



El Paso Zoo

EL PASO ZOO'S SUMATRAN ORANGUTANS EXPECTING THIS SPRING

Pregnancy of Rare Orangutan is Part of AZA Breeding Recommendation

El Paso, Texas (January 28, 2015) - The El Paso Zoo's Sumatran orangutans, Ibu and Butch, are expecting their first baby this spring. This will be the first offspring for both 23-year-old Ibu and 29-year-old Butch. Ibu is one of only 12 females included in the current breeding recommendation of the AZA's Species Survival Plan for this species.

Butch came to El Paso Zoo to breed with Ibu in March of 2011, as part of a breeding recommendation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP). Ibu and Butch have bonded well over the last three years and it was evident that someday they'd be pregnant.

"There are no words to explain our excitement about her pregnancy. We've been working with Ibu to prepare her for pregnancy and motherhood for several years," said Griselda Martinez, Collections Supervisor. The community can help with Ibu's baby training by purchasing a plush orangutan at the Zoo's gift shop and donating it to Ibu. Call (915) 521-1871 for more information.

Maintaining a breeding population in accredited zoos is an integral component to the future of their survival due to the pressure on wild populations. The El Paso Zoo is one of 27 AZA accredited institutions with Sumatran orangutans.

"Staff has been working hard on many fronts for orangutan conservation and this represents a very important component of that effort. The birth of a Sumatran orangutan at the El Paso Zoo could be one of the most important conservation achievements in the history of the zoo," said Steve Marshall, El Paso Zoo Director.

Many conservationists predict that if any of the five species of great apes become extinct in the wild during this century, it will be the Sumatran orangutan. The wild population has declined dramatically by more than 50 percent during the past few decades with an estimated wild population of only 7,300.

"This birth is going to be very significant for our Zoo and orangutans. Ibu's keepers have worked extremely hard to make it possible for the veterinary team to monitor Ibu. She presents her stomach and we are able to perform sonograms which made it easier for us to confirm that she is pregnant and monitor the developing baby," said Dr Victoria Milne, Zoo Veterinarian.

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Steve Marshall – Zoo Director

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The El Paso Zoo has focused on Sumatran orangutan conservation efforts as one of its top priorities over the past 10 years with support from the El Paso Zoological Society Conservation Fund. The fund supports programs in Indonesia that rescue and relocate hundreds of injured, orphaned and displaced orangutans. In recent years, the Zoo has expanded its conservation efforts to include more targeted education programs, the further development of a palm oil smart phone application and a partnership with UTEP that sends Zoo staff to Indonesia to assist with “hands on” orangutan conservation.

To follow Ibu’s pregnancy and get exclusive weekly information, the community can follow her mommy blog “Motherhood: A New WILD Life...From Sonogram to Orangutan” at ibusmommyblog.com.

About El Paso Zoo

Locally recognized as the Best Place to Take the Kiddos, the El Paso Zoo sits on 35 acres of fun and adventure. Bigger and better than ever, the El Paso Zoo is an expansive green space that is home to exotic animals from around the world and features family attractions such as the Foster Tree House Playground, African Star train, the Hunt Family Desert Spring water feature and Giraffe Encounters. Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the El Paso Zoo celebrates the value of animals and natural resources and creates opportunities for people to rediscover their connection to nature. For more information, visit elpasozoo.org. For news and exclusive content, follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/elpasozoo), Twitter (www.twitter.com/elpasozoo) and YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/theelpasozoo).

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