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Press release

Bundles of Joy

There are loads of new babies to coo over at Tierpark Berlin

The new Tierpark babies are just so adorable! It has been over 60 years since ethnologist and zoologist Konrad Lorenz introduced “cuteness” as a scientific concept. He taught us about the effect that big eyes, button noses and chubby cheeks have on our emotions, and how cuteness in baby animals is an evolutionary adaptation to help ensure their survival. But knowing that we’re just responding animalistically to stimuli makes no difference: Tierpark visitors and keepers alike become helpless in the face of so much cuteness!

Who would have thought that prickles could be sweet? Proof that they most certainly can comes in the shape of our little New World porcupine, born on 27 April to proud parents Anni and Oskar. The baby is not just Anni’s firstborn – it’s also the first-ever North American New World porcupine to be born at Tierpark Berlin. And that’s not the only adorable new arrival visitors can admire close to the Bärenschaufenster entrance, as the buffaloes also welcomed a new addition on 22 May. Slightly further in, close to the Kakadu terrace café, the cousins of the New World porcupine have their own bundle of joy to show off: on 20 May the crested porcupine family welcomed an adorable youngster, who is already busy practising raising its tiny quills.

Tall and skinny but no less cute is delicate gerenuk calf Thaba, who was born on 21 April. This week she has been observing the world outside her stall with her huge, dark eyes. Her big, pointed, sticky-out ears give Thaba a certain resemblance to Star Wars icon Yoda, but Tierpark staff are pretty certain that male gerenuk Jess is the father of Priscilla’s firstborn. Gerenuks, a type of antelope that live on the African savannah, have evolved to fill an ecological niche: with their long necks and their ability to stand erect on their hind legs, they can nibble at leaves that are too high for other antelope species. Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem proudly reports that Berlin has two breeding pairs of this rare antelope species: “Zoo Berlin and Tierpark Berlin are the only zoos in Germany, in the whole of Europe even, to keep these special animals.” The southern gerenuk is designated “near threatened” by the IUCN, as populations are decreasing outside the national parks and nature reserves in Kenya, Tanzania and Somalia. The animals are hunted to excess for their meat; agriculture is destroying their habitat; and they are vulnerable to diseases carried by domestic cattle.

Elsewhere in the Tierpark, the tule elks had two new babies this spring. The female calves were born on 23 and 26 May and are delightfully reminiscent of Bambi. By the late 19th century, this Californian elk subspecies had been hunted almost to extinction by European settlers. At one stage, there were only five animals left. But successful breeding programmes



and conservation measures brought this smallest of all North American elks back from the brink, and there are now several thousand of them living in nature reserves along the Californian coast.

But that is by no means all the cute baby animals Tierpark visitors can go gaga over. This May, the Transcaspian urials welcomed seven frisky new lambs to Germany's only herd of this threatened Central Asian wild sheep species. Triplets were born to the endangered Chacoan peccaries on 10 May, while the threatened Arabian oryxes and Asian leopard cats had young on 8 May and 19 May respectively. Two eastern wallaroo joeys and one grey kangaroo joey can also be spotted peering out from their mothers' pouches. But the prize for the most prolific parenting has to go to the naked mole rats. On 6 May, one proud mum gave birth to a whopping 19 offspring. And if you're not too strict with your definition of cuteness, you'll surely warm to them as well!

The Tierpark's new arrivals do not yet have sponsors. If you would like more information on how to sponsor an animal, visit <http://www.tierpark-berlin.de/de/unterstuetzen/patenschaften/tierpatenschaft> or patenschaft@tierpark-berlin.de.