



## PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

# Header – The nations oldest white tiger, ‘Zena’, celebrates her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday at the Isle of Wight Zoo

Sat 20th - Sun 21st May 2017

## CONTENT:

The Isle of Wight Zoo will be hosting a weekend of celebrations in an exciting two day event over the weekend of Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st May, to help celebrate the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of one of its much loved big cats, ‘Zena’, the white tiger. Zena is the oldest white tiger in the UK and believed to be one of the oldest in Europe.

Having been rejected at birth by her mother at Longleat Safari Park, Zena arrived at the zoo at the tender age of 3 weeks in early summer 1996. The founder’s daughter and now CEO, Charlotte Corney, soon became surrogate mum to the orphaned cub which she lovingly hand-raised and would swimming in the sea around Sandown Bay.

During her adolescence Zena quickly found her way into the hearts and minds of the zoo team and its extended family of Island residents and mainland visitors. In 2007-8 Zena was transported into living rooms all over the world thanks to her starring role in ITV’s award-winning series ‘Tiger Island’ which was based at the Isle of Wight Zoo.

Reflecting on the past 21yrs Charlotte fondly recall’s *“It seems like a mere moment ago that Zena was a small, white bouncing bundle of a tiger. She is the chalk to her older sisters’ cheese, she’s the ‘tom boy’ always delighting in an opportunity to get dirty or show her mischievous side. It’s been the greatest gift to have been her human mum and watch her grow up into a fine, if not ‘refined’, lady! She has been, and continues to be, a central character even in her mature years and I have no doubt that she has sparked many a persons’ desire to value more the wonderfully diverse wildlife which we share our world with. I am proud of her for that and, well, for just being utterly, uniquely, ‘Zena’.”*

Zena is a resilient individual having overcome the removal of her right eye after battling the effects of glaucoma followed by cataract surgery in her remaining eye - but even these challenges have failed to diminish her zest for life and Zena readily adapted to her reduced vision. She also has a form of inflammatory bowel disease which requires specialist management by her carers, every day she devours freshly minced chicken laced with probiotics to keep her healthy.

White tigers are not albinos but rather naturally occurring ‘leusictic’ forms of the ordinary orange colour form. The last known wild white tiger was shot in 1958 in Central India.

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In the wild a tiger's maximum life span would rarely span past 10-15 yrs so approaching her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Zena is certainly a grand old lady, yet she still retains her looks, charm and charisma.

Visitors planning to enjoy the weekend's events will be able to take advantage of a special celebratory 2 for 1 entry voucher available to download from the zoo's website from Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May.

<http://www.isleofwightzoo.com>

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**Notes to editors:**

The Isle of Wight Zoo is a charity ('The Wildheart Trust') which aims to promote the survival of endangered species through first class educational and recreational experiences, exemplary animal management, conservation and research. The Zoo is best known for providing a lifelong home for rescued big cats which come to the Zoo at different stages of their lives and from a variety of backgrounds. The Isle of Wight Zoo is currently home to 4 tigers, 3 lions and 1 jaguar.