

Regarding Punch's hand-rearing and the process up to now:

We announced on our official X account that Punch began spending time in the monkey mountain on January 19th. We are thankful for the numerous heartwarming, supportive messages we have received so far. We have also received various messages and opinions from Japan as well as overseas concerning hand-rearing and reintroduction to the troop. To respond to these voices as much as possible, we will explain the process to date.

- From an animal welfare perspective, our primary goal is to reintegrate Punch with the troop.
- While Punch's own willingness is essential for his successful integration to the troop, we nursed Punch inside the monkey mountain enclosure, where all monkeys can freely access, so that all troop members can recognize Punch as part of the group.
- Providing a stuffed toy and towels to hold onto not only simulates clinging to a mother but also prevents excessive dependence on humans. This approach is used for other artificially reared primates at our zoo, not just Japanese macaques.
- In Punch's case, we ensured during feed times that two caretakers fully provide the physical contact and sense of security crucial for his growth.
- To acclimate Punch to the group as he grew, preparations were carefully put into place: from around three months of age, he spent time in an environment where he could freely interact with other monkeys through fences; after four months of age, he entered the monkey mountain enclosure with his caretakers and spent time there.
- Before the group reintroduction on January 19th, Punch spent a certain period of time with a young female macaque who had been gentle with him. Observing their interaction, we determined he could live independently with the group without human intervention, leading to the decision for the reintroduction.
- Punch continues to live with his stuffed toy. Japanese macaque infants normally begin spending more time playing freely away from their mothers around six months of age. They routinely return to their mother when seeking comfort or wanting to nurse at this stage. Punch clings to his stuffed toy for comfort or protection when he perceives danger, but the caretakers provide milk and assist with meals.
- Our zoo has integrated multiple hand-reared individuals into groups in the past. We published one example case of integration in 2009 concerning an individual named "Otome" on our website, and we would like you to review. Otome naturally separated from her stuffed toy during her growth process, and subsequently gave birth four times, raising all her offspring on her own. Otome's offspring have also given birth and are raising their young themselves.
- Based on the aforementioned background and experience, our entire staff will put their utmost effort into ensuring that Punch can live a healthy and fulfilling life as a member of the troop and as a Japanese macaque.

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