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Media Contact: Todd Eviston
Director of Marketing and
Communications

todd.eviston@fwzoo.com

260.427.6800 ext. 140

Fort Wayne Zoo Announces New Baby Orangutan

Fort Wayne, IN – The Fort Wayne Zoo is thrilled to announce the birth of a female Sumatran Orangutan named Raya (pronounced “RAH-yah”). Raya was born one month ago, on January 11th, to mother Tara, age 30, and father Tengku, age 39.

Her name derives from the Indonesian word for “grand” and is popularly associated with idea of festive celebrations. This birth is cause for celebration when it comes to the conservation of her critically endangered species.

Orangutans are part of the American Zoological Association (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP) which helps to ensure genetic diversity and the survival of critically endangered species. Angie Selzer, Senior Animal Care Specialist at the Fort Wayne Zoo, serves as the Orangutan SSP Coordinator for all North America and is in regular collaboration with AZA professionals across the world in this initiative.

“I’m very proud of the Fort Wayne Zoo’s efforts in the conservation of orangutans. Every single orangutan birth is significant to the survival of the species, and our group at the Zoo is very important in the greater picture,” says Angie. Raya joins the troop alongside her parents, big sister Asmara, age 11, and Melati, age 41.

Rick Schuiteman, Executive Director, says “I’m just so thankful for the efforts of our incredible Zoo team through the whole process. They really went above and beyond to prepare and ensure the health of both mother and child. We can’t wait until later this spring for our guests to meet Raya!”

As with many births, the Fort Wayne Zoo developed a birth management plan to prepare for Tara’s pregnancy and Raya’s birth utilizing care manuals provided by the AZA and orangutan SSP. This plan included prenatal vitamins, ultrasound training, fetus monitoring, overnight camera watches, and more to help ensure a smooth pregnancy and birthing process. The Indonesian Rainforest Care Team and Veterinary Staff stayed in regular communication and collaboration throughout the pregnancy and birth.

We invite our community to follow all Fort Wayne Zoo social media channels and website blogs to see and share all the exciting milestones Raya will experience in the coming months.

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About the Fort Wayne Zoo: The Fort Wayne Zoo is northeast Indiana’s largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 650,000 guests annually. The Zoo is home to Red Panda Ridge named #6 in USA Today 10Best Zoo Exhibits for 2024. In 2021, the Zoo was voted Visit Indiana’s “Summer Bucket List Top Attraction” and is consistently named one of the nation’s Top Ten Zoos for Kids by national media outlets.

The Zoo is a conservation leader, investing annually in local, regional, and international efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats. The Zoo cares for more than 1,500 animals and participates in 41 cooperative species survival plan programs and 42 taxon advisory groups, which are critical to supporting threatened species.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Zoo receives no tax dollars for daily operations, unlike most accredited zoos where those dollars fund approximately 40% of their annual operating budgets. The Zoo’s mission is made possible thanks to support derived from admissions, memberships, donations, group picnics, special ticketed events, and other visitation-related activities.