



For Immediate Release

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CRITICALLY ENDANGERED TIGER IS EXPECTING!

Litter of cubs should arrive in early July

ATLANTA – June 1, 2011 – Chelsea, a 7-year-old female Sumatran tiger, is expecting her first litter. Her cubs will be the first offspring for her and mate, 10-year-old Kavi, as well as the first tigers born at Zoo Atlanta in more than a decade. The Animal Management and Veterinary Teams confirmed the pregnancy via ultrasound on May 20.

"We're delighted about Chelsea's pregnancy. We were hopeful that she was expecting, but it's very exciting to have our suspicions confirmed in an ultrasound," said Dwight Lawson, PhD, Deputy Director. "Tigers are extremely popular at the Zoo, but they're also one of the most critically endangered species in our collection."

As is typical for their wild counterparts, Chelsea and Kavi interact only at specific times. The species is solitary, with males and females associating briefly during short breeding intervals. Zoo Atlanta's pair met in 2007, but not until early 2009 did Chelsea begin demonstrating interest in Kavi. The Animal Management and Veterinary Teams have been monitoring Chelsea since the pair's most recent breeding introduction in late March. Veterinarians plan to continue to track the pregnancy through regular ultrasounds, an activity Chelsea is trained to participate in voluntarily. Tiger gestation averages 103 days, suggesting a delivery in early July.

"The ultrasounds were performed in a specially-designed portal in Chelsea's training area, thanks to the groundbreaking efforts of Zoo Atlanta's keepers and veterinary team," said Hayley Murphy, DVM, Director of Veterinary Services. "This remarkable achievement highlights our commitment to cutting-edge animal care and training and will enable us to monitor Chelsea's pregnancy without the risk and stress of general anesthesia."

Sumatran tigers are among the rarest species housed at Zoo Atlanta, with fewer than 400 believed to remain in the wild. Poaching, habitat loss and territory fragmentation caused by deforestation are the primary threats to these charismatic predators, which are found only on the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Zoo Atlanta is a participant in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) Tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP), which seeks to maintain a self-sustaining, genetically diverse population within North American zoos. Conservation projects supported by Zoo Atlanta include work to preserve tiger habitat located in a critical wildlife corridor in Sumatra's Aceh Forest.

About Zoo Atlanta

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and outdoor family fun. From well-known native wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 1,500 animals from around the world. Complex Carnivores, a new series of exhibits featuring bush dogs, fossa and binturong, opened on April 1. Zoo Atlanta is also proud to be one of only four zoos in the U.S. that giant pandas call home: Lun Lun's newest cub, Po, born November 3, 2010, made his public debut in spring 2011. Other highlights include the nation's largest collection of western lowland gorillas, the nation's largest zoological collection of orangutans and a global center of excellence for the care and study of vanishing reptiles and amphibians. The Zoo is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or visit zooatlanta.org.

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