

Mission Statement

The Indianapolis Zoo inspires local and global communities to celebrate, protect, and preserve our natural world through conservation, education, and research, and by providing an enriching and wondrous environment for our visitors and the animals in our care.

indianapoliszoo.com

Indianapolis Zoo

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NEWS RELEASE

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Indianapolis Zoo Becomes Haven for Orphaned Bear Cubs

INDIANAPOLIS ---- The Indianapolis Zoo is pleased to announce that it has been selected as the new home for two orphaned Alaskan brown bears. The cubs, one female and one male, are littermates, approximately eight months old, and weigh in at 85 to 100 pounds each. Currently housed at the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, the cubs should arrive at the Zoo sometime in September, courtesy of a FedEx flight from Anchorage. Zookeepers have already selected names for the two charming little bears – Kiak (KEY’ACK) for the female, which means summer, and K’etnu (KETT’-NEW) for the male, which means river.



The cubs were orphaned in mid-August when Alaska Fish & Game officials were forced to kill their mother because she was implicated in multiple episodes involving hikers, bikers and joggers on and near the Rover’s Run Trail in Far North Bicentennial Park. The adult sow (female bear) is believed to be the bear that severely mauled a jogger earlier this summer. Officials from Alaska Fish & Game report an unusually high number of bear-human conflicts during this year, and they continue to urge residents to avoid the areas where bears have been reported.

The cubs were turned over to the Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, where more than half of the animal collection consists of orphaned or injured animals. The male cub was captured almost immediately after the sow’s death, but the female cub eluded Fish & Game officials for about two weeks before she was captured in a residential area on Labor Day, apparently none the worse for wear. The cubs have adapted well to an enclosure built to hold rescued cubs while the Indianapolis Zoo puts together its plan to receive them.

Following the deaths of the Zoo’s two geriatric Kodiak bears (one in 2007 and one earlier this year), Forests Curator Lynne Villers had reached out to her professional colleagues,

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letting them know that the Indianapolis Zoo had space available should the need arise to house orphaned or rescued animals.

“The Indianapolis Zoo is delighted to be able to make a home for these cubs,” said Michael Crowther, Indianapolis Zoo President and CEO. “We hope that they become ambassadors for Zoo visitors to translate emotions into actions that help preserve the natural world.”

He added, “These bear cubs and their mother are a perfect example of the ongoing conflicts between humans and wildlife that exist around the globe. Human/wildlife conflict is at the core of the work done by three Indianapolis Prize finalists (cheetah researcher Laurie Marker, tiger expert K. Ullas Karanth, and snow leopard advocate Rodney Jackson) and central to the landmark accomplishments of a fourth finalist, Save the Elephants’ Iain Douglas-Hamilton.”

“Finding solutions that work for both humans and animals is not only relevant to endangered species (or species that are endangered *at the moment*), but to more familiar species such as brown bears. These are animals that many Hoosiers may encounter in their lifetimes, and we will use this opportunity to connect a complex concept to our audience. This is both an opportunity and an obligation we feel deeply at the Indianapolis Zoo,” Crowther concluded.

For that reason, the Indianapolis Zoo staff is experienced in dealing with the transition of animals that are displaced for one reason or another, including injured bald eagles, stranded sea lions, abandoned bear cubs, plus orphaned tiger cubs and walrus pups, among others.

All new animals arriving at the Indianapolis Zoo are quarantined for at least four weeks. During this time, the animals undergo a variety of medical evaluations, and staff members are able to observe the animal and help make the transition between zoos run smoothly. The new cubs will be quarantined in an area that will allow them to become accustomed to the sights and smells of their new surroundings, and then they will be moved to the holding area of the bear exhibit to continue the process of adjusting and bonding with their keepers. All

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interactions with the cubs will be based on making their experiences with humans very positive and in building their confidence level around people, including Zoo visitors.

Once the cubs are given a clean bill of health and adjust to their new setting, the Zoo will release information on when the public will be able to view them on exhibit. Prior to that, the former Kodiak bear exhibit will undergo renovations to accommodate the very active lifestyle of young brown bear cubs.

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Located in White River State Park downtown, the Indianapolis Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the American Association of Museums as a zoo, aquarium and botanical garden. The Indianapolis Zoo inspires local and global communities to celebrate, protect, and preserve our natural world through conservation, education, and research, and by providing an enriching and wondrous environment for our visitors and the animals in our care. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things.