



## NEWS RELEASE

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### CHATTANOOGA ZOO WELCOMES RED PANDA CUBS



*Chattanooga, Tennessee-* The Chattanooga Zoo is proud to announce the birth of two red panda cubs. The two male cubs were born at the Chattanooga Zoo on July 10<sup>th</sup> to first time parents, Wyatt and Maina. Parents and cubs are all doing great!

“Having seen firsthand last year the threats that red pandas face in the wild, I am very proud to play a part in their conservation through our work with the Species Survival Plan. The birth of two healthy, genetically diverse, red pandas is so exciting and I love watching what an excellent job Maina is doing in taking care of them,” states Betsy Eckermann, Red Panda Primary Keeper.

First time mother, Maina, is doing well and has shown to be a very caring mother. Wyatt and Maina were placed together as a breeding pair in 2014 through the Association of Zoo’s and

Aquariums’ (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP). According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, red pandas are listed as an endangered species. Their biggest threat to survival is habitat loss.

The cubs, not yet named, are still very dependent on their mother’s milk, and will not be visible to the public for quite some time. It can take up to four months for red pandas to mature and adapt. The official debut to the public will depend on when their mother feels they are ready to leave the nest den.

The Chattanooga Zoo first began housing red pandas in 1998, with a singly housed male, Nigalya. However, Maina and Wyatt are the first SSP breeding pair to be united at the Chattanooga Zoo, and this is the Zoo’s first red panda birth.

Dardenelle Long, Zoo CEO and President says, “After caring for these animals, partnering with conservation organizations, building and adding to exhibits, studying this species and their behaviors, and working relentlessly, it is so rewarding for our staff to experience the miracle of birth and watch their hard work pay off. We are so excited to have another SSP birth success and we look forward to seeing these cubs grow!”



The Chattanooga Zoo invites the press to come to meet and get footage of our red panda cubs on Wednesday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. However, we do ask that you contact us to make a reservation due to limited space. If you plan to attend, please email Hannah Hammon at [hhammon@chattzoo.org](mailto:hhammon@chattzoo.org).

*To learn about our daily activities and monthly events, please follow us on social media and stay up-to-date.*



The 14-acre Chattanooga Zoo (historically referred to as the Chattanooga Zoo at Warner Park) is accredited by the national Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), assuring the highest standards of animal care and husbandry. The Zoo is dedicated to its mission of engaging and inspiring all citizens of the community to better understand and preserve wildlife by creating meaningful connections between people and animals. With its intimate, innovative exhibits, wide-ranging education offerings and commitment to conservation, the Chattanooga Zoo fills a unique niche within the community. The Zoo is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the exception of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. For more information, visit [www.chattzoo.org](http://www.chattzoo.org).