Pygmy hippo takes his first swim

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He may be tiny but pygmy hippo Sapo made a big splash when he took a dip in his outdoor pool for the first time this week.

The hugely cute calf, now three months old, is an important addition to the European Endangered Species Programme and for the conservation of this species worldwide.

Included on ZSL's Edge program – a global conservation program dedicated to threatened animal species which have unique evolutionary history – pygmy hippos are endangered and in the wild their numbers have dwindled to less than 3,000.

The calf has been named after the national park in Liberia where ZSL's Edge programme field workers managed to secure the first camera trap pictures of the species in that country.

Meanwhile at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, the calf's mum Flora is being a star mother and helping her young son to thrive. The hungry hippo is now munching on grass and leaves in his outdoor paddock at the zoo. Like the name hippopotamus – which means water horse – suggests, Sapo enjoys taking a dip.

Africa section team leader Mark Holden said: "To have a pygmy hippo born is fantastic, not only are they endangered, but pygmy hippos are really in vital need of protection to stop their numbers falling even more. The birth of Sapo will hopefully raise awareness of this wonderful animal and help its future survival in the wild."

Sapo is the first born calf to parents Flora and Tapon. When fully grown he will be a height up to 100cm/1m and will weigh more than 250kg.

Provided by Zoological Society of London

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