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Rare Red Wolf Pups Depart Zoo for Life in the Wild

Recovery Effort Aims to Save Red Wolves – One of the World’s Most Endangered Canids

Chicago, IL (April 30, 2010) – Two of six endangered red wolf pups born at Lincoln Park Zoo on April 17 are on their way to North Carolina today where they will be released into the wild through the Red Wolf Recovery Program. The newborn pups will be placed inside the den of a pair of wild adult wolves that are currently nursing their own small litter of comparably aged pups. The wild wolves will become the zoo-born pups’ foster parents.



The red wolf fostering strategy has been successfully performed with multiple litters over the past decade, including four pups from Lincoln Park Zoo last year.

According to Arthur Beyer, red wolf field coordinator for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, “Wild mothers have readily accepted the

pups when they are placed in the den when the pups are this young.”

The Red Wolf Recovery Program is a cooperative conservation effort between the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ Red Wolf Species Survival Plan and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service. This is the second litter of wolf pups born at Chicago’s zoo to be released into the wild.

“Red wolves are critically endangered, so it is very important to bolster their population, and the zoo is proud to contribute to their recovery in this important way,” said Diane Mulkerin, Lincoln Park Zoo curator.

“This is a great example of how red wolves in the Species Survival Plan continue to support recovery efforts in the field,” explained Will Waddell, Red Wolf Species Survival Plan coordinator. “This fostering strategy has demonstrated a very high success rate.”



Four red wolf pups remain at the zoo. They are not visible to the public yet, but are expected to emerge from their den and start exploring their habitat within the next few weeks.

The red wolf is one of the world’s most endangered wild canids. Once common throughout the southeastern United States, red wolf populations were decimated by the 1960s due to intensive predator control programs and loss of habitat. After being declared an endangered species in 1973, efforts were made to round up as many wild red wolves as possible. Of the 17 remaining wolves captured by biologists, 14 became the founders of a successful managed-breeding program. Consequently, the US Fish and Wildlife Service declared red wolves extinct in the wild in 1980.

By 1987, enough red wolves were bred in the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan to begin a restoration program on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in northeastern North Carolina. Since then the experimental population area has expanded to include three national wildlife refuges, Department of Defense and state-owned lands and private property, totaling 1.7 million acres. The main threats to the wolf’s survival remain loss of habitat due to development and persecution by humans.

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ABOUT LINCOLN PARK ZOO

Lincoln Park Zoo, a historic Chicago landmark founded in 1868, is dedicated to connecting people with nature by providing a free, family-oriented wildlife experience. A leader in conservation science both globally and locally, the zoo exemplifies the highest quality animal care and educational outreach. The not-for-profit zoo, managed by The Lincoln Park Zoological Society, is a member-supported organization and one of the nation's only free, privately managed zoos. For more information, call 312 -742-2000 or visit www.lpzoo.org.