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Press release

Cats of all stripes: The tigers are back!

Sumatran tiger twins Luise and Lotte come to Zoo Berlin from the Tierpark

Sumatran tigers Luise and Lotte are no strangers to Berlin, as they were born at Tierpark Berlin in the east of the city on 1 September 2022. Now, they have found a new home at Zoo Berlin in the west on the recommendation of the EEP.

The cubs' birth was an auspicious event, as Sumatran tigers are classified as "Critically Endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). According to current estimates, only 400 to 600 of the majestic big cats remain in their natural habitat. It is therefore crucial that breeding and protection efforts for these animals continue. A Global Species Management Plan (GSMP) is currently in place for the Sumatran tiger that brings together all regional conservation breeding programmes, such as the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP), and coordinates them on a global scale in order to ensure the big cat's survival in the long term. This means that the arrival of every new offspring is a particularly joyous occasion. Luise and Lotte quickly captured the hearts of Tierpark visitors, but it was always clear they would eventually have to go their own way.

The departure of the young tigers will give mother Mayang (12) and father Jae Jae (15) the chance to produce more offspring. "Our top priority is always the protection and conservation of endangered animal species," explains tiger curator Matthias Papies of Tierpark Berlin. In the "Empire of Cats" animal house at the Zoo, Luise and Lotte will reside in a modern habitat that meets their needs and resembles their natural environment. "Our committed zookeepers will make sure that the two cats quickly feel at home on the other side of the city," says Zoo and Tierpark director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "The return of tigers is a huge asset for Zoo Berlin."

The Sumatran tiger is the smallest extant tiger subspecies and a particularly charismatic ambassador for the threatened wildlife of Asia. One of the most endangered animals in the world, this tiger has stripes that are closer together than those of other species and a distinctive "facial mane". The Zoo's former Predator House, which originally opened in the 1970s, was extensively modernised in recent years and finally reopened in 2022 as the Empire of Cats. The renovations included bringing in natural ground material and trees for climbing. The tiger sisters will remain out of public view for the first few days to allow them to get accustomed to their new home. This part of the animal house will therefore be closed for a few days.

Background

The IUCN Red List classifies Sumatran tigers as “Critically Endangered”. One of the main reasons for the dwindling Sumatran tiger population is massive habitat loss. The clearing of rainforests in Sumatra, especially for the cultivation of palm oil and for the timber industry, has led to a drastic reduction in available habitat. Poaching and human-wildlife conflict are other threats facing these big cats. Sumatran tigers are key species in their ecosystem: as top predators, they regulate prey populations and thus contribute to maintaining the ecological balance in Sumatra’s rainforests. The tigers’ survival is not only important for the environment, it also has economic, cultural and social significance.