



PO Box 50220  
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## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Idaho Falls Zoo Announces Birth of Male African Lion Cub

**Idaho Falls, ID** – Idaho Falls Zoo is thrilled to announce the extraordinary birth of a male African lion cub, born on February 17, 2017 to first-time parents Kimani and Dahoma.

Because of the first successful birth, the advanced age of the parents, and the unique genetics of the couple, this adorable cub is extremely important to the captive African lion population in North American zoos.

In only 30 years, wild African lion numbers have declined a startling 40 percent. The new cub is an example of the important role Idaho Falls Zoo, as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), plays in both local and global conservation efforts to save threatened and endangered species through a program known as the Species Survival Plan (SSP).

“Unfortunately, shortly after his birth, the cub had to be removed from his mom to be treated for a medical issue. We are pleased to report that he has completely recovered and is almost ready to be returned to his mother,” states Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Rhonda Aliah.

Lions are the most social of the cat species, and sociability is incredibly important for behavioral and psychological reasons. Young cubs rely on other members of their pride to teach them how to be adult lions. A cub that has been away from his parents is at risk for not being easily accepted back into the pride and could be injured or killed when reintroduced.

Extensive conversations with staff, the AZA and other zoo professionals explored all possible options for the cub. “Everyone agreed that the only option available was to keep the cub at the Idaho Falls Zoo and eventually reintroduce him to his parents,” states Aliah.

Although reintroducing this genetically valuable cub to his parents is essential for his development, the process is not simple or straightforward. To lessen the risk, the cub will return to his mother when he is bigger and more mobile.

A lion manager from the Denver Zoo who has experience with conducting these types of reintroductions and who serves as an advisor to the AZA’s lion SSP will be onsite during



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reintroduction. The lion manager will help interpret behaviors and guide zoo staff and the cub during what will be a very stressful and potentially dangerous, but extremely developmentally important, time in the cub's life.

In the meantime, the lion cub needs to be socialized. So, how do you keep a lion cub social without being around other lions? Meet Justice, another new member of the zoo family.

### *Justice's Story*

Justice is not a lion, but a domestic dog. To be exact, she is a Great Pyrenees with wonderful mothering instincts. Two-year-old Justice is a rescue dog that has had at least one litter of puppies. Upon rescue, representatives with the Humane Society of the Upper Valley found her alone caring for her puppies as well as a weak sheep. Her puppies have all been rehomed, and now Justice has a new role – nursemaid to a rambunctious two-month old lion cub.

Zoo Curator, Darrell Markum explains, "An important aspect of animal development, particularly with baby carnivores, is having an adult animal teach 'animal etiquette.' This includes not biting other animals hard enough to injure them, and not using your claws to climb on your elders. Justice is a very patient teacher." The use of domestic dogs to raise young carnivores is an accepted practice in modern zoos given this unique situation. Justice and the cub are getting to know one another in the zoo's CHC Animal Health Care Hospital.

The duo will be on exhibit periodically starting next week as the weather improves. "The birth of this amazing cub is vitally important to the future of captive lions, and the birth happening right here in Idaho Falls in your zoo," states Zoo Executive Director David Pennock. "We're eager, given the unique circumstances he's encountered in his young life, to see what the cub's future holds."

The tentative plan is for the cub and Justice to be on exhibit daily between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Please note the times will be subject to change to ensure the safety and health of the animals. For up-to-date information, fun sneak peeks of playful antics of this unique pairing, as well as a schedule of when the new cub and Justice will be on exhibit, follow the Idaho Falls Zoo on [Facebook](#), Instagram and on the zoo [website](#).

To receive all City of Idaho Falls News, including zoo announcements, simply click on the *Notify Me* button on the homepage of the city's [website](#).

Spring and summer recreation enthusiasts can now learn about a myriad of recreation activities, community events, youth & adult programs and sports in the recently released [2017 Discover Idaho Falls Parks and Recreation Guide](#). More than 25,000 copies will be distributed to local businesses, the state building, city facilities and in our FREE distribution racks located at Sunnyside Park, Community Park, the Idaho Falls Zoo,



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Japanese Friendship Gardens, Idaho Falls Library, Wes Deist Aquatic Center, Ryder Park, Civitan Plaza and multiple locations along the River Walk.

*Media Note: For more information or to schedule an interview with zoo staff, contact Public Information Officer, Kerry Hammon.*

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***About Idaho Falls Zoo at Tautphaus Park:*** *With more than 330 individual animals representing 130 species from all around the globe, the Idaho Falls Zoo has the largest collection of animals in the state of Idaho and is considered the “Best Little Zoo in the West.” Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the zoo participates in 44 national Species Survival Plans. Learn more on our [website](#).*