

Cubs are born in zoos while forests are protected in Western Nepal.



In this issue of Red Panda Network eNews, it takes a village to raise red pandas, RPN's first female Forest Guardian in Western Nepal, sign up for an ecotrip for \$100, and new organic tea!

Raising Red Pandas: It Takes A Village--And A Plan



'Tis the season for red panda babies.

As summer in the Northern Hemisphere approaches, zoos remain on watch for another year of successful red panda births. [In late April, Birmingham \(Ala.\) Zoo announced that its red panda Sorrel is pregnant.](#)

The news comes a year after zoos around the world welcomed red panda kits: brothers Pokhara and Shimla at [Highland Wildlife Park](#) in Scotland (photo above); triplets Rohan, Ishwar and Mishry at [Taronga Zoo](#) in Sydney; and sisters Zeya and Ila at [Woodland Park Zoo](#) in Seattle. Red panda cubs were also born at zoos in England, New Zealand, Wisconsin, Idaho, Virginia, New York and Illinois, among other places.

According to an annual report of the red panda European Endangered Species Programme (EEP) prepared by Janno Weerman of [Rotterdam Zoo](#) (the Netherlands), the European red panda population has grown from 276 individuals in 2012 to 389 in 2018. Of the 49 cubs born in participating institutions in 2018, 42 survived. In the U.S., red pandas gave birth to 36 cubs, of which 16 died, in 2018, according to Sarah Glass, the North American Red Panda SSP Coordinator and Curator of Red Pandas/Program Animals/Special Exhibits at [Zoo Knoxville](#). She said several of the red pandas who gave birth last year were new moms.



Red Panda Triplets at Taronga Zoo.

The majority of red panda births in North America take place in July and August, said Mark Myers, Curator of Birds and Invertebrates at Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, in a phone interview. The animal collection at the zoo is divided into teams, and his team includes red pandas.

Breeding Zeya and Ila's parents, Yukiko and Hazel, last year was an interesting process, Myers said. "They had been kind of side-by-side before that, so they knew each other existed, but they just hadn't been in direct physical contact," he said. "When we first put them together in, must have been January, she was really kind of aggressive towards him and would kind of charge him and chase him a little bit. After a couple weeks, they had become compatible."

Things went a little more smoothly at [Milwaukee County Zoo](#). The zoo celebrated its first red panda birth upon the arrival of cub Dr. Lily last June. "This was the first time that I personally have tried to breed pandas," said Katie Kuhn, Area Supervisor-Big Cat Country, via email. "We didn't really do much for them except allow them to be together during breeding season. So for us, so far, it has been pretty easy. Fingers crossed."

But successful red panda pairings require more than "chemistry" between the animals. Human intervention is also involved.

The Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) in North America and the EEP of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) provide participating zoos with breeding recommendations designed to help manage the demographics and genetic diversity of a variety of animal species.

Each species has an SSP coordinator who consults a studbook, which is a catalog of each animal's pedigree, said Myers, who is the SSP coordinator for about five species of birds.



Rotterdam Zoo, Netherlands.



Knoxville Zoo, Tennessee, USA.

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No Trees, No Red Pandas-No Life



She witnessed the forests being decimated; now, she fights to protect them as RPN's first female Forest Guardian in Western Nepal.

Shanti Malla grew up in the rural hills of Dailekh district in Western Nepal. She remembers venturing into the forests to gather fuelwood and graze livestock. Sometimes Malla would cross paths with villagers who were hunting wildlife like barking deer, wild boar and ghoral for meat. The forests were essential to the livelihoods of Dailekh villagers.

At age 17, Malla got married and came to live in Mahawai village in neighboring Kalikot district. Once again, she found herself in a similar scenario where herself, and everyone around her, heavily depended on the forest for their daily needs.

"The forest is our lifeline-I cannot imagine our day-to-day lives without it," says Malla, "At the same time, this kind of excessive use of resources contributes to forest degradation and loss of wildlife."



Fuelwood collected by family in Nepal.



Village in Kalikot district, Western Nepal.

The forests near Mahawai village-along with many districts in Western Nepal-were being decimated by Illegal logging and timber collection. Hunting of wildlife for meat remained unchecked and resources were being extracted at unsustainable rates. "Our water sources began to dry out," Malla said.

Recognizing the problems, members of Him Kalika Community Forest (HKCF), which covers 241 hectares of land, took steps to revive the disappearing forests. They planted trees on denuded hilltops, appointed locals to protect the forests, and raised awareness about the importance of forests and how to utilize resources sustainably. The community also controlled the movement of people going inside the forests for timber collection and discouraged locals from hunting forest wildlife. Malla was one of the active members of Him Kalika Community Forest User Group (HKCFUG) in Mahawai Rural Municipality.

In 2017, Malla was elected as HKCFUG secretary and two later promoted to become the first female FG in Western Nepal. Red Panda Network (RPN), in collaboration with local partner organizations' Himalayan Community Resource Development Center (HCRDC) and Human Rights and Environmental Development Center (HuRENDEC) selected Malla as a Forest Guardian (FG) to protect red pandas and their habitat in Kalikot.



Shanti Malla during Forest Guardian field training.

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Red Panda Network is committed to the conservation of wild red pandas and their habitat through the education and empowerment of local communities.

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