



PO Box 50220  
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## PRESS RELEASE

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## Lion Cub Soon to be Reintroduced to Parents

**Idaho Falls, ID** – The next few weeks will be an exciting and critically important time in the life of the lion cub at the Idaho Falls Zoo. The cub has begun the process of reintroduction to his parents, mom Kimani and dad Dahoma.

You may remember from a [previous press release](#), the cub had to be separated from his mother shortly after he was born to be treated for a life-threatening medical issue.

“We are pleased to report that he has completely recovered and is ready to be returned to his parents,” states Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Rhonda Aliah. Since his convalescence, the lion cub has been staying with Justice, a Great Pyrenees dog who has been teaching the young cub how to be a healthy, active carnivore. Read more about Justice and the cub [here](#).

Extensive conversations with Idaho Falls Zoo staff, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and other zoo professionals explored all possible options for the cub at the time of the separation. “Everyone agreed that the only option to ensure he had the best chance possible to become a physiologically and emotionally healthy lion was to keep the cub at the Idaho Falls Zoo and eventually reintroduce him to his parents,” states Aliah. “That time has come.”

Reintroducing this genetically valuable cub to his parents is essential for his development, as lions are the most social of the cat species. Sociability is incredibly important for behavioral and psychological stability. Young cubs rely on other members of their pride to teach them how to be adult lions. As the cub gets older, the need to socialize with other lions increases in importance.

“Even though captive, wild animals retain complex programming needed to ensure species survival,” states Gregg Losinski, Regional Conservation Educator for the Idaho Fish and Game. “We as humans may have the best intentions when it comes to working with wildlife, but the outcome may be determined by factors that we cannot observe or comprehend. All we can do is proceed in as cautious of a manner as possible,” explains Losinski who is also a board member for the Tautphaus Park Zoological Society.



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Zoo staff have been working with species experts including AZA's lion Species Survival Plan (SSP) who have experience with conducting reintroductions.

"Even though the lion parents were both born in captivity, they still exhibit all the wild behaviors of a lion. Thus, we are taking careful measures to ensure the reintroduction goes smoothly," states David Pennock, zoo director. "We have all indications that the reintroduction will go well. The experienced professionals will help interpret behaviors and guide Idaho Falls Zoo staff and the cub during this extremely developmentally important time in the cub's life."

The zoo has been taking steps toward the reintroduction already. The process is extremely complex and not at all straightforward, but it is in the very best interest of the cub's future.

Similar to many animals, if separated from their young for any length of time, lions will often not remember their offspring. A cub that has been away from his parents is at risk for not being easily accepted back into the pride and could be injured or killed when reintroduced. Currently, the cub stays at night in an area next to his parents where they can see and smell each other, but not come in direct contact. However, that will soon change.

### *What's Next for Justice?*

Justice, the Great Pyrenees dog that has been socializing with the lion cub is now a much-loved member of the zoo family and will remain at the zoo. She will most likely become an animal ambassador, which means she will help zoo staff and volunteers perform education programs and outreach presentations. In the near future, she may be called upon again for her motherly skills as the zoo welcomes a young new addition from Zoo Boise that will be announced soon.

### *Conservation at Your Zoo*

In only 30 years, wild African lion numbers have declined a startling 40 percent. The lion cub is an example of the importance the Idaho Falls Zoo, as an accredited member of the AZA, has in both local and global conservation efforts to save threatened and endangered species.

*Media Note: For more information or to schedule an interview with zoo staff, contact Public Information Officer, Kerry Hammon.*

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***About Idaho Falls Zoo at Tautphaus Park:*** With more than 330 individual animals representing 130 species from all around the globe, the Idaho Falls Zoo has the largest collection of animals in the state of Idaho and is considered the "Best Little Zoo in the West." Accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the zoo participates in 44 national Species Survival Plans. Learn more on our [website](#).

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