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Press release

Coming to earth with a bump

Baby giraffe born at Tierpark Berlin

Dropping two metres onto the floor doesn't sound like the nicest way to start life, but it's perfectly normal for giraffes: the mothers always remain standing while giving birth. Just like Rothschild's giraffe Amalka (5), who delivered her first-ever calf on 3 November at Tierpark Berlin after a gestation period of 467 days.

After "landing" safely on the straw-covered floor of the giraffe shed, the newborn female had to quickly find her feet. This is the only way a baby giraffe can reach its mother's teat to drink the life-giving milk. Amalka will probably suckle her calf for around eight months before the youngster switches to a diet of solids – primarily hay, leaves and twigs. As is normal for giraffes, father Jabulani (6) will not be involved in raising the calf. At birth, the calf was 182 cm tall. Giraffes reach maturity at around five years of age, at which point they can measure up to 450 cm in height.

Rothschild's giraffes have been on the IUCN Red List since 2016 and are classified as "Endangered". "Due to massive habitat loss and poaching, the number of giraffes in Africa has decreased by around 40 percent in the last 30 years," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "In order to protect the world's tallest animal, Zoo and Tierpark Berlin support a conservation project in Tanzania. Among other things, the project promotes teaching in schools to raise local awareness of environmental issues." The project also involves observing and precisely documenting the giraffe population's movements and behaviour in order to develop additional effective measures to help save the species.

Amalka and her calf will be spending the next few days indoors. Once the calf is strong enough – probably around mid-November – she and her mother should be able to join the rest of the herd, so Tierpark visitors will be able to see her then. In the wild, too, mother giraffes give birth away from the herd. There are five other Rothschild's giraffes at Tierpark Berlin alongside Amalka, Jabulani and the currently still nameless infant. In the coming weeks Tierpark Berlin will decide on a name with the herd's sponsor, housing association HOWOGE.