



An animal keeper at Lincoln Park Zoo holds a 1-week-old red wolf pup Friday. The pup and three litter mates were taken to North Carolina to be raised by wild wolves. | LINCOLN PARK ZOO PHOTOS

Red wolf pups leave zoo for life in the wild

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They are four tiny, chocolate-brown newborns.

They're so young that their eyes aren't even open yet — which could be for the best.

The four red wolf pups just moved from the relative safety of Lincoln Park Zoo to a new home in the wild.

On Friday, they flew from Chicago to North Carolina, where they were being placed in dens of wild wolves. If that's done when

they're young enough, the adult wolves will raise the pups as their own, zoo officials said — like canid foster parents.

The cross-country move is part of program to save the critically endangered species.

The red wolf was once common throughout the southeastern United States, but by the 1960s, the population was decimated because of a loss of habitat and the hunting and killing of the animals, feared as predators by farmers. Today, only an esti-

mated 100 to 130 remain.

These are the first Lincoln Park pups to be released into the wild.

Adult wild red wolves wear special radio collars that allow field biologists to track them, said Will Waddell, the red wolf species survival plan coordinator.

He said biologists have had good success placing pups born in captivity with wild foster mothers.

"It's just another mouth to feed," Waddell said.

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