



NEWS EDITORS: Here's a link to a gallery of downloadable photos:  
<https://pdza.smugmug.com/Category/Media-Galleries/Horned-puffin-chick/>  
Password: puffin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Aug. 9, 2017

## A POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM FIRST: HORNED PUFFIN CHICK HATCHES AT ZOO

*Tiny black chick weighs only 3.7 ounces and lives in a nest box at the zoo's Rocky Shores area*

TACOMA, Wash. – A tiny, horned puffin is doing well at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium this week following its hatching last month in the Rocky Shores habitat for sea birds.



It's the first horned puffin ever hatched at the zoo, which has been home to four adult members of the species since October 2014.

The chick periodically might be visible to visitors from its nest box, but zoo guests are likely to get only glimpses of its tiny beak as it ventures to the front of its nesting area, said staff biologist Cindy Roberts. She is the zoo's lead in caring for the alcids, or sea birds.

The chick's parents take turns feeding it, and visitors can see them going to and fro with food, or watching over the nest box, she added. Earlier this year, zookeepers took the initiative to build nest boxes for the horned puffins.



They consulted with experts at the Alaska Sea Life Center to build boxes for the mating pair – “an effort that really paid off,” said zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck.

Zookeepers talk about horned puffins, tufted puffins and common murrelets during a puffin feeding presentation at noon each day.

Staff won't know whether the chick is male or female until it's old enough for staff to collect a small blood sample from which gender and general health status can be determined, Roberts said.

**Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium veterinarian Dr. Kadie Anderson examines a recently hatched horned puffin chick with the help of staff biologist Cindy Roberts, the zoo's lead zookeeper of the puffin colony.**



**Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium staff biologist Cindy Roberts tends to the horned puffin nest as the chick's parents keep watch from above.**

A well-chick check-up from a zoo veterinarian on Saturday found the baby puffin to be in good health.

The incubation period for a horned puffin is 40 days. And once it hatches, it spends 40 more days in the burrow until it fledges, or has grown old enough and gained the necessary strength and feathers to go out on its own.

Right now, it looks like a black-and-gray ball of fluff with a dark gray beak, but as it grows, it will take on the full black-and-white body of a horned puffin, and its beak will turn a distinctive yellowish-orange with a red tip.

Adult horned puffins also have bright orange feet and legs. They are members of the auk family, or birds characterized by short wings, thick beaks and with excellent swimming and diving abilities. During breeding season, horned puffins have characteristic "cheeks" with a "horn" above the eyes.

They are found on the coasts of Japan, Russia, British Columbia and Alaska, and they spend winters in the ocean as far south as the Washington coast.

Like all sea birds, horned puffins face a number of threats in the wild, including predators, oil spills, plastic pollution, over fishing and entanglement in fishing nets.

In addition to its horned puffin colony, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium has a complement of 21 tufted puffins and seven common murrelets living in the Rocky Shores sea bird habitat.

For more information, go to [www.pdza.org](http://www.pdza.org).

*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*

**Contacts**

Kris Sherman, 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or [kris.sherman@pdza.org](mailto:kris.sherman@pdza.org)

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637; 253-278-6343 or [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)