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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Contact: John Wright, Zoo Director  
Phone: (217) 585-1821 ext. 1705

#### SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT INTRODUCES TWO NEW ALASKAN BLACK BEAR CUBS AT THE HENSON ROBINSON ZOO.

[Springfield, IL] – The Springfield Park District and Henson Robinson Zoo are excited to announce new additions to its animal collection. Two orphan black bear cubs from Alaska, Klondike and Kenai.

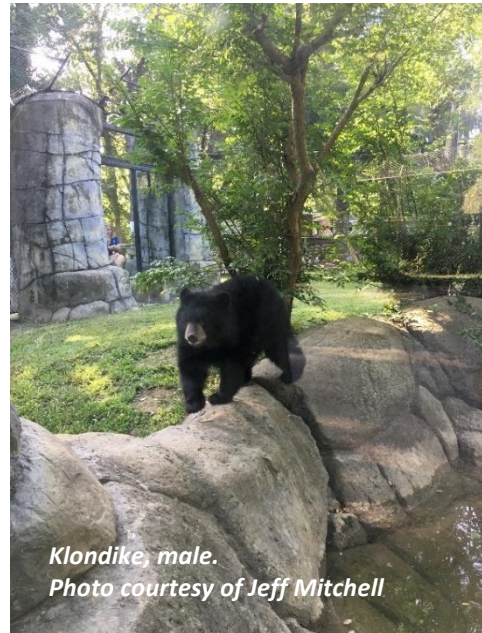
Zoo Curator, Jeff Mitchell, initially contacted Alaska Department of Fish and Game in late January to express interest in obtaining orphaned bear cubs that would eventually inhabit the Zoo's Bear Exhibit. That exhibit is currently home to the Zoo's thirty-four-year-old Asiatic Black Bear, Mandy.

In mid-June, the Zoo received information that a seven-pound male cub, Klondike, had been located near the town of Tok, Alaska across the border from Canada's Yukon Territory. Approximately one week later an eleven-pound female, Kenai, was located at mile marker twenty of the James Dalton Highway, which is north of Denali National Park. As both cubs were identified as orphaned they were taken by Alaskan officials to the Alaska Zoo, in Anchorage, to be evaluated and cared for until arrangements for re-homing and transport could be made.

In late July, a team of three Zoo staff members flew to Anchorage, Alaska to learn more about the bears' history and care. Funding for this trip and transport was provided by Springfield Park District, Springfield Zoological Society and private funding. Staff spent four days working with the Alaska Zoo Keepers to learn more about the care of the young bears, helping Alaska Zoo staff with projects, learning about where the bears came from and challenges facing these animals in the wild.

Staff and cubs flew overnight on July 28<sup>th</sup> from Anchorage to Chicago where they were met for the last leg of the journey for transport to their new home at the Springfield Park District's Henson Robinson Zoo. The entire return transport took approximately sixteen hours.

Upon arrival to the Zoo, the two cubs were placed into a thirty-day quarantine. As these animals were wild-born, this quarantine period allows staff and the Zoo Veterinarian time to assess their health before introducing them to their new habitat. Since arrival and their time in quarantine, both cubs now weigh approximately forty pounds each.



*Klondike, male.*  
*Photo courtesy of Jeff Mitchell*

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“The Board of Trustees and staff are excited to finally be able to share these amazing animals with the community and the Park District’s commitment to *renew the Zoo* with new exhibits, a financial pledge to modernize infrastructure and increased conservation efforts boast an exciting future for this wonderful recreation facility!” – **Leslie Sgro, Park Board President**

Hundreds will visit the Zoo this weekend as Zoo Staff prepare to showcase the bear cubs on exhibit through a series of special events.

- Ursa Minor Night is dedicated to Zoo Supporters and Sponsors and will be held on Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00 P.M.-7:30 P.M.;
- Zoo Members only night on Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 P.M.-7:30 P.M.
- Public viewing begins Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, the public can view the bears, during normal operating hours, 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.; regular admission applies.

During these events, several opportunities will be provided for Zoo guests learn about the Alaskan Black Bear cubs and challenges for bears in the wild with a series of education booths and keeper chats.

For more information on the new bear cubs and their acquisition, you may contact the Zoo at 217-585-1821 or email our Zoo Director, John Wright at [jwright@springfieldparks.org](mailto:jwright@springfieldparks.org)

***Ursus americanus* – American Black Bear** is a medium-sized bear native to North America. It is the continent's smallest and most widely distributed bear species. Black bears are omnivores, with their diets varying greatly depending on season and location. They typically live in largely forested areas but do leave forests in search of food.

Male black bears are larger than the females. The average Alaska black bear is about 2½–3 feet (0.7–1.0 m) tall at the shoulder and five feet (1.5 m) long. Black bears may weigh 40 percent less in the spring after emerging from their winter dormancy, a period during which they do not eat. The average spring weight of a female black bear is 100–150 pounds (45–60 kg), and the average adult male spring weight is 170–200 pounds (77–90 kg). Spring males weighing nearly 400 pounds (180 kg) have been reported in Alaska. Fall male black bears can weigh over 500 pounds (227 kg).

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For more information on any other Park District news related items, please visit our Website at [www.springfieldparks.org](http://www.springfieldparks.org)