



## **NEWS RELEASE**

- For Immediate Release -

*June 26, 2009*

### **WHAT'S JUST BORN, JUST ADORABLE AND JUST OH SO CUTE? Red panda cub born at the Calgary Zoo**

Calgary, AB – The Calgary Zoo is pleased to announce the birth of a female red panda on June 4, 2009. Parents are 5 year old Malikha and 2 year old Zeyar. This is Malikha's second successful turn at motherhood.

Ingrid Goemans, zookeeper, has been keeping a watchful eye on mother, Malikha, and her newborn cub since the birth.

"The cub is doing very well and we can tell by her weight gain and the size of her tummy that she is being well fed and cared for," said Goemans.

"Once again Malikha is being a very good mother and while she tolerates me briefly taking the cub for health checks, she grooms her and looks her over as soon as I return her to the nest box."

Goemans said the vet checks are as brief as possible to limit any possible distress to both Malikha and the cub, but are necessary to ensure the cub is gaining weight appropriately and continues to thrive.

Each successful birth, and in particular when the cub is mother-raised, is an important achievement as red panda cub mortality rates are estimated as high as 74 per cent. There have been nine red panda cubs born at the Calgary Zoo since 1994. Malikha's first cub Kayah, also a female, was born on June 11, 2007 and was transferred to the Toronto Zoo on September 24, 2008. Red pandas are part of a Species Survival Plan managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) of which the Calgary Zoo is an accredited member. Malikha came to the Calgary Zoo from the Cincinnati Ohio Zoo on September 28, 2005 and Zeyar came from Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park Zoo 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.

"It is important to continue to support conservation and protection of red pandas so that some day we see a natural increase in their populations," said Tim Sinclair-Smith, Curator of the Eurasia section.

"There is still a long way to go to this end, but this new birth will have a positive impact on captive population growth and genetic diversity of the species."

Red pandas are classified as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. This is the third most serious classification in reference to how close a species is to extinction, behind Critically Endangered and Endangered. In 2006, the IUCN Red List classified red pandas as endangered; so this change in classification shows a promising trend.

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

**The naming of the cub has not yet been decided. She will not be seen in the exhibit until she is ready to leave the den on her own – which will likely happen near the end of the summer. Stay tuned for her public debut!**

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Media:

Interviews available upon request with Tim Sinclair-Smith or Ingrid Goemans.

You may also contact:

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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*