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Press release

A big bundle of joy

Right on time for World Giraffe Day: a new arrival at Tierpark Berlin

On 16 June, an unusually large baby was born at Tierpark Berlin – just in time for World Giraffe Day on 21 June. A giraffe's gestation period is around 15 months, following which the mother gives birth to a not-so-tiny newborn in a standing position. The birth at the Tierpark went well. Mother Amalka (8) and her female calf are doing fine and will be on view to visitors from tomorrow in the Giraffe House.

Her height of six foot and birthweight of approximately 60 kg are not the only remarkable things about this baby. Within minutes of being born, giraffes are able to stand on their own four feet, and Amalka's calf is already teetering along behind – and sometimes underneath – her mother on long spindly legs. "It's always a special event when a young animal is born here at Tierpark Berlin," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "As a former zoological veterinarian, I know there's not much that can be done to help a giraffe give birth; we have to rely on the mother's natural instincts. So I am very pleased that Amalka did such a great job bringing her third calf into the world." The young giraffe still appears to lack horns, but that's just because they're not visible yet. Baby giraffes develop these "ossicones" in the womb, but they lie flat at first and do not harden and grow upright until a few weeks after birth. "You can practically watch little giraffes getting bigger," says Knieriem. "They develop rapidly in the first few weeks – growing as much as three centimetres a day." Amalka is spending the first few days with her calf away from the herd, but Tierpark visitors can already see mother and daughter in the Giraffe House from 21 June.

Amalka's previous calf Henry, now an adolescent at the age of two, recently left Tierpark Berlin to join a new herd at a French zoo. In a few days, the most recent addition will get to know the rest of the herd and take her first steps in the outdoor habitat. In the wild, too, giraffe mothers retreat from the herd to give birth. The fathers are not involved in the rearing of the calf, which will also be the case for the Tierpark's bull Jabulani (10). Four other giraffes live at Tierpark Berlin alongside Amalka, Jabulani, and the as-yet-unnamed calf.

The birth of this baby, right on time for World Giraffe Day, is great news for the species. For several years now, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed the giraffe as a threatened species. For instance, there are only around 2,000 Rothschild giraffes – one of nine giraffe subspecies – still living on the African savannah. "The general situation for giraffes is very worrying," says mammal curator and giraffe expert Dr Florian Sicks. "We are working closely with our partners at the Wild Nature Institute in Tanzania to help protect



these graceful creatures in their natural habitat. Alongside the scientific collaboration, we are part-financing field research in the Tarangire National Park.” Researchers at the Wild Nature Institute are studying the giraffes in Tanzania in order to make effective recommendations for their protection. They also run environmental education initiatives, particularly with schoolchildren, to inspire fascination and fondness for the world’s tallest land mammal.