



PRESS STATEMENT

April 26th, 2024

Alaska Zoo Polar Bears Cranbeary and Kova Introduced

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Zoo announces that the initial nose-to-nose introduction of polar bears Cranbeary and Kova has taken place successfully without barriers. The bears have access to the main habitat, pool and den areas according to their comfort levels.

Zoo fans have been awaiting this news since the arrival of Kova, a female polar bear cub, in November of 2022. Kova was brought to the zoo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists amid escalating concerns for her welfare as a young cub with no mother. She spent her first six months at the zoo in a quarantine to ensure that she did not have rabies or other health concerns, a standard practice and length of time when an animal comes to the zoo from areas of the state which have higher instances of rabies. Zookeepers cared for Kova in the off-public area of the polar bear facility which has its own den, yard and pool. Once Kova was out of quarantine, she alternated days in the main habitat with Cranbeary who previously arrived in October of 2018. She was 16 years old when she came from the Denver Zoo with a unique name which stems from her Thanksgiving birthday in 2001. Cranbeary, who is now 22-years-old, was accustomed to having the place to herself in recent years. Zookeepers took the first stages of introduction slowly, giving the bears time to see and smell each other through barriers. They were observed and a full introduction plan was written by animal team managers. The introduction took place on the morning of April 26th under controlled conditions with only zoo staff, biologists, veterinarians and the zoo photographer present.

By all accounts, the introduction was a success as the bears cautiously touched noses and had a short chase in the back area. From there, both bears were given access to the main public habitat where they proceeded to play poolside. According to Zoo Curator Sam Lavin, the introduction could not have gone better. “I was pleased to see how quickly the two bears got along”, said Lavin. She is proud of her staff, particularly Deputy Curator Christin Groth, whose experience with polar bears and introductions at the zoo led to the writing of a very thorough and well-planned introduction procedure. Executive Director Tristan Thon had this to say, “I am extremely proud of Alaska Zoo staff for their careful and thoughtful introduction of Kova and Cranbeary. The introduction went well and we can’t wait to share these magnificent bears with the community”.

Zoo officials caution that introductions can ebb and flow as the bears adjust to new routines. While guarantees of seeing both bears together and schedules of appearances cannot be given, zoo officials see this as a very special time for visitors to observe Cranbeary and Kova as they get to know each other. Current hours for April are 10am-5pm, last entry at 4:30pm. Hours shift May 1st to 9am-6pm daily, last entry at 5:30pm. Updates will be posted on zoo social media accounts and at www.alaskazoo.org as well as in member emails.

About the Alaska Zoo

The Alaska Zoo is a nonprofit that has provided a home for orphaned, injured and captive-born animals since 1969. Open year-round, the zoo promotes conservation of Arctic and sub-Arctic species through education, research, and community enrichment. Visit www.alaskazoo.org.

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