

## Rare Tiger Cubs Born at St. Louis Zoo

**A first-time mother Amur tiger gave birth to five tiger cubs last month.**

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Kalista, a 7-year-old Amur tiger at the St. Louis Zoo, recently gave birth to five tiger cubs. On April 28, Kalista the Amur tiger gave birth to five tiger cubs at the St. Louis Zoo. The zoo said the two male and three female tiger cubs each weigh between 4.5 and 7 pounds, MSNBC and The Associated Press report.

Most tigers give birth to two or three cubs per litter, so Kalista's first litter is unusual. "It is so rare to have a litter of this size," said Steve Bircher, St. Louis Zoo curator of mammals, in a public statement.

While Kalista is devoted to her tiger cubs, nursing and caring for them, the zoo stepped in to provide extra food and care when two of the female cubs dropped weight shortly after birth. The mother tiger and cubs will stay in a private maternity den until the babies reach about 3 months of age. Around that time, the cubs will make their debut at the zoo's outdoor tiger habitat.

Kalista, a 7-year-old tiger born in captivity, came to the St. Louis Zoo in 2003 from the Philadelphia Zoo. The cubs' father, 15-year-old Khuntami, was born in the wilds of eastern Russia and arrived in St. Louis in 2006, coming from the Omaha Zoo. Khuntami is considered one of the most genetically valuable tigers in North America. Because he will not participate in the care of the cubs, Khuntami remains on public display at the Big Cat Country exhibit at the zoo.

Amur tigers, formerly known as Siberian tigers, are listed as critically endangered. Only about 500 of the tigers remain in the wild, mostly in Northeastern China and Russia. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums estimates the captive population of Amur tigers at 300.