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Press release

A cosy, quiet time for mother and cub

News from the polar bear birthing den at Tierpark Berlin

At just six days old, the new polar bear at Tierpark Berlin may still be blind, deaf and only the size of a guinea pig, but it has developed a healthy appetite. Young polar bears are unable to see or hear until around 30 days after birth, so naturally the tiny cub is still spending most of the day cuddled up in the warm fur of its mother Tonja (9). Curator Dr Florian Sicks reports that the youngster is drinking from its mother at regular intervals of around two hours. He is very pleased with the cub's development to date: "As in the past two years, Tonja is doing a great job caring for her baby."

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.

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