

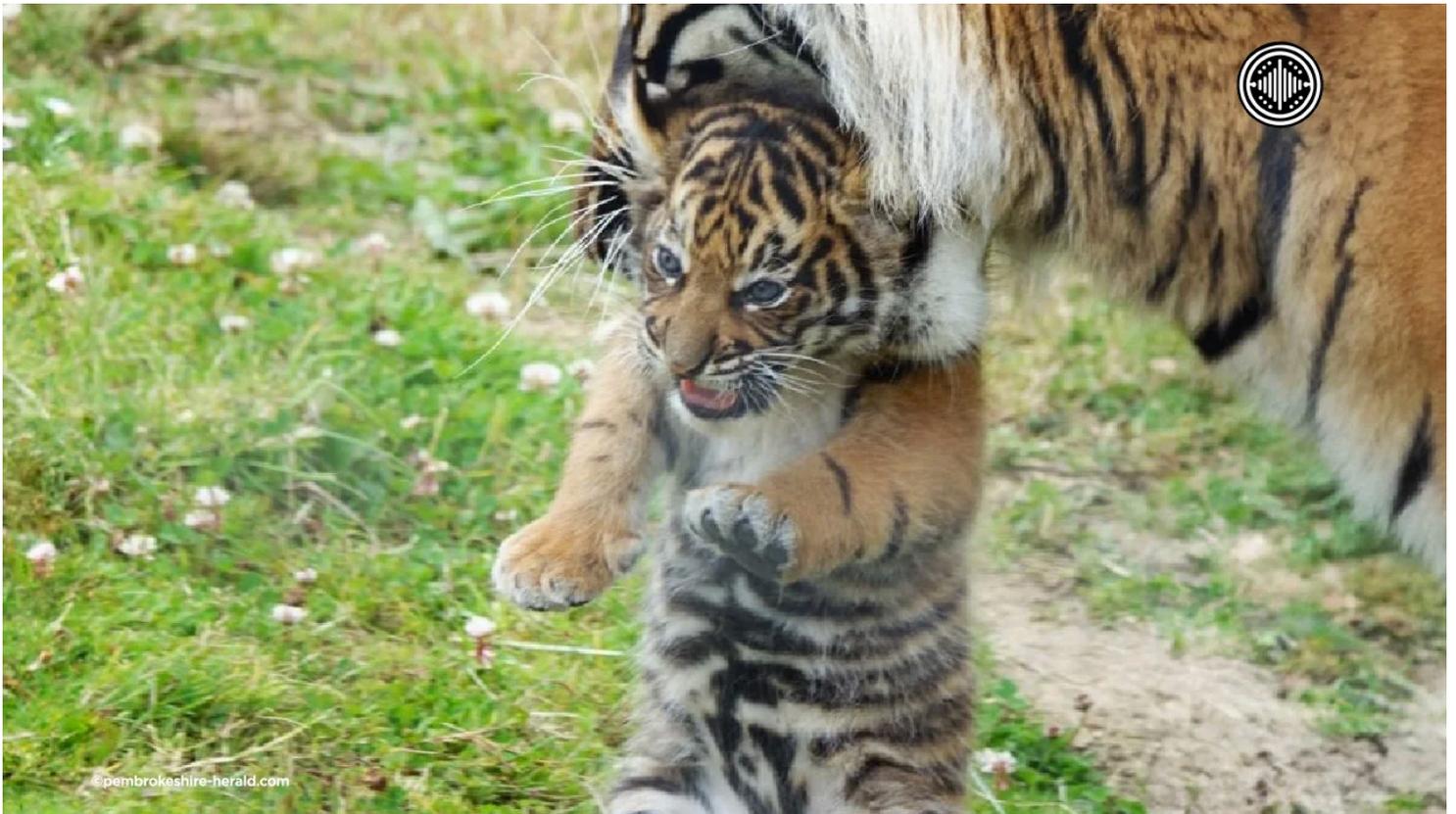
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Historic Tiger Birth Offers Hope for Endangered Species at Welsh Zoo

July 29, 2025

– Categories: Uncategorized



A Welsh zoo has welcomed the UK's largest litter of critically endangered Sumatran tiger cubs, marking a major success in global conservation efforts. Born on June 8 at Manor House Wildlife Park in Pembrokeshire, the four cubs are a promising sign for the future of a species with fewer than 400 individuals remaining in the wild.

The cubs, born to 11-year-old mother Terima and 10-year-old father Jaya, are the result of a carefully managed breeding programme overseen by the European Endangered Species Programme (EEP). This initiative works across zoos in Europe to ensure the survival of

vulnerable species by promoting genetic diversity through structured pairings. Manor House Wildlife Park, located near St Florence, is a registered participant in this initiative, which aims to protect animal populations facing extinction due to illegal poaching and rapid habitat loss.

The arrival of the cubs was initially kept confidential to allow them time to adjust. Their birth now brings the zoo's tiger count to seven, including their first cub, Zaza, born in 2024 after years of unsuccessful breeding attempts. Park officials describe the newborns as "very noisy and very cute," but their genders remain unknown for the time being.

Park owner Anna Ryder Richardson, a former television presenter and interior designer, described the births as a "once in a lifetime opportunity" for both the zoo and conservationists. "This is the largest litter in the UK, possibly even in Europe, and it's incredibly exciting," she said. She emphasised the importance of the breeding programme: "These tigers have a very important job to do, as they've been genetically matched. We're hoping one of the four is a male."

According to Ryder Richardson, the zoo may not be allowed to breed again unless a new male is introduced or existing females are relocated, something she's reluctant to consider. "It's happening before our eyes. Sumatran tigers may vanish from the wild within our children's lifetime. That's why it's vital people visit and learn while they still can."

The breeding of Sumatran tigers, *Panthera tigris sumatrae*, is guided by a *studbook*, a detailed genetic database maintained by a designated coordinator to ensure suitable pairings among tigers across European institutions. This cooperation among accredited zoos aims to preserve the health and genetic strength of the species in captivity.

Manor House Wildlife Park is now inviting the public to help name the cubs once their sexes are confirmed. Ryder Richardson expressed her hopes for the chosen names to have a Welsh connection, celebrating the region's unique role in protecting one of the world's most endangered big cats.

This significant birth underlines the ongoing importance of captive breeding programmes, particularly when wild populations continue to face immense pressures. The zoo's success is not only a cause for celebration, but also a reminder of the challenges still ahead in global conservation.