



For Immediate Release

Dane County Contact: Joshua Wescott
608-266-9069

Friends of the Zoo Contact: Emily Lundquist
815-210-4489

Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo Announces Birth of Twin Lion Cubs New Arrivals Ready for Public Debut in Late May

Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo is now home to two healthy African Lion cubs, officials announced today. The cubs were born at the end of February to first-time parents Shakura and Pelo and will likely be available for the public to see within the next few weeks, once they are big enough to leave the den.

"The birth of these cubs is an incredible accomplishment for both the Henry Vilas Zoo family and the conservation work our zoo staff does every day," Dane County Executive Joe Parisi said. "It doesn't get much better than healthy, happy baby lions which will no doubt be a must-see attraction for our zoo in the months ahead. We take a lot of pride in the work our zoo is doing to help conserve this much-loved species."

The Henry Vilas Zoo participates in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' African Lion Species Survival Plan (SSP). The lion cubs are important to the national effort to maintain a genetically healthy population of this species, who are threatened in the wild. African Lions are found in a variety of habitats south of the Sahara Desert. The main threats to wild lions are humans and loss of habitat.

"We're very excited to see how well Shakura has adapted to being an attentive and caring mother to her cubs, especially as a first time mom," Zoo Director Ronda Schwetz said. "Our staff did everything possible to ensure this positive outcome and I couldn't be more proud or thankful of their efforts. From working with the African Lion SSP to bring Pelo and then Shakura here to producing these healthy cubs, we are proud to be part of the efforts to help guests connect to and conserve these species."

Pelo's arrival was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Madison community in 2013 on Giving Tuesday, a global day dedicated to giving back.

"Giving Tuesday is an important part of the Friends' efforts to support our zoo, and we are incredibly grateful to our Madison community for helping us bring Pelo to Henry Vilas Zoo," said Friends of the Zoo Executive Director Alison Prange. "Without the support of this wonderful community, we wouldn't have the opportunity to have lion cubs at the zoo and continue to promote the survival of these majestic animals."

For the next few weeks, Shakura will continue adjusting to motherhood and getting acclimated with her cubs while Pelo will continue to spend time in both his indoor and outdoor exhibit. When the cubs are big enough to join "mom and dad" outside, it will be announced on Facebook, mostly likely in late May.

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