



News from the Office of
Adam J. Bello
Monroe County Executive



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**Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and the Seneca Park Zoo
Announce Birth of two Red Panda Cubs**

ROCHESTER, N.Y.- Monroe County Executive Adam Bello and the Seneca Park Zoo have announced that Starlight, the Zoo's four-year-old female red panda, gave birth to two male cubs on Sunday, June 20, 2021. The one-month old cubs are doing well and currently weighing 350g and 380g respectively. This is the first red panda birthing in the 128 years of the Seneca Park Zoo.

“The birth of the two red panda cubs is exciting for the Seneca Park Zoo and our community, and is encouraging news for ensuring the sustainability of red panda populations,” **said County Executive Bello**. “I want to thank Zoo Director Steve Lacy, Dr. Louis DiVincenti, Lead Red Panda Keeper Heidi Beifus and the rest of the talented staff at the Seneca Park Zoo for their dedication to caring for the cubs and their new mom over the last month. We can't wait to be able to share our newest Zoo additions with residents and visitors.”

Starlight came to the Seneca Park Zoo in 2018 from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and her mate, Willie, 6, arrived in 2020 by way of the Knoxville Zoo. Both animals are first time parents.

Lead Red Panda Keeper Heidi Beifus said, “Even as a first time mom, Starlight has taken perfect care of her two cubs. We are confident they are in good hands as they grow.” The cubs will remain in their nest box - out of public viewing - until they are two or three months old. At the current trajectory, the red panda cubs will not be available for public viewing for at least another month.

“This successful birth is the result of careful planning and preparation. Our red pandas play an important role as ambassador for their wild counterparts, and we look forward to them helping our community foster a connection to red pandas in the wild,” **said Dr. Louis DiVincenti, Assistant Zoo Director**.

The pairing was recommended by Red Panda Species Survival Plan, which ensures the conservation of red pandas across zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Native to southwestern China and the eastern Himalayas, red pandas are threatened by habitat loss and poaching throughout their natural range. If you would like to get involved in helping to preserve the red panda, please visit <https://www.redpandanetwork.org/>.

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