

Cuddly polar bear cub makes splash in Berlin debut

March 15 2019



The three and a half month old polar bear still has not been named

Berlin's latest zoo celebrity, a fluffy polar bear cub, made her first tentative steps on the public stage Friday, with media hungry to anoint her the rightful successor to late lamented superstar Knut.

Nuzzling her mother Tonja, taking a dip in a pool in her enclosure and sniffing the fresh air, the still unnamed three and a half month old seemed oblivious to the phalanx of cameras gathered for her coming-out at the Tierpark zoo in the east of the capital.

Under grey skies, the cub splashed in the water, lolled on the grey stones outside the breeding burrow where she has lived since her birth on December 1 and gnawed on [tree bark](#) as she explored her new surroundings.

Following her media photo-op, she will be presented to the public on Saturday.

The mortality of polar bears tends to be very high in the first weeks. Tonja lost three of her cubs in less than two years. To the great relief of her keepers, the new female has made it through the crucial first three months when a captive cub's chances of survival hang in the balance.

"We're very happy with her development," the zoo's [polar bear](#) vet Florian Sicks said in a statement.

Tierpark is hoping she will take the place in Germans' hearts once occupied by Knut, the universally adored polar bear born in 2006 and hand-reared by west Berlin zookeepers after being rejected by his mother.



The unnamed polar bear cub frolicked with her mother Tonja at Berlin zoo

Knut's worldwide fame led to appearances on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine and on German postage stamps and brought in millions of euros from visits and merchandising.

But the cuddly icon died suddenly of a suspected [brain tumour](#) in 2011 at the age of four, sparking grief amongst his army of fans.



The polar bear cub was born in December

A bronze statue of Knut now stands in the west Berlin Zoo.

Its Arctic habitat threatened by global warming, the polar bear is listed as a vulnerable species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

A European Union breeding plan is attempting to boost numbers of the bear, whose population in the wild stands at around 26,000, according to the IUCN.



The new cub will be presented to the public on Saturday

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Cuddly polar bear cub makes splash in Berlin debut (2019, March 15) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-03-cuddly-polar-cub-splash-berlin.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.