



3930 West Land Park Drive  
Sacramento, CA 95822-1123  
[sac zoo.org](http://sac zoo.org)

## Media Release

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### A little snow leopard cub gets a big name just in time for his exhibit debut



The Sacramento Zoo's snow leopard cub made his first (brief) exhibit debut late last week, after much anticipation from staff and visitors alike. Accompanied by his keepers, the 15-week-old cub named "Coconut" eventually warmed up to the space enough to stop and smell the shrubs and explore the rocks above his den.

Coconut's navigation through the outdoor space was a little tentative at first; the exhibit was a completely new experience for the young cub with swimmer's syndrome. The recipient of ongoing physical therapy, Coconut has been living in an off-exhibit maternity den and enclosure to ensure that he was able to receive his physical therapy sessions in a quiet, controlled space. The extra time working with zookeepers and veterinary staff has afforded Coconut a bright future considering multiple birth defects.



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One of the cub’s primary keepers, Erin Dougher said, “Coconut is gaining confidence daily by exploring the snow leopard habitat. It has been so much fun to watch him take it all in and begin to explore his new space.”

Veterinary Director, Dr. Ray Wack noted that Coconut continues to grow and develop well. With hard work and compassionate care from his keepers and veterinary staff, the cub’s condition is greatly improving every day. Coconut is walking and jumping much more than before; however, he continues



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to have a slight outward rotation of both rear feet and patellar luxation of his right knee (a mild condition where the kneecap temporarily slides out of the groove in which it normally sits). By extending his right leg, Coconut can guide the kneecap back into place himself. Through exercises designed to strengthen his muscles and tendons and his continued growth, veterinarians are hopeful that Coconut will grow out of this issue.

Although the cub's eyelid issue remains unchanged, he can see well and his corneas remain healthy. Veterinarians and veterinary ophthalmologists agree that the cub will likely need corrective surgery for his eyelid defects when he is older. For now, this issue is being closely monitored.

Coconut's name, sponsored and selected by Coconut's Fish Café in Sacramento, California, was chosen by the owners as a legacy to their late house cat who was also named Coconut. Daniel Oney, owner and chief operating officer said, "A constant companion to the family, Coconut the cat became the namesake of our family restaurant when we first opened our doors at the original Maui restaurant in 2009." Daniel continued, "In November of 2017, after 16 years of friendship, we said farewell to Coconut. We see the partnership with the Sacramento Zoo and Coconut the snow leopard cub as an exciting way to keep Coconut's legacy alive and well while supporting the work of the Sacramento Zoo at the same time."

Coconut will continue to navigate his outdoor exhibit space accompanied by his keepers for the time being. This guidance aids in keeper-cub relationship building and allows for consistent monitoring of safe and controlled exhibit exposure. As keepers are operating on Coconut's timeline and comfort-level, an exact schedule of the cub's time on exhibit is impossible to predict at this time. In the coming weeks, keepers plan to allow cub and mom access to the space together once Coconut is comfortable enough to be outside for longer periods of time.

The Sacramento Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and participates in the Snow Leopard Species Survival Plan® by following breeding recommendations and increasing awareness of the problems facing this species. Snow leopards are vulnerable due to poaching, loss of prey and the fragmentation of habitat. The Sacramento Zoo also supports snow leopard conservation, partnering with organizations such as the International Snow Leopard Trust and Snow Leopard Conservancy by donating funds for educational materials and conservation programs in the range where snow leopards are found.

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Open since 1927, the Sacramento Zoo is home to more than 500 native, rare and endangered animals and is one of more than 200 accredited institutions of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Located near the corner of Land Park Drive and Sutterville Road in William Land Park, the zoo is wholly managed by the non-profit Sacramento Zoological Society. This Sacramento treasure inspires conservation awareness through education and recreation. Daily admission is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., zoo grounds are open until 5 p.m. General admission is \$14.95; children ages 2-11 are \$9.95 and one and under are admitted free. Parking is free throughout the park or ride Regional Transit bus #6. For information, call 916-808-5888 or visit [sac zoo.org](http://sac zoo.org).