Beat: Arts

Critically endangered Sumatran tiger gives birth to triplets at London Zoo

-, 13.03.2014, 02:23 Time

USPA News - A Sumatran tiger, a species that is facing imminent extinction after its numbers in the wild were reduced to less than 400 over the past decades, has given birth to three cubs at the London Zoo, officials announced on Wednesday. The zoo`s 5-year-old Sumatran tiger, Melati, gave birth to the cubs on February 3 but the news was kept quiet until Wednesday.

Amy Plowman, head of conservation at the London Zoo, said they had not yet determined whether the cubs were male or female, but both appear healthy. Hidden cameras within the zoo monitored the birth of the animals, which took place just after midnight, Plowman said. The cameras are currently being used to record footage of the animals that will be made available on the zoo`s YouTube channel until the animals are ready to join the other animals in the public part of the zoo. When asked why the birth of the cubs was kept from the public for the last five and a half weeks, Plowman said it was done "to give the tiger a little bit of time just to be with the cubs, and also for our keepers. Just to make sure they could concentrate fully on the tigers without any interruptions or disturbances." Plowman, ecstatic about the birth of the cubs, added: "We are absolutely thrilled, and they are so adorable! We keep looking at the footage as well, and they`re beautiful, aren`t they?" Melati gave birth to another tiger cub last year, the first tiger to be born at the London Zoo in 17 years, but it was found dead just three weeks later after it drowned in a pool inside the enclosure. Environmentalists have expressed grave concern in recent years as there are believed to be less than 400 Sumatran tigers remaining in the wild due to accelerating deforestation and rampant poaching in Sumatra, despite efforts to provide better protection for them in Indonesia and new anti-poaching laws. Increasing population and the subsequent need for agricultural plantation such as rice paddies previously drove Indonesia`s other two tiger sub-species into complete extinction. In the 1930s, the Bali tiger became extinct due to hunting and deforestation and in the 1970s the Javan tiger suffered the same fate, leaving the Sumatran tiger as the sole tiger sub-species in the country.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1997/critically-endangered-sumatran-tiger-gives-birth-to-triplets-at-london-zoo.html

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UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619