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Press release

It's a grrrrl!

Vets at Tierpark Berlin examine polar bear cub for the first time

After spending almost eleven weeks in cosy solitude, polar bear mum Tonja and her cub received a first visit from the vet. The examination showed that the cub is in good health – and that it is a girl! Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem, who is a qualified veterinarian, was very happy with the check-up: “We were able to confirm that the cub is developing well and that she is a strong and lively little girl.”

During her visit from the vet, Tierpark Berlin's little polar bear proved that she has a good set of lungs and remarkably sharp little claws. She may only be small right now, but she has plenty of bark and plenty of bite. Knieriem carried out the examination along with fellow vet Dr Günter Strauß and department head Andrea Fleischer. Of course, Tonja had to be separated from her daughter for the duration of the check-up, so she was lured into a separate pen with a warm soup of meat and carrots. This allowed the vets to approach the cub and examine her. At the same time, she was weighed, vaccinated, and wormed. After just 15 minutes, the visit was over and the bear could return to her mother. “The cub measures 61 centimetres from head to tail and weighs an impressive 8.5 kilograms,” reported Strauß. Thanks to feeding regularly on the nourishing milk of her mother, which has a very high fat content of around 30 percent, the little bear has grown rapidly over the past few weeks. She currently spends almost two hours a day drinking from her mother's teats and has not yet expressed an interest in solids.

Tierpark visitors hoping to catch a glimpse of the adorable little bear will have to be patient for now. “The two bears won't leave the den until the cub is able to confidently follow her mother,” explained polar bear curator Dr Florian Sicks. “That will probably be the case in March.” The young polar bear is still nameless. Tierpark Berlin will decide on a name together with the cub's sponsor. We have already received several requests for sponsorship. Anyone else interested should send an e-mail to patenschaft@tierpark-berlin.de.

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.

Infant mortality in polar bears is extremely high. 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 will approach the birthing den over the next few weeks.

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.