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County Executive

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NEWS RELEASE

County Executive McMahon Announces Amur Tiger Cubs on Exhibit

Birth of two cubs represents critical milestone

SYRACUSE, NY – The Rosamond Gifford Zoo announces that two Amur tiger cubs, born in late April to mother Zeya, will be viewable to the public in their exhibit on the Wildlife Trail starting Tuesday, September 5.

The cubs — a male named Zuzaan, and female named Soba (pronounced ‘Zova’) — were born on the morning of April 29. Since then, they have spent the summer in an off-exhibit den with Zeya while they received necessary vaccinations to provide them with immunity to common diseases and infections that they may encounter in their exhibit. While the cubs stayed close to Zeya in the first month of life, they’ve grown more explorative and rambunctious in the past few months, and have begun to venture outside of their den to explore the outdoor portion of their home.

“It is quite a privilege to be able to see not one, but two of these rare tiger cubs at our zoo,” County Executive Ryan McMahon said. “The birth of these special, striped cubs is a big success for our zoo and community, and it’s all thanks to the diligence and expertise of the animal care team at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.”

Amur tigers are the largest feline species on Earth, but their population is one of the smallest — the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has determined that less than 400 of these Critically Endangered cats remain in the wild. Along with other Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) -accredited institutions, the Rosamond Gifford Zoo participates in the Amur tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP), which seeks to contribute new generations of genetically diverse Amur tigers to the currently declining population. The goal of all SSPs is to reverse negative population trends of species at risk of extinction, with the goal of one day, potentially taking these animals born in human care and introducing them into the wild.

“Since the birth of the cubs, our team of tiger care specialists have worked tirelessly to provide routine vaccinations and regular health check-ups to ensure their well-being,” Executive Zoo Director Ted Fox said. “We’ve all waited for this moment, and know the public is anxious to see them. Now we get to enjoy seeing the curious tiger cubs as they explore their exhibit — all while knowing that the care they received these past few months has set them up for a lifetime of health and success.”

The zoo has cared for Zeya and the cubs’ father, Thimbu, for over three years, but the process of introducing them was long, slow, and unpredictable. The zoo’s goal has always been to pair these tigers to breed, but as apex predators, this species of cat is incredibly complex. After years of introductions, Zeya and Thimbu have welcomed their first cubs, passing along their crucial genetics to a new generation of Amur tigers.

“Thimbu has four siblings, but he is the first of the five to have sired cubs,” said Fox. “Zeya was hand-reared by Beardsley Zoo personnel after her mother was uninterested in raising her. The birth of any Amur tiger cub is remarkable, but with all the factors in this instance, these cubs are truly extraordinary.”

Unlike her mother, Zeya instinctually took to motherhood, and has diligently raised her cubs throughout the past three months. Visitors will now be able to see Zeya and her cubs on exhibit at the Wildlife Trail, weather permitting,

For more information on Amur tigers, visit rosamondgiffordzoo.org.

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