Zoo Welcomes Baby Animals

Zoos often are home to animals that are in danger in the wild. So it is exciting when zoo animals give birth to babies.

In the past year, keepers at the San Francisco Zoo have been lucky to have babies born to three animals whose survival in the wild is in danger. "We've had a bit of a baby bonanza," said zoo director Tanya Peterson.

In January, a giraffe named Bititi (bah-tē-tē) gave birth to a female calf at the zoo. Zookeepers were excited because the zoo is part of a program that is working to increase the number of giraffes. In the wild in Africa, giraffes are in danger from hunters and people who are moving into their habitats.

A baby giraffe isn't the only recent addition to the zoo:
• In December, the zoo welcomed a male baby gorilla. The baby gorilla is a western lowland gorilla, which is a highly endangered species.
• In March 2008, three Sumatran tiger cubs were born at the zoo. They were the first Sumatran cubs born there since 1956. The number of Sumatran tigers in the world is dangerously low. About 450 of the tigers are known to live in the wild, and most of them live in national parks on the island of Sumatra.

NEWS WORD BOX

Sumatra   maintain
extinct   recent
bonanza   survival

Zoo workers have reason to celebrate when healthy baby animals are born. The babies can help protect species from becoming extinct. "We want to help maintain the strength of a population before it reaches that point," said Ingrid Russell-White, who is a mammal expert at the zoo.

GIRAFFE FACTS
• Giraffes are related to deer and cattle.
• A baby giraffe can stand on all four legs about an hour after it is born.
• The largest giraffe on record stood 19 feet tall and weighed more than 2 tons.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Learn more about the habitat of one of the animals in this news story.
Then draw a picture of the zoo habitat you would design for that animal.