



**Press Release
For Immediate Release
Monday, December 10, 2012**

**For More Information
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Toronto Zoo Polar Bear Breeding Update

Toronto, Ontario, Monday, December 10, 2012: On Thursday, 2012-12-06 Aurora, the Zoo's 11 year old female polar bear, gave birth to one female and two male cubs, weighing between 644g and 669g. While the first male cub died shortly after birth the two remaining cubs were being mothered, nurtured and nursed by Aurora and all was going well. Despite this, and 24-7 monitoring of the den, on Sunday, 2012-12-09 it was determined that the two remaining cubs had died during the night. It is still unclear how the cubs passed away and post mortem tissue samples have been sent out for analysis. Zoo Staff are disappointed by this latest development in the polar bear breeding program however it does demonstrate, positively, that Aurora's maternal instinct was finally kicking in and she was learning to be a mother. Despite the loss of the three cubs, this is a positive direction in the breeding program and with Aurora.

"Toronto Zoo Staff began watching Aurora, around the clock, once she began denning in early November. The fact that Aurora was doing everything right this time is a huge step in the right direction" says Maria Franke, Curator of Mammals. "Given that polar bear cubs are born so small and undeveloped, there are many possibilities of what could have happened. Little is known about polar bear births and rearing in the wild and it is possible that young female bears gain experience over time before successfully raising their young."

Polar bears are a critically endangered species and the Toronto Zoo's breeding program works closely with other zoological associations and conservation institutions including a very close partnership with Polar Bears International. Making every effort to learn about this species in captivity provides valuable information to field researchers and helps create conservation plans to help species survival. Biologists estimate there are only approximately 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears in the wild with approximately 60% of those living in Canada. As a leader in conservation efforts, and Canada's premier zoo, we have a responsibility to support all research efforts to help this iconic Canadian species through our Conservation, Education and Research Programs. The information gained throughout Aurora's breeding has allowed us invaluable information that we can learn from and share with our counterparts. These efforts are essential for the survival of this magnificent species.

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**Current Zoo Hours are 9:30am to 4:30pm. Last admission is one hour before closing.
General admission 13-64 is \$20, Children 3 and under are free, Children 4 to 12 are \$11, and Seniors 65+ are \$15.
Parking is \$10. Events and admission prices are subject to change without notice.
The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy 401, Exit #389 eastbound and westbound.
For more details about the Toronto Zoo please visit torontozoo.com or call 416-392-5929.
The Toronto Zoo is open year round except December 25th.**