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**Press release**

## **Say hello to our kitty Kitai**

**Tierpark Berlin's snow leopard cub now has a name**

As of today, the snow leopard born at Tierpark Berlin on 13 June officially has a name: Kitai. A jury of Tierpark keepers and curators had the difficult task of choosing between almost 1,000 suggestions submitted through a variety of channels. The chosen name makes reference to the natural habitat of these rare cats. In his travel journals, Marco Polo wrote about a region in the Far East called Kitai or Cathay. Today, that area corresponds to parts of modern-day China, whose mountains are home to the largest population of snow leopards left in the wild. Around 2,000 of the big cats are estimated to live here, compared to just a few hundred in the bordering countries of India, Nepal, Russia and Mongolia. "The big cat team from the Alfred Brehm building wanted our young cub to have an Asian name," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "I think Kitai fits really well with his parents' names Maya and Bataar." Visitors are very excited to see the little fellow in person, but they will have to wait just a little bit longer. "Currently, the little leopard's head can still fit through the fencing of the outdoor enclosure," explains curator Christian Kern. "So we have decided to postpone his first outing by a week. That means visitors should be able to see Kitai discovering his outdoor habitat from 21 August."

Snow leopards are among the most endangered of all big cats. According to estimates from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are currently only 4,000 to 6,600 snow leopards living in the Central Asian mountain ranges. Their numbers in the wild have fallen drastically due to destruction of their environment and poaching for their thick fur and their bones. Tierpark Berlin has been involved in efforts to protect these endangered big cats for almost 20 years.

Snow and ice at Tierpark Berlin: The young snow leopard is sponsored by ice cream company FRONERI Schöller GmbH, which delights Tierpark guests with ice-cold treats.