

Rare elephant twins born in dramatic birth in Thailand

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Elephants rarely give birth to twins, and male-female pairs are even more unusual.

An elephant in Thailand has delivered a rare set of twins in a dramatic birth that left a caregiver injured after he tried to rescue one of the

newborns.

The 36-year-old Asian elephant named Jamjuree gave [birth](#) to an 80-kilogram (176-pound) male at the Ayutthaya Elephant Palace and Royal Kraal north of Bangkok on Friday night.

But when a second, 60-kilogram female calf emerged 18 minutes later, the mother went into a frenzy and attacked her new arrival.

"We heard somebody shout 'there is another baby being born!'" said veterinarian Lardthongtare Meepan.

An elephant keeper, also known as a mahout, moved in to prevent the mother from attacking her newborn, and took a blow to his ankle in return.

"The mother attacked the baby because she had never had [twins](#) before -- it's very rare," said Michelle Reedy, the director of the Elephant Stay organization, which allows visiting tourists to ride, feed and bathe elephants at the Royal Kraal center.

"The mahouts who are the caregivers of the elephants jumped in there trying to get the baby away so that she didn't kill it," Reedy told AFP.

Jamjuree has now accepted her calves, who are so small that a special platform has been built to help them reach up to suckle.

They are also being given supplemental pumped milk by syringe, said Lardthongtare.

Twin elephants are rare, forming around only one percent of births, according to research organization Save the Elephants, and male-female twin births are even more unusual.



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Mothers often do not have enough milk for both calves and the pair might not have survived in the wild, said Reedy.

"Whether the rest of the herd may have intervened—they may have, but the baby may have been trampled in the process," she said.

Reedy said many of the 80 elephants at the center were rescued from street begging, a practice that became increasingly common after a logging ban in 1989 that left mahouts working in the industry with their elephants seeking alternative income.

The practice, which was outlawed in 2010, involved the animals performing tricks like playing with footballs or carrying baskets of fruit.

Some elephants at Royal Kraal carry tourists to the nearby ruins and temples of Ayutthaya, the historic former capital of Siam.

Many [conservation groups](#) oppose elephant riding, arguing it is stressful for the animals and often involves abusive training.

The center argues the rides allow the animals to socialize and exercise, and promote conservation of the species, which is endangered in Southeast Asia and China.

Only about 8,000-11,000 Asian elephants remain in the wild, according to the WWF.

The animals were once widespread, but deforestation, human encroachment and poaching have decimated their numbers.

The twin calves, whose father is a 29-year-old elephant named Siam, will be named seven days after their birth, in accordance with Thai custom.

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