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## **Endangered Red Panda Cub Born at Seneca Park Zoo**

**Monday, July 8, 2024** – Seneca Park Zoo today announced that Raji, Seneca Park Zoo’s female red panda, gave birth to a cub on Thursday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. Raji arrived at the Zoo late last year from Rosamond Gifford Zoo in Syracuse based on a breeding recommendation from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA).

Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Chris McKinney says, “Raji unfortunately abandoned her cub, which is not uncommon for first-born cubs of red pandas. We have made the necessary decision to bottle-feed the cub.” McKinney continues, “The good news is that the cub nursed initially and received colostrum from mom, which is incredibly important to survival.”

“Animal Health and Animal Care teams are providing excellent care to ensure he has what he needs.” says Seneca Park Zoo Director Steve Lacy. “The first thirty days are crucial, and the cub is being monitored and fed around the clock. This adorable red panda is gaining weight appropriately, and we are excited to share this great news with the public.”

The cub’s father is Willie, who also fathered cubs Lukas and Micah with female Starlight. Starlight, Lukas, and Micah were transferred to other AZA Zoos in 2023 as part of the Species Survival Plan for red pandas.

Guests have a rare chance to view the cub in the Animal Hospital on Zoo grounds. Starting Tuesday, July 9, guests can see the cub through the viewing glass in the procedure room, where he will be housed for the short term. The

Animal Hospital is accessible to guests during regular Zoo hours, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

McKinney notes it will be a month before animal health staff will be able to confirm the cub's gender, and another few days before the cub's eyes fully open.

Red pandas are classified as “endangered” by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), meaning they are at significant risk for extinction in their native ranges in the near future. Red pandas, native to the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China, are threatened by deforestation, loss of habitat, and climate change. Fundraising efforts at the Zoo have provided more than \$30,000 in grants to Red Panda Network to support the protection of crucial forest habitat for red pandas in their natural range.

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Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.