



May 4, 2007
NEWS RELEASE

TIGER CUB BORN AT THE CALGARY ZOO

The Calgary Zoo is thrilled to announce that Kita, one of our Amur (Siberian) tigers, gave birth to a healthy cub on **March 21, 2007** at 11:30 p.m. The little one is still in the den and being diligently taken care of by its mother. The sex of the tiger cub has not yet been determined as keepers and vets have not had an opportunity for a hands-on examination.

"We've been waiting to share the news because, in the wild, reproduction is not considered successful until the critical post-partum period has passed and the mother emerges from the den with her young," explains Kevin Strange, Manager of Conservation Education and Communication. "Amur tigers are part of a Species Survival Program (SSP) and, as such, every birth is significant. We are excited to now be able to share this great news," says Strange.

"Kita is an experienced mother and has taken very good care of her cub. With no competition for milk from a litter mate, the baby has become quite the little butterball," says keeper Larry Miller, who has been at the zoo for over 35 years.

Visitors may be lucky enough to catch a brief sighting of the cub, although it may be several weeks until the baby tiger is regularly venturing out into the exhibit. **However, in collaboration with and thanks to the technical assistance of our Zoolights partner ENMAX, the Calgary Zoo is excited to be able to provide a glimpse into the private world of the tiger's den.** By utilizing cameras already in the nursery and with the assurance that Kita and her cub have not been disturbed, you can view this beautiful animal parenting her adorable cub and experience what few people ever have a chance to share. Video highlights from the den are available on the ENMAX website www.enmax.com/tiger or you can view photos and the release on the **Calgary Zoo** website at www.calgaryzoo.com.

Stay tuned for the announcement that Kita and her cub are making their public debut and for details of the naming contest.

Media will be advised when a photo opportunity is available.

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BACKGROUNDER – THE CALGARY ZOO'S AMUR (SIBERIAN) TIGERS

Mother tiger Kita was born in Toronto on September 3, 1995 and arrived at the Calgary Zoo on August 25, 1999. The father is Lashka, son of Khasam and Teykova, and was born on March 30, 1994 at the Calgary Zoo. Lashka was sent to the Edmonton Valley Zoo in February 1999 and returned to Calgary in May 2006 following a breeding recommendation from the SSP (Species Survival Program) managed by the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums). Khasam's genetics, passed down through Lashka, are considered especially valuable in the SSP as he was wild-born.

Khasam's story is compelling and an example of how, by officials rescuing a doomed cub, his genetic legacy is able to benefit the future of his species. On November 28, 1989, the director of a wildlife area near the River Khasami in eastern Russia received a message that two tiger cubs had appeared. They were observed for about a month, but no mother was discovered in the area. It was estimated that they had been born in April or May of that year, but the cubs were unable to hunt for themselves and were existing by eating the remains of animals killed by other predators. On December 20, 1989 the decision was made to capture the tiger cubs since it was determined they could not survive on their own. They were caught on December 22, 1989 and transported to the Moscow Zoo. Khasam and his sister came to the Calgary Zoo on May 17, 1991. Sadly, Khasam died January 20, 2004, succumbing to inoperable cancer.

Kita was previously mated with Khasam and her first litter of four cubs – three females and a male - was born on April 20, 2000. One of them, Katja, still remains at the Calgary Zoo. The other two females were sent to the Czech Republic in October 2004 – Tsamara to the Pilzen Zoo and Marilei to the Prague Zoo. Tsamara has now had a litter of two cubs of her own. The only male cub, Fedor Eh, was sent to the Winnipeg Zoo on May 15, 2006.

AMUR (SIBERIAN) TIGER FACTS

Amur (Siberian) tigers are critically endangered. In the early 1900s, they lived throughout the north eastern Chinese and Korean peninsula, north eastern Mongolia, and south eastern Russia. Today, their range is largely confined to a very small part of Russia's southern Far East, the Amur-Ussuri region. In the 1930s, the wild population may have been lower than 50, but, with controls on hunting and illegal poaching, the numbers rose to more than 200 by 1982. A count taken in 1996 by Landmark Survey [National Geographic, June 16, 2005] reported 430 Amur (Siberian) tigers in the wild and continuing Russian conservation efforts have led to a slight increase from that number and what is hoped to be a stable subspecies population. The captive population of Amur tigers comprises several hundred. Developed in 1982, the Species Survival Program (SSP) for the Siberian tiger is the longest running program for a tiger species. It has been very successful and used as a model for other SSPs. While it is not difficult to breed these tigers in captivity, the possibility of releasing animals to the wild is small. If a captive born tiger were released to the wild, it would lack the necessary hunting and survival skills to have a viable future. Continuing conservation efforts to secure the wild population are therefore still very important.

Male Amur (Siberian) tigers weigh on average 225 kg (500 lb) and females weigh about 160 kg (350 lb). The largest captive Amur tiger was 3.7 metres (12 ft) long and weighed over 423 kg (932 lb). They are differentiated from other tiger subspecies by their paler fur and dark brown (rather than black) stripes. As well as colour differences, their fur is thicker and longer to help deal with the cold temperatures in their natural habitat. They also have larger feet than other tiger subspecies to facilitate walking in the snow.

Courtesy of the Calgary Zoo – May 4, 2007