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## Press release

### A spring outing for the sloth bears

#### Baby sloth bear takes his first steps in the great outdoors

Zoo Berlin's baby sloth bear digs eagerly at the earth with his impressive claws and snuffles around audibly in the hollow he has made. Meanwhile, mama bear Kaveri (eight) keeps a watchful eye on her little one.

The furry mother and child have spent the past weeks out of the public eye enjoying the necessary peace and quiet. Now that spring is here, it's high time for a first outing. Today, a good three months after the happy event of the cub's birth on Christmas Eve, the two bears could be seen enjoying their outdoor enclosure together for the very first time. Supervising vet Dr André Schüle is very pleased with the cub's development: "He's quite a bold little chap, climbing about on ropes and tree trunks or giving his mum a cheeky bite on the snout"

Mother's milk, melon, mango or mealworm? Even though the little bear is still feeding solely on Kaveri's nutrient-rich milk, he is already showing an interest in solid foods. As well as fruit, flowers and honey, sloth bears have another favourite snack: termites. To reach this delicacy, they dig into a termite mound, extend their flexible lips, close their nasal passages, and suck up the tasty treats like a vacuum cleaner. Their long tongues help them to lick up any strays.

Sloth bears are only found on the Indian subcontinent and are listed as "vulnerable" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Populations are relatively stable in protected areas, but outside those reserves, destruction of their native forests and hunting pose a great threat to the bears. On the same day as the young sloth bear's first public appearance, his sponsor was also revealed. It is Berlin-based municipal electricity provider Berliner Stadtwerke – a company that focuses on generating electricity from renewable energy sources. "Berliner Stadtwerke is the perfect sponsor for our little sloth bear and we are delighted to welcome the company on board," announced Zoo Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "As a modern, scientific zoo, we also have a vested interest in sustainability". Andreas Irmer, managing director of Berliner Stadtwerke, made the following pledge: "We live in an age where ecology is no longer a niche topic. Berlin intends to be a climate-neutral city by 2050, and the Berliner Stadtwerke will play a central role in those efforts, which will be visible beyond the city limits."

Some 40 percent of the mammal species living in Zoo Berlin appear on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Through its breeding programmes and reintroduction projects, Zoo Berlin plays an important role in international nature and species conservation efforts.



The young sloth bear is yet to be given a name. From today, all bear fans can vote for their favourite via social media at <https://www.facebook.com/zooberlin> and <https://www.facebook.com/BerlinerStadtwerke> to help decide whether the little guy will be christened **Kralle** (claws – the bear’s second most important tool), **Balou** (after the popular Jungle Book sloth bear), or **Schnute** (literally “pout”, in recognition of the bear’s characteristic long lips). The hearts and smileys representing each name will be added up and taken into account for the final decision. Voting ends on 3 April at 12 noon.

As of today, the sloth bear cub can be seen frolicking around the bears’ outdoor area. However, mother and cub still have the option to retreat to the privacy of their den, and therefore might not be visible all the time. Alongside the new arrival and his parents Rajath (six) and Kaveri (eight), two other sloth bears live at Zoo Berlin – female bear Sutra (20) and her son Jürgen (14).