

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:Christan Baumer
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The long wait is over: The highly anticipated Slawson Family Tiger Trek will open up to the public on May 22. Initially there will be four tigers that will call the new exhibit home. On grand opening day you can see two female Amur tigers, two male Malayan tigers, and much more.

Many people may be wondering, "Isn't a tiger just a tiger?" What makes one different from another one? There are many, sometimes subtle, differences within the tiger species that categorize them into one of nine established subspecies. The nine subspecies, three of which are extinct, consist of: Amur, Balinese (extinct), Bengal, Caspian (extinct), Indochinese, Javan (extinct), Malayan, South China, and Sumatran.

The Amur tiger, sometimes referred to as the Siberian tiger, is not only the largest member of all the tiger subspecies, but also of the entire Felidae, or cat, family. Male Amur tigers typically range between 500-700 pounds and females between 200-400 pounds. Generally by the age of 6 months, an Amur tiger cub can be as large as a full-grown leopard.

The wild Amur tiger population is completely confined to the Amur-Ussuri region of the Russian Far East. These tigers particularly depend on red deer and wild boar as their main food source. However, they will also prey on moose, sika deer, hares, fish and even brown and black bears. It has even been documented that certain tigers have been seen imitating the calls of Asiatic black bears to help attract them for prey opportunities.

As it stands now, the Amur tiger is still critically endangered. In the mid 1980s it was estimated that only 250 individuals composed the entire wild Amur tiger population. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, illegal deforestation and poaching became much easier practices, aiding the demise of the Amur tiger. However in 1992, the Siberian Tiger Project was founded. Through its conservation efforts, such as anti-poaching patrols and activities to reduce habitat depletion, the Amur tiger has experienced a steady recovery.

The Malayan tiger is a recent addition to the list of tiger subspecies. It wasn't until 2004 that this particular tiger was considered to be an entirely different subspecies. It is natively found in the central and southern parts of the Malay Peninsula. It is one of the smallest extant, or existing, subspecies of tigers, with males averaging 256 pounds and females 220 pounds.

While still facing the status of being endangered, the wild Malayan tiger population, which consists of approximately 600-800 individuals, is thought to be one of the largest tiger populations in the world. Right now there is still much to be learned about the newly classified Malayan tiger.



We are proud to open the Slawson Family Tiger Trek to the community and welcome four amazing tigers to Sedgwick County Zoo. Come out and get face to face with these secretive creatures through one of our several glass-viewing ports. You can also enjoy a good elevated view of the larger of our two tiger yards from our very own Lookout Tower. Beginning June 1 there will also be daily Tiger Talk sessions held inside the Tiger Reserve Lodge. These talks will consist of a tiger training session and will give our guests the chance to ask questions and hear about some of the largest cats in the world. So instead of taking a journey to the Far East to get a glimpse of these magnificent animals, just take a short trek to Sedgwick County Zoo.

Where does the distinctive white tiger fit into this classification?

The white tiger is in fact not a separate species of tiger, but actually the result of a recessive gene that produces a color mutation. This well-known mutation is rarely seen in wild tiger populations and only approximately one in 10,000 tiger births actually carry the particular gene. To get white tigers, these animals are purposely bred, largely through inbreeding, to keep the mutation alive. As a result of the inbreeding, these tigers are born with a predisposition to having certain physical deformities. These deformities typically consist of cleft palates, scoliosis and crossed eyes. Even the apparently healthy white tigers still have a reduced lifespan when compared to their orange counterparts.

The Sedgwick County Zoo is a not-for-profit organization, accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, visit www.aza.org. Sedgwick County Zoo is also a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums www.waza.org. Sedgwick County Zoo has been recognized with national and international awards for its support of field conservation programs and successful breeding of rare and endangered species. It's the No. 1 outdoor family tourist attraction in Kansas and is home to more than 2,500 animals of nearly 400 different species. For more information, visit www.scz.org.

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