

ENDANGERED RED PANDA CUB BORN AT WEST MIDLANDS SAFARI PARK...



West Midlands Safari Park has announced the birth of a red panda cub, the fourth cub to be born at the Park in as many years.

The fluffy cub, whose sex is not yet known, was born on 21 June, to experienced mum, six-year-old Mei Lin and dad, eight-year-old Sanka.

Keepers were first alerted to the arrival of a cub as they could hear tiny squeaks coming from one of the nest boxes.

On the same day, a guest staying in one of the Red Panda Cottages, was lucky enough to catch the first glimpse of the cub, as Mei Lin moved it from one nest box to another.

The birth comes a month after the Park said goodbye to the cub's big sisters, who moved to other zoos as part of the endangered species breeding programme, in May.

Head Keeper of the Discovery Trail, Vicky McFarlane, said, *"Following last year's red panda cubs, Nadiya and Nikisha, leaving for their new homes just a few short weeks ago, we are overjoyed to announce that Mei Lin has given birth to another beautiful red panda cub! Guests in the Red Panda Cottages were the first to get a sneak peek at the new arrival, as Mei-Lin moved the cub early in the morning of 21 June, following its birth a few days before."*

"Mei Lin is an experienced mum, having had three cubs previously and she knows exactly what to do, so keepers leave her undisturbed to do what she does best. So, the cub will stay in the nest box, growing bigger every day for the next few months, under the careful supervision of mum."

She continued, *"With a wild population of less than 10,000 individuals, every red panda birth is special and aids conservation efforts for this endangered species."*

For the next few weeks, keepers will continue to monitor the cub and Mei Lin from a safe distance, but they will perform a quick health check at three-months, where they will determine the sex of the cub and pick a name.

The cub's name will begin with the letter 'O', as all animals born at the Park in 2026 have names starting with this letter.

Mei Lin arrived at the Park in August 2021 and was joined by male, Sanka, in March 2022, as part of an EEP (EAZA Ex-Situ Programme), which is a collaboration between European zoos to conserve endangered species.

Red pandas are sadly listed as 'endangered' by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature), due to threats such as the loss, degradation and fragmentation of their habitat, caused by human activities.

Reports of poaching and hunting are also on the rise as well as smuggling live red pandas for the illegal wildlife trade.

The Park supports the Red Panda Network (RPN) which is committed to the conservation of wild red pandas and their habitat through the education and empowerment of local communities.

As part of this commitment, the Park sponsors a forest guardian, who helps monitor and protect wild red pandas and their habitats.

Red pandas spend the first few months of their lives growing in their dens with their mother; therefore, it is unlikely that guests will see the cub out and about regularly until it is about four months old.

Guests can see dad to the cub, Sanka, at Red Panda Retreat, located in the Safari Walk area of the Park, which is included in the admission price.

West Midlands Safari Park is open daily for its summer season and guests can book in advance online for the best prices, which also includes a free return visit.

More information is available on the Park's website: www.wmsp.co.uk

E N D S

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Photo captions:

- 01 – A tiny, endangered red panda cub has been born at West Midlands Safari Park.
- 02 – A glimpse of the cub as Mum, Mei Lin, moves it to a different nest box. (Still taken from video).
- 03 – Red pandas are classed as ‘endangered’, so this is another milestone birth for the Park. (Still taken from video).
- 04 – Mum to the cub is six-year-old Mei Lin.
- 05 – The cub’s dad is eight-year-old Sanka.

Video captions:

- 01 – Mobile phone footage from two lucky staff members, show rare glimpses of the red panda cub, born at West Midlands Safari Park.
- 02 – As above but no music.
- 03 – Video of the panda cub snoozing on a hot day, taken by Keeper Ben Pedrick.
- 04 – Staff member, James Plant, gets a lucky glimpse of the red panda cub at just a few days old, as Mei Lin moves it to another nest box.