

## **East Anglian zoo welcomes female Amur tiger as part of breeding programme**

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To mark Endangered Species Day tomorrow, one of the region's top zoos recently welcomed female Amur tiger, Mishka, as part of the European Breeding Programme for the species – an incredibly important conservation programme in place to protect endangered animals from extinction.

Mishka arrived at Banham Zoo from Woburn Safari Park on Thursday 13 May, having been born at the park in 2015 to parents Minerva and Elton.

The transfer was made on the recommendation of the European Breeding Programme coordinator for this species as Mishka was identified as a genetically compatible mate for the Norfolk zoo's resident male, Kuzma, who was bred at the zoo 12 years ago.

Kuzma recently returned from Banham Zoo's sister park, Africa Alive, whilst essential refurbishment works were carried out on his enclosure. The work was part of a variety of upgrades taking place at both zoos following the lifeline Zoo Animals Fund grant of £752,000 awarded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) earlier this year.

Mike Woolham, Head of Living Collections at The Zoological Society of East Anglia, said: "We are delighted that Mishka, with our male Kuzma, were considered a compatible match by the European breeding programme coordinator for Amur tigers and we are looking forward to playing our part in preserving this amazing and increasingly endangered species".

The arrival of the female tiger ties in with the annual Endangered Species Day which takes place on Friday 21 May, where further awareness is made for the protection of threatened and endangered species. Follow [#endangeredspeciesday](#)

Amur tigers, also known as Siberian tigers, are one of 9 subspecies of tiger – three of which are now extinct. They are classed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to habitat loss and hunting, with only around 500 thought to be left in the wild.

This particular breeding programme maintains a population of around 250 Amur tigers housed in EAZA zoos which are managed by a breeding programme coordinator to maintain as much genetic variability as possible.

In 2018, the Zoological Society of East Anglia donated £25,000 to Wildcats Conservation Alliance, whose mission is to save wild tigers and Amur leopards for future generations by funding carefully chosen conservation projects.

Meanwhile at Africa Alive in Suffolk, keepers have welcomed the birth of an aardvark, who was born to mother Boo and father AJ.

It is notoriously hard to distinguish the gender of an aardvark and it is therefore expected that the gender of this new arrival will be undetermined for a few months.

Although aardvarks are not endangered in the wild, they are also managed as part of a European Breeding Programme, showing a further step forward in the Zoological Society of East Anglia's commitment to conservation.

Claudia Roberts, CEO at the Zoological Society of East Anglia, said: "We are thrilled about these new arrivals to our two zoos. The past year has financially been very difficult which meant that we needed to pause some of our conservation projects.

"Both these new arrivals and our other two most recent additions – a southern white rhino at Africa Alive and a Ruppell's griffon vulture chick at Banham zoo – are a promising step forward in once again committing to a wealth of conservation projects for these incredible animals.

"They have all come at a great time as we once again re-open to the public following the most recent national lockdown, marking a fresh start for our zoos with lots of exciting new plans on the horizon, including the hopeful new addition of some sweet tiger cubs in the future!"

To find out more information about the Zoological Society of East Anglia's conservation work, visit <https://www.banhamzoo.co.uk/>

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**About the Zoological Society of East Anglia**

- The Zoological Society of East Anglia (ZSEA) is the dynamic conservation and education charity that leads Africa Alive! and Banham Zoo. For over 50 years the zoos have sought to amaze and inspire guests who visit, providing wonderful, memorable days out and to share unique experiences with their families, friends and loved ones.
- The creation of ZSEA in 2013 meant that the zoos could secure their long term futures and have a greater purpose than just being successful visitor attractions. Any surplus funding generated at the ZSEA zoos is directed to supporting and implementing the charity's objectives.
- Vision: Our world will be a haven for wildlife and people
- The natural world is something special that we all benefit from. Animals, the environment and so many people are facing tough challenges in life, but together we can make a positive difference, locally, nationally and globally.
- Mission: Connecting communities to nature
- Conservation is at the very heart of everything we do and to bring people and animals closer together and inspire individuals to become advocates for the natural world.
- Banham Zoo and Africa Alive!
- Banham Zoo opened to the public in 1968 and has become the premier zoological collection in Norfolk and houses diverse species, a number of which are endangered such as the Amur tiger, Grevy's zebra and Golden lion tamarin.
- Banham Zoo Ltd bought Africa Alive!, Kessingland, Suffolk in 1991, then known as Suffolk Wildlife Park, and now home to a variety of African species including the critically endangered Somali wild ass and the endangered African hunting dog and drill.