



Berlin, 8 January 2019

Press release

Here's looking at you, kid!

Polar bear cub at Tierpark Berlin opens its eyes

Footage from the polar bear birthing den now shows two adorable black eyes peering up at mother Tonja (9). At around five weeks of age, the new cub at Tierpark Berlin has opened its eyes for the very first time. After spending the first weeks of its life just feeling its way around, the cub can now finally explore its surroundings with its other senses, too. "Young polar bears are unable to see or hear until around 30 days after birth," says curator Dr Florian Sicks. "Now the camera shows us that the cub is becoming more active every day. It is already trying to crawl and get up on its feet."

Although the cub is developing well, it is important to remember that polar bears have an extremely high infant mortality rate. In the wild, around 85 percent of polar bears do not live past their second birthday. Because absolute peace and quiet is crucial for the successful rearing of young polar bears, no one has approached the birthing den yet. A veterinarian will probably examine the cub in early February. That is also when we will find out the sex of the young bear.

Background:

Tierpark Berlin's female polar bear Tonja gave birth to her cub on 1 December 2018, at 2:33 a.m. She had mated with male bear Wolodja (7) several times in March and April. In the summer, Wolodja moved to Zoo Berlin to give Tonja plenty of peace and quiet for her presumed pregnancy and birth. In the wild too, polar bears are solitary animals, and males are not involved in raising the young.

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The polar bears are currently not on view to Tierpark visitors. In zoos just as in the wild, mothers and their cubs do not leave their dens until the spring.