

# PB Zoo and Conservation Society Announces Birth of Baby Siamang

The Palm Beach Zoo & Conservation Society has announced the birth of an endangered baby siamang. Raya and Zain, the Zoo's siamang pair, were designated as a genetic match for breeding by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and are the proud parents of a baby boy, born October 1.

"We were delighted when the AZA recommended us for breeding siamangs," said Nancy Nill, Palm Beach Zoo Associate Curator of Animal Wellness. "We worked closely with the AZA to find and bring both Raya and Zain to Palm Beach Zoo. We are all overjoyed with the birth of their baby boy."

Palm Beach Zoo is AZA accredited and therefore held to the highest standards for animal care. Part of the AZA's mission is to

ensure the survival of endangered species through the Species Survival Plan. The Zoo received a recommendation for breeding siamangs in 2017 and then began the process of finding the right genetic match.

Raya is a 12-year-old female and came to the Zoo in January 2018, and Zain is a 13-year-old male who has lived at the Zoo since November 2017. They have been cohabitating since November 2018.

According to the Zoo's veterinary team, the baby is doing very well, feeding regularly, gaining weight and growing. Siamang babies cling to their mothers at birth, and remain close to their mother and father for the first two years.

"Zoos play a crucial role in continuing endangered species, and we are ecstatic with the new ad-

dition to our Palm Beach Zoo family," said Margo McKnight, president and CEO of Palm Beach Zoo. "Raya is such a natural first time mother, and Zain is a doting and attentive new father."

The siamang family had been living at the Melvin J. and Claire Levine Animal Care Complex located on the north side of the Zoo, while enhancements were being made to the siamang habitat, Siamang Island, for the family. They officially moved back to the island late last week.

Siamangs scientifically belong to the gibbon family. In the wild, they are found in the forests of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. In 1980, there were estimated only 360,000 remaining in the wild, however poaching and deforestation since then has most likely led to

a reduction in the population. All gibbons are currently on the endangered species list.

At the Zoo's annual fundraiser, Tropical Safari Gala on January 31, 2020, the Palm Beach Zoo is providing the opportunity to a gala attendee to help support animal care and conservation initiatives. The Gala, along with admissions, grants, corporate sponsorships and private donations, funds the operation of the Zoo.

Palm Beach Zoo is planning a "Sip and See" reception to introduce the public to the new siamang family. In lieu of baby gifts, the Zoo is requesting donations to assist in enhancements to the primate night houses. To donate, visit [www.palmbeachzoo.org/donate-to-your-zoo](http://www.palmbeachzoo.org/donate-to-your-zoo).



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The nation's longest-running community science initiative will take place in Palm Beach County on Saturday, Dec. 28. The 120th National Audubon Christmas Bird Count will mobilize nearly 80,000 volunteer birders and nature enthusiasts in more than 2,600 locations across the United States, Canada, the Caribbean and Latin America. Data compiled from the count will record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area, contributing to a vast community science network.

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt," where participants wandered the countryside shooting at every bird and small animal they saw. At the end of the hunt, teams tallied their kills to find out which side had won. Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations.

Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.

This year marks the 65th year Audubon Everglades, the Palm Beach County chapter of the National Audubon Society, will contribute to the annual bird count. Audubon

Everglades member and volunteer Chuck Weber, who has participated in the count for more than 25 years will compile the data collected from teams of observers.

"The West Palm Beach Christmas Bird Count is not only another opportunity to get out and go birding, it makes us part of a worldwide citizen science effort going back more than a century," said Chuck Weber. "In the years I've done our count, I've seen many changes in the area we survey. Yes, we've lost wooded areas and much farmland, but we've also benefited from new public natural areas and habitat improvements, thanks to projects and funding from local, state and federal governments. And, while our bird numbers are trending downward, like everywhere, last year aided by some excellent weather, our hardworking volunteer counters managed to log 150 species, the most we've had in at least a decade."

There is a specific methodology to the Christmas Bird Count. Volunteer counters are required to follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile diameter circle counting every bird they see or hear. All birds are counted during the 24 hour period, giving an indication of the total species and number of birds in the circle that day.

New count sites within the circle for 2019 include Certified Audubon International Cooperative Sanctuary golf courses Wycliff Golf & Country Club and the Links at

Boynton Beach. "Golf courses provide good habitat for birds, so we are really interested in capturing data from these locations," said Audubon Everglades volunteer Doreen LePage. "As the population grew with in Palm Beach county the good birding habitats turned into gated communities." We lost access to these areas to include in our annual counts, and we are grateful to have access to these private golf courses this year."

Science published a study using decades of Audubon Christmas Bird Count data to describe a grim picture: a steady decline of nearly three billion North American birds since 1970, primarily as a result of human activities. Christmas Bird Count data have been used in more than 300 peer-reviewed articles.

In response to the report, National Audubon has identified a number of conservation priorities that include the implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The Everglades is home to 70 threatened and endangered species and more than 300 native bird species.

Birders of all ages and experience are invited to participate in this fun community science project, which provides ornithologists with a crucial snapshot of our native bird populations during the winter months. To sign up for the Palm Beach County count, contact [info@audubon-everglades.org](mailto:info@audubon-everglades.org). There is no fee to participate.