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Tigers times three at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo



The Rosamond Gifford Zoo is pleased to announce the birth of three Amur tiger cubs. Parents, Tatiana and Toma, welcomed the trio – two boys and a girl -- in the afternoon hours on May 7, the day before Mother’s Day. Dr. George Kollias, pictured at left, examined the cubs. (Photo credit: Amelia Beamish, Rosamond Gifford Zoo.)

Cornell's veterinary faculty and students provide full-service health care to the animals in the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park in Syracuse.

“The birth of baby tiger triplets at the zoo is great news,” said Onondaga County executive Joanie Mahoney. “We are glad they are here and look forward to letting everyone see

them at the zoo sometime soon.”

Mother Tatiana, 11, and father Toma, 10, were introduced to each other this past December. It is the second litter of cubs for Tatiana. Her first, consisting of Korol, Kunali and Naka, was born on June 7, 2004. Brothers, Korol and Kunali, now reside at The Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, while Naka lives at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo, where she has been recommended for breeding.

“Tatiana is an excellent mother,” said Tom LaBarge, curator of animals at the zoo. “With the exception of occasional veterinary health checks, we’ll allow her to take care of the cubs without interference. The cubs will be weaned and ready to go on exhibit in late August or early September.”

The zoo is working to provide a live video feed from the cubbing den so zoo visitors may have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the cubs.

The Rosamond Gifford Zoo participates in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ Species Survival Plan, a population management and conservation program that began in 1981. Currently there are 57 tigers in 149 zoos in North America. Amur tigers, also known as Siberian tigers, are a critically endangered species. It is estimated that there are between 300 and 400 Amur tigers remaining in the wild, found in isolated forests across eastern Asia, in parts of Siberia and China. The

species suffers from habitat loss and poaching.

About the Parents

Mom, Tatiana

Born March 13, 2000 at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

Arrived in Syracuse in early fall 2002

Weighs 350 lbs.

Mother to Korol, Kunali & Naka, born June 7, 2004

Identify her by the long vertical stripe at the base of her tail.

Of interest: Tatiana's paternal grandmother was killed by a poacher in Russia; her father was rescued as an orphaned cub.

Dad, Toma

Born May 21, 2001 at the Buffalo Zoo

Arrived in Syracuse late 2010

Weighs 470 lbs.

Sired one offspring at the Buffalo Zoo

Identify him by his light orange color and shoulders that are nearly void of stripes.

Of interest: Toma is a cancer survivor. Initially the SSP had recommended him for placement at a west coast zoo. Concerns about the impact of a cross-country trip resulted in considerations of a zoo in closer proximity, which is why the Rosamond Gifford Zoo was selected. Genetically, he is very valuable tiger, as his genes are not well-represented within the North American population.

Early Stages of Life

Gestation length ~104 days

11 days old – eyes open

5 weeks old – begin playing with siblings

9 weeks old – begin grooming siblings

10 weeks old – self grooming begins

13 weeks old -- begin eating meat

17 weeks old – weaning complete

2-3 years old – leave mother to begin solitary lifestyle

Fun Facts

- Tigers are super predators, but not efficient hunters; they are successful in their hunts about 1 in 20 attempts. They will often make a kill and then gorge on the meat (up to 60 to 110 pounds), then sleep for several days.
- Each tiger has its own unique stripe pattern.
- Amur Tigers have a thick fur coat and a layer of fat up to 2" thick on their belly and flanks that help them tolerate temperatures as low as negative 45 degrees.
- Baby tigers gain approximately 100 grams per day; an adult male weighs an average of 425 lbs., females average 350 lbs.
- Mother tigers spend approximately 36 percent of their time nursing their cubs and 24 percent of their time grooming the cubs.