



Berlin, 22 January 2019

Press release

## Baby steps

### Tierpark Berlin's polar bear cub tests its paws

Until now, the little polar bear at Tierpark Berlin has done little else but sleep, drink milk, and cuddle mum – but now, at eight weeks of age, it has developed a new skill: crawling, and even initial attempts at walking! Coordinating four furry little paws isn't so easy for a beginner, so almost every attempt currently ends in a tumble. But mother Tonja (9) is very patient and helps her little one back up on its feet every time. "For a fluffy furball like this one, walking is obviously a rather difficult skill to learn," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "Thankfully, the cub has plenty of time to practise and build up its strength. It won't be going outside with its mother until the spring."

Absolute peace and quiet is crucial for the successful rearing of young polar bears, so no one has yet approached the maternity den. A veterinarian will probably examine the cub in early February, which is when we will find out the sex of the young bear. Although the cub is developing well, it is important to remember that polar bears have a high infant mortality rate, so there is still a risk.

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#### 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 pregnancy and birth. In the wild too, polar bears are solitary animals, and males are not involved in raising the young.

Thanks to sophisticated new camera technology, the experts at Tierpark Berlin are able to watch the den around the clock, and can even zoom in to see how well the cub is drinking.

**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.**