

PRESS RELEASE

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Media contact: Gigi Allianic, Craig Newberry
woodlandparkzoo@zoo.org

Media link for video and photos:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=4180&k=0f28516a5a>

Sloth bear cub reaches a milestone *Baby Bowie takes first steps*

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo’s newest sloth bear cub, a girl named Bowie, has taken her first steps! Bowie shares the same birthday, January 8, as icon David Bowie, her namesake.

At 2 months old, Bowie continues to thrive and remains off view in a maternity den with mom Kushali (kuu-SHAA-lee); the zoo’s sloth bear team monitors mom and cub on den cams. The dad of the cub, Bhutan (boo-TAHN), lives separately from the cub.

“Kushali continues to be a very attentive and protective mom and rarely leaves Bowie’s side. However, through the den cams we were able to witness Bowie taking her first steps under the watchful care of her mom,” said Kim Szawan, an Animal Care Manager at Woodland Park Zoo. “This is a very important developmental milestone. Bowie is on track for sloth bear cubs her age and she’s also starting to play and wrestle with mom Kushali. This is a precious time watching her grow and explore!”

As long as Bowie continues to stay on track for important developments, the zoo should begin introducing her with Kushali to the public sometime in April.

While the zoo’s other sloth bears, dad Bhutan and Tasha, are currently spending more time off view in their dens, they’ll be more active and visible in their habitat in Banyan Wilds as the weather warms up. Banyan Wilds is also home to Malayan tigers, Asian small-clawed otters and a tropical aviary.

Sloth bears in zoos are rare, with 48 currently living in zoos accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#), and every birth of sloth bears is significant for the Sloth Bear Species Survival Plan. [Species Survival Plans](#) are cooperative breeding programs across accredited zoos to help ensure healthy, genetically diverse, self-sustaining populations of select species or subspecies.

About Sloth Bears

- Sloth bears live in forests and grasslands in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- Adult sloth bears are missing their top two front teeth (incisors), which lets them suck ants and termites right out of their underground tunnels, like a vacuum cleaner! Their shaggy, dusty, black coats deflect sunlight, protecting them from the extremes of tropical heat. No wonder they’re fondly described as shaggy slurpers!
- Sloth bears forage for termites, grubs and other insects; they also eat grass, flowers, fruit, and honey plus occasional eggs and cultivated crops. At the zoo, they eat insects, honey, fruits and vegetables, eggs and omnivore chow.



Hope for Sloth Bears

- A vulnerable species, sloth bears' survival is challenged by conflicts with humans and animals for space and food caused by deforestation, the bear parts trade for use in traditional Asian medicines and fragmented populations.
- Woodland Park Zoo supports Wildlife SOS, a conservation organization in India that runs wildlife rescue centers and helps communities coexist with sloth bears and other native species. Visit www.zoo.org/donate to support Wildlife SOS.
- Buy wisely. Choose [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) certified paper and wood products to protect forest habitat and wildlife. By purchasing FSC-certified forest products, consumers help to protect sloth bear habitat by encouraging sustainable forestry and limiting overharvest of forest products (timber, fuelwood, fruits and honey). Without the FSC label, timber may come from illegal logging and forests that are not responsibly managed.

Winter zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily. For admission prices and tickets, visit www.zoo.org/visit. To learn more about Woodland Park Zoo or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#) and [TikTok](#).

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