



## **NEWS RELEASE**

- For immediate release -

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### ***Two red panda cubs born at the Zoo Conservation success and cuteness x2!***

Calgary, AB – On May 30, the zoo's six-year old female red panda Malikha gave birth to two cubs and is raising them herself – a monumental success for a species classified as threatened with extinction. These two cubs increase the number of successful red panda births at the Calgary Zoo to eleven since 1994.

"Each successful birth, and in particular when the cubs are mother-raised, is an important achievement as red panda cub mortality rates are estimated as high as 74 per cent," said Tim Sinclair-Smith, Curator. "To have two cubs being successfully mother-raised is an absolutely outstanding accomplishment."

"It will likely be several months before the cubs can be seen by the public," continued Sinclair-Smith. "These are den animals and it is extremely important that we allow the mother to take care of them undisturbed. We're able to monitor the cubs' development and weight-gain by viewing them with remote cameras located in the den."

Red pandas are part of a Species Survival Plan managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The mother, Malikha, came to the Calgary Zoo from the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in Ohio on September 28, 2005 and the cubs' father, Zeyar, came from Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba on October 1, 2008 – both transfers as part of breeding recommendations from the AZA Species Survival Plan. Red pandas reach maturity at about 18 months of age.

The zoo currently has six red pandas: a senior male Kachin who at 15 years old receives extra attention daily from the veterinary team and keepers to monitor his special geriatric needs; Keti a one-year-old female; Zeyar age 3; Malikha age 6; and the two new cubs. Cub naming will be decided upon closer to their public debut.

In the wild, red panda survival is threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation of populations due to deforestation, poaching, and genetic problems due to inbreeding. While it is difficult to obtain an accurate census, the red panda population is currently estimated at fewer than 10,000 mature individuals.

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*The Calgary Zoo is part of a professional, accredited association and member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) comprised of caring, trusted experts committed to ensuring that many endangered and threatened species are part of the world's future. AZA and CAZA advocate on behalf of animals with a unified and consistent voice, and collaborate with others committed to their long-term survival. The Calgary Zoo participates in many Species Survival Plans (SSP), a network among accredited institutions designed to breed endangered species in captivity to ensure the best possible genetic diversity and maintain healthy populations in human care. Through our conservation, education and research programs, many animals in our care play an essential role in the survival of their species in the wild.*

*The Calgary Zoological Society is a charitable organization. Charitable Registration #118824192 RR0001*