Baby red panda twins unveiled at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo

Tuesday 29 September, 2015

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The first pictures have been released of twin red pandas, born on 30 June 2015 at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo.

The baby red pandas, named by keepers Bert and Ernie after the Sesame Street characters, have been hiding away in their nesting boxes until this week, when their mum, six year-old Tashi began carrying them outside for short intervals.

Senior Keeper at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, Stephen Perry said: "It's been magical to see the baby red pandas out and about for the first time.

"Red pandas can be difficult to observe due to their shy and secretive nature, their nocturnal habits and the fact that they spend most of their time up trees. We never see much of their babies for the first couple of months of their lives but it's worth the wait. They're incredible and beautiful creatures, and a real visitor favourite.

"Tashi is a brilliant mum, and when the weather gets warmer you sometimes catch her carrying the babies between nesting boxes to find the coolest one for them."

Bert and Ernie are part of the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP), a tool used by zoos, aquariums and wildlife parks across Europe to manage conservation breeding programmes. Bert and Ernie are the fourth and fifth cubs born to experienced mum Tashi at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo.

Stephen Perry said: "Having such a confident mum there is great because it means we can just leave them to it and not interfere. We just check in on Tashi, the boys and their dad Blue once a day to make sure everything's okay."

Red pandas, which are classified as Vulnerable by IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species, are found mainly in Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar, and southern China. There are thought to be around 10,000 red pandas left in the wild. It is estimated that their numbers may have decreased by as much as 40% over the last 50 years due to massive habitat loss, increased human activity and poaching.

International conservation and science charity the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) works in Nepal, as well as over 50 other countries, for worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats, through ground-breaking science, conservation projects and two Zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo.

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Editor's Notes

High res photos available to download here: https://zslondon.sharefile.com/d-s7f2cefd469f43adb

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