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## HEALTHY POLAR BEAR CUB MAKES DEBUT



Photos: Ken Ardill, Toronto Zoo Volunteer

**February 3, 2012 Toronto, Ontario:** After a precarious start to life, the Toronto Zoo today introduced a very special member of the Zoo's wildlife family, the now 3 ½ month old male polar bear cub. This energetic young cub represents a heartwarming journey of survival, one where expert Toronto Zoo Wildlife Health staff worked around the clock to save a vulnerable species. The cub has successfully surpassed many milestones in his young life and is a great ambassador for a species in need of public education and support.

"This has been an interesting and challenging case for the Zoo and a valiant and dedicated team effort of both the Wildlife Health Centre and Wildlife Care staff," said John Tracogna, the Zoo's Chief Executive Officer. "Ultimately, it has been a rewarding journey for everyone involved, and we are happy to introduce an active and healthy polar bear cub, our new Arctic ambassador to help share our conservation message with our visitors."

On October 11, 2011, Aurora, one of the Zoo's two 10-year old female polar bears, gave birth to three cubs. Tragically, the new mother rejected the cubs shortly after birth. Zoo staff quickly intervened, and rescued the two surviving cubs. Less than 24 hours later, one cub did succumb to injuries sustained.

Polar bears are born in a very immature state and are documented as being very difficult to hand raise from the moment of birth. The newborn cub weighing only 700 grams was immediately placed into an incubator in the Intensive Care Unit of the Zoo's Wildlife Health Centre, and monitoring '24/7' commenced. At birth, polar bears have a pink nose, eyelids, and feet, and their eyes and ears are tightly closed.

For the past 3 ½ months, Zoo staff has focused on care of the cub, tending to his every need. There are few documented cases of humans rearing a cub from such an early age. Veterinary staff monitored his health closely to ensure he was receiving all of the necessary requirements to survive and grow strong. He was fed an artificial polar bear milk formula with an infant bottle, which he accepted very readily. While early on the cub did experience some close calls, he has achieved, right from the start, a strong and consistent growth weight, and now weighs approximately 17kg. Some of the major milestones that were reached since birth are:

- At two weeks, the cub's skin color began to change and his pink nose and feet gradually changed to black.
- At about 30 days, his eyes and ears opened, and he began responding to his environment and the people that cared for him.
- At about 40 days, the cub began to teethe, and to the delight of his care givers, very quickly showed his ability to use them!
- At about 90 days, his walking improved with lots of exercise to strengthen his hind legs. This increased mobility and independence allowed for his move from the Wildlife Health Centre to the polar bear house on January 26.

The cub can be seen in his new outdoor den in the Zoo's polar bear exhibit, generously supported by Symcor. "As part of our ongoing partnership, Symcor's Integrated Statement Services group is pleased to support the polar bear research and conservation initiatives at the Zoo," says Michael Corbett, Director, Operations, Integrated Statement Services at Symcor. "It also helps us to instill a culture of environmental awareness and engagement among employees which is an important aspect in solving the environmental challenges that face us today and in the future."

### **Name the polar bear cub! Presented by Coca Cola**

The male cub also needs a suitable name. Starting today and over the next six weeks, names can be submitted to the Zoo's facebook page - [facebook.com/TheTorontoZoo](https://www.facebook.com/TheTorontoZoo) and on the Zoo's website at [torontozoo.com](http://torontozoo.com) . Voting on a short-list will start mid-March and the selected name will be announced on March 31, 2012.

The Toronto Zoo is a champion for Canada's majestic polar bears listed as a critically endangered species. The Zoo works closely with other Zoological associations and conservation institutions, including a close partnership with Polar Bears International (PBI). Zoo biologists and researchers work closely with their Wildlife biologist counterparts in the field with valuable learning and studies that can be applied to polar bear conservation in the wild.

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**For photos and b-roll of the polar bear cub, contact Katie Gray at 416-392-5941**

### **About Toronto Zoo:**

The Toronto Zoo is Canada's premier zoo and a leader in animal preservation and environmental protection. More than a tourist attraction, the Toronto Zoo boasts a number of leading programs for helping wildlife and their natural habitats – from species reintroduction to reproductive research. A world-class educational centre for people of all ages, the Toronto Zoo is open every day except December 25 and attracts approximately 1.3 million visitors each year.

**[torontozoo.com](http://torontozoo.com)**

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