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ZOO IS THANKFUL FOR BIRTH OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SUMATRAN TIGER CUB JUST DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING

November 25, 2015 - Jacksonville, FL – In the early morning hours of November 19, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) welcomed the arrival of a single, critically endangered Sumatran tiger cub just six days before Thanksgiving.

"This rare cub's birth is so exciting for the zoo and our community. We can't wait to see the youngster grow, develop and explore the special features we designed into our newest *Land of the Tiger* habitat, especially the unique trail system.", beamed Dan Maloney, Deputy Director of Animal Care and Conservation.

The cub, whose gender is unknown at this time, is the first tiger born at JZG in 35 years, and the fifth Sumatran tiger born in the U.S. this year. First-time mother Dorcas is a 4-year-old female that came to JZG from the Oklahoma City Zoo. Berani, the 14-year-old father, is also a first-time parent who came to JZG from the Akron Zoo.

Berani was labeled a 'behavioral non-breeder' because he couldn't quite get the correct 'technique' when it came to mating. However, when placed with Dorcas, Berani earned his stripes and successfully fathered their first cub.

To ensure appropriate mother-cub bonding, the newborn will remain with Dorcas in an isolated area with little contact from staff for the next several weeks. Tigers are solitary animals, and since males do not play a role in raising offspring, Berani will remain at a distance as he would in the wild.

In a wonderful twist of fate, Dorcas' sister from the same litter, Leeloo, gave birth to her first cub just five days earlier at Zoo Miami. Coincidentally, the sire's name is also Berani – no relation to the Berani here at Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens.

Sumatran tigers are the smallest of the six subspecies in existence today, and are only found on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. Originally, nine tiger subspecies were found in parts of Asia, but three subspecies have become extinct in the 20th century. Less than 400 Sumatran tigers remain in the wild.

"Protecting tigers involves protecting the animals they prey upon," said John Lukas, Conservation and Science Manager at JZG. "Illegal hunting and snaring removes natural tiger food from the forest and forces tigers to kill domestic livestock to survive."

To combat extinction of those tigers in the wild, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports a Wildlife Protection Unit on the island of Sumatra. The unit patrols the national forest, removing traps and snares that harm Sumatran tigers and their prey and keeps poachers out of the reserve.

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.