

Fort Worth Zoo hits conservation milestone by hatching endangered crocodiles

July 25 2024, by Maria Salette Ontiveros, The Dallas Morning News



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The Fort Worth Zoo made wildlife conservation history, marking the "first-ever repeated" breeding of endangered gharial crocodiles.

"With two new hatchlings of gharial crocodiles this summer, the Zoo

remains the only institution in North America to have produced multiple offspring of this species and is now the only North American institution to have repeated this process," reads a July 24 news release from Fort Worth Zoo.

According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, gharials are classified as critically endangered.

The babies came from eggs laid by two different females within the zoo's gharial group, according to the news release.

"Everyone here at the Fort Worth Zoo is ecstatic to have repeated success with our gharial hatching for the second year in a row," said Vicky Poole, associate curator of ectotherms. "Having two additional hatchlings is a big win for growing the gharial population in zoos and expanding knowledge to help this critically [endangered species](#) survive."

Gharials are notable for their long, slender snouts adapted for fishing, and are among the largest crocodylian species, according to Fort Worth Zoo. They are great swimmers that prefer to live in [aquatic environments](#).

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Although the hatchlings currently measure about 12 inches, they will grow quickly. Male gharials can reach lengths of up to 16 feet and weigh nearly 1,500 pounds, while females tend to be smaller.

Gharial crocodiles face critical endangerment due to [habitat destruction](#), pollution and river fragmentation, according to the zoo.

The zoo built a specialized habitat in 2010 within its Museum of Living Art to combat these challenges. The environment features regulated [water temperatures](#) and direct access to wet and dry areas to maintain ideal conditions for the gharials.

The offspring were conceived on June 16 and 22, dates that coincided with the zoo receiving an important award. On June 22, Poole accepted the 2024 Joseph Laszlo Memorial Award from the International Herpetological Symposium, recognizing the Zoo's outstanding work in gharial husbandry and breeding.

The achievement comes after a decade of work by Poole and Fort Worth Zoo's team, according to the zoo, to enhance the species' genetic diversity.

Currently, the hatchlings remain out of public view, where their growth and development are closely monitored. However, the Fort Worth Zoo is offering a chance to see the 2023 hatchlings up close on July 27 and 28 in the Museum of Living Art at the Discovery Hub from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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Citation: Fort Worth Zoo hits conservation milestone by hatching endangered crocodiles (2024, July 25) retrieved 26 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-07-fort-worth-zoo-milestone-hatching.html>

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