcomes Rare Clouded Leopard

Nashville Zoo's clouded leopard Jing Jai gave birth to a rare female cub on May 24. This is the second clouded leopard birth at the Zoo in two years as the Zoo continues its work to save this species in decline.

"Clouded leopard conservation is a unique and ambitious project at Nashville Zoo," said Rick Schwartz, Nashville Zoo president. "The birth of the female cub not only adds to a worldwide clouded leopard population that is rapidly decreasing, but it also increases the genetic viability of the captive population."

Clouded leopards are seriously endangered because of deforestation, poaching and the pet trade. Since 2002, Nashville Zoo has been a member of the Thailand Clouded Leopard Consortium, an ongoing collaboration with the National Zoo, Point Defiance Zoo and organizations to develop a multi-faceted conservation program that includes a viable self-sustaining breeding program. Introducing clouded leopards to potential mates is difficult due to the cat's reclusive disposition. Male clouded leopards are often aggressive and have been known to attack and kill potential female partners. To reduce fatal attacks, cubs are hand-raised and introduced to mates at a young age.

At one month old, the cub, named Matsi, weighs 1.5 pounds and is being hand-reared by Zoo staff. The Consortium plans to pair her with a male clouded leopard born in February at the National Zoo in Washington D.C. This is the second birth for Jing Jai and her mate Arun. Last year, she gave birth to three cubs that were on exhibit at Nashville Zoo during fall 2009.

Clouded leopards are native to the dense forests of Southeast Asia and parts of China. They are considered the smallest of the large cats, growing to about five feet long (half of that is tail) and weighing 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 nonprofit 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.

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