

# **Buttonwood Park Zoo announces birth of three North American river otter pups**

The Buttonwood Park Zoo welcomes three North American river otter pups. Born on March 17, 2017 to Dani, the Zoo's female otter. The pups are getting acclimated to their surroundings and beginning the process of learning to swim. Zoo Director, Keith Lovett stated the babies are expected to be introduced into the Zoo's otter habitat in the coming weeks and a naming contest will be announced soon.

This is Dani's second litter born at Buttonwood Park Zoo. She gave birth to two pups in March of 2014. Dani, now 6 years old, arrived at the Buttonwood Park Zoo in April of 2013. She lives with the Zoo's two 7 year-old male river otters, Duncan and Donut. Based on behavioral observations by the animal care staff, it has been determined that Donut is the father of the new pups, one male and two females. The birth of these otter pups are the result of a breeding recommendation of the Association of Zoo and Aquariums (AZA) North American River Otter Species Survival Plan (SSP). The goal of the SSP is to cooperatively manage otter populations within AZA accredited zoos to ensure the sustainability of a healthy and genetically diverse population.



The Zoo's veterinary and animal care staff has been monitoring the growth of the otter pups since birth. The pups weighed about a quarter of a pound at the time of birth and have grown steadily to their current weight of two and a half pounds. Otter pups are born almost helpless and require significant care by their mother to survive. Dani is once again demonstrating excellent skill in caring for her offspring. As is normal for the species, the pups did not open their eyes until four weeks after birth. The Buttonwood Park Zoo has had North American river otters since 2000.



The birth, according to Lovett is, “exciting as Dani, Duncan and Donut are favorites among Zoo staff and guests.” Lovett stated that it is likely that the otter pups will leave the Buttonwood Park Zoo once they reach sexual maturity and move to another accredited zoo as part of a larger breeding program. The pups births and presence at the Zoo help educate guests about the conservation work being done in wetland areas throughout the country by AZA accredited zoos to ensure that river otters remain a thriving species in the wild.