

Getting out of Edinburgh – Highland Wildlife Park has a new tiger!



A male Amur tiger, an extremely threatened species, has moved in with tiger girl Dominica in the Scottish Highlands, and the pairing is already proving to be a 'roaring' success.

Marty, the three year old tiger, is a powerful and agile youngster. With Amur tigers the world's largest species of cat, Marty could weigh up to 190kg or 30 stone when fully grown.

Exceptionally rare animals, Amur tigers are formally listed as endangered and it is estimated that there are only between 400 and 450 left in the wild. From the Amur region of the Russian Far East, next to the Chinese border, the population once numbered less than 50, they are still threatened due to habitat loss, poaching for their skins and the traditional medicine trade.

The Highland Wildlife Park is a great success story when it comes to breeding these rare and striking animals. Marty's love match Dominica, and her sister Natalia who recently left for a zoo in Portugal, were both born at the park in 2009 to parents Sasha and Yuri. Marty will be the first adult male Amur tiger in the Highlands since Yuri passed away in 2010. Sasha, the Park's matriarchal tiger, was painlessly put to sleep in March of this year due to a noticeable deterioration in her health and wellbeing.

It is hoped that this young feisty couple, Marty and Dominica, will have the same success when it comes to producing cubs. The pair seem to have hit it off, with mating behaviour being observed soon after they were introduced, and Marty and Dominica are now spending their days together. Still separate at night, it is hoped that Marty will move in with Dominica full time in due course.

Douglas Richardson, Animal Collection Manager at the Highland Wildlife Park, said:

“There is a high likelihood that Marty and Dominica will produce cubs together in the future, and it would be wonderful if Dominica takes after her mother Sasha who was a natural at parenting. Any cubs born to this pair would be the first Amur tiger cubs at the park in three years. Very significant for the Park, these cubs would help enhance the long term viability of the crucial captive breeding programme and ultimately the survival of this species”.

“The two tigers spend their time together during daylight hours, but we are currently observing their behaviour and gauging their reactions to each other to determine if and when they will be ready to live together 24/7. All fairly positive so far, particularly as breeding between the two has already been spotted; the initial indications are that they are compatible.

“Bar a few small ‘arguments’ – which is to be expected from two fiery animals – this three year old tiger duo seem to have fairly similar characteristics. Marty and Dominica both enjoying playing, pouncing and giving chase to each other, but obviously due to Marty’s much greater size and power we have to exercise a fair degree of caution!”

Photo by Jan Morse RZSS