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HUDSON THE POLAR BEAR GETS A NEW HOME



Photo: Jim Skene, Toronto Zoo Volunteer

Photo: Ken Ardill, Toronto Zoo Volunteer

Thursday, January 17, 2013 Toronto, Ontario: The Toronto Zoo announced that, "Hudson", their one-year old polar bear cub, will embark on an exciting journey to a new, state of the art home at the Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg week of January 28, 2013. Before "Hudson", who has grown to be a big ("Hudson" weighed 700g at birth and now weighs in at 410 lbs!), happy and healthy bear, travels, the zoo is inviting visitors to come and say farewell to him before he goes off exhibit end of day Sunday, January 27, 2013.

"Hudson" has successfully surpassed many milestones in the past year and is a great ambassador for a species in need of public education and support. After a precarious start to life he became a very special member of the Toronto Zoo's wildlife family and represented a heartwarming journey of survival; one where expert zoo staff worked around the clock to save a vulnerable species.

Polar bears are a critically endangered species and biologists estimate there are only approximately 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears in the wild with approximately 60% of those living in Canada. The Toronto Zoo's breeding program works closely with other zoological associations and conservation institutions, including an important partnership with Polar Bears International.

"Hudson" was born on October 11, 2011, to Aurora, one of the zoo's two female polar bears. Unfortunately, new mother "Aurora" rejected "Hudson", shortly after birth, and zoo staff quickly intervened and rescued him. In the wild, polar bears are solitary animals and cubs will leave their mother to roam the Tundra to, hopefully, reproduce and pass on their genetics to the polar bear population. Therefore this move for "Hudson's" is the next step in his life to becoming a mature male polar bear in the hopes that he will be paired with a female in the future and so he may contribute to the Species Survival Plan (SSP) breeding program.

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The Assiniboine Park Zoo has recently completed the International Polar Bear Conservation Centre – a key component of the new 10-acre Journey to Churchill exhibit currently under construction. Hudson will be the first polar bear to inhabit this new facility prior to moving into Journey to Churchill in 2014. This is exciting news for the Toronto Zoo, Assiniboine Park Zoo and, of course, Hudson. Full details about Hudson's new home can be found at www.imagineaplace.ca/zoo-renewal/journey-to-churchill.

"This is very exciting for all of us here at the Assiniboine Park Zoo and we can't wait to welcome Hudson into our zoo family," said Tim Sinclair-Smith, Director of Zoological Operations at the Assiniboine Park Zoo. "His arrival marks a significant step in our polar bear program and conservation efforts as we move closer to the opening of the Journey to Churchill in 2014."

Once Hudson has departed to his new home, the Toronto Zoo will continue the important polar bear breeding program and pair male, Inukshuk, with sisters Aurora and Nikita, in the hopes of success and more polar bear cubs at the Toronto Zoo.

"The knowledge gained from our efforts with captive polar bears provides the necessary foundation for understanding population dynamics in the wild and gives field researchers the tools they need to create conservation plans to help species survival" says Gabriella Mastromonaco, Curator Reproductive Programs and Research Toronto Zoo.

"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 says Maria Franke, Curator of Mammals. The information gained through the Zoos breeding programs provides invaluable information that is shared internationally and is essential for the survival of this magnificent species".

Be sure to come out and say goodbye to "Hudson" and wish him all the best! The Toronto Zoo would like to thank Symcor and Coca-Cola for their on-going support of Hudson's first year.

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.