

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Baby gorilla begins crawling Zoo releases first video of the new baby gorilla**

SEATTLE—A 6-week-old, female gorilla at Woodland Park Zoo has reached another milestone: crawling.

The baby gorilla is developing her leg muscles, according to Martin Ramirez, Woodland Park Zoo's mammal curator. "She's starting to crawl short distances and she's on target for this physical development at her age," said Ramirez.

The [western lowland gorilla](#) was born November 20 to 19-year-old Nadiri (NAW-duh-ree), a first-time mom. After giving birth naturally, Nadiri did not pick up her baby. Staff immediately stepped in for the safety and welfare of the baby and to allow the new mom to rest.

Because Nadiri did not have experience with motherhood, the zoo prepared for different outcomes while Nadiri was pregnant, including human intervention.

Zoo gorilla and veterinary staff have been providing 24/7 care for the unnamed baby gorilla behind the scenes in the gorillas' sleeping quarters in a den next to Nadiri. The mom and the other two members in her group can see the baby, and the baby is immersed in the sights, sounds and smells of gorillas.

Introduction sessions between the baby and mom continue several times a day and Nadiri is given the choice to be with her baby. "The baby is holding her head steady and is periodically looking at her mom and other objects," added Ramirez.

The zoo will provide hands-on care for the baby gorilla for approximately the next two months before evaluating next steps and continue introductions as long as the sessions remain positive.

Woodland Park Zoo's Director of Animal Health, Dr. Darin Collins, checked on the baby gorilla and reported she is doing well, has a great appetite and currently weighs 7 pounds. See video of the checkup at [https://youtu.be/WRYM3qQ\\_Gjg](https://youtu.be/WRYM3qQ_Gjg).

The zoo will keep the community informed on its plans to name the new gorilla.

The father of the newborn is 36-year-old Vip, who has sired six other offspring with three different females at the zoo.

The new baby carries very valuable gorilla genes. The new baby's grandfather, Congo, was born in the wild and had no other known representatives in the population of gorillas in zoos. The introduction of this baby's genes is a boon for the Gorilla Species Survival Plan (SSP), a cooperative breeding program to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of gorillas for the next 100 years. Woodland Park Zoo participates in 95 SSPs, overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

The birth of Nadiri at Woodland Park Zoo and the first several weeks of her life got off to a rocky start 20 years ago. Her mother, Jumoke, experienced complications during labor and the zoo had to call on a team of human physicians to assist with the delivery. While the volunteer medical team successfully delivered the baby, Jumoke unfortunately didn't show any interest in accepting her infant, despite a series of introductions on a daily basis. To compound matters, Nadiri's father, Congo, passed away two weeks after the birth of his first viable offspring. His death defeated any hope of further introductions between Jumoke and



her baby. Without a dominant male, Congo's group was no longer a stable environment for the baby.

The sad turn of events for Nadiri, essentially orphaned, captured the hearts of the community and garnered mass media attention. Zoo staff and volunteers provided round-the-clock care and loads of love. It didn't take long for the community to care for this special baby and for a local bagel company to step forward to become the exclusive corporate parent of the newborn under the ZooParent Animal Adoption program. Through the dedication and countless hours invested by gorilla and animal health staff, Nadiri was eventually introduced to a surrogate family of gorillas at Woodland Park Zoo when she was only several months old.

The other gorillas currently living at Woodland Park Zoo are: females Amanda, 45; Jumoke, 30; Akenji, 14; Uzumma, 8; and males Pete, 47, and Leonel, 37.

The western lowland gorilla lives in seven countries across west equatorial Africa: southeast Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Angola and Equatorial Guinea. All gorillas are endangered; the western lowland gorilla is critically endangered. The estimated population of western lowland gorillas in the wild is about 95,000. There are three primary reasons gorillas are endangered. One is habitat destruction caused by logging, mining, and slash and burn agriculture. The bushmeat trade, facilitated by logging, has become an immediate threat to the western lowland gorilla population, particularly in Cameroon. Additionally, infectious diseases such as the Ebola virus have recently become a great threat, killing many gorillas.

Woodland Park Zoo supports conservation efforts for the critically endangered western lowland gorilla through the [Mbeli Bai Study](#), one of the zoo's Partners for Wildlife. The study researches the social organization and behaviors of more than 450 lowland gorillas living in the southwest of Nouabale-Ndoki National Park, Republic of Congo. The data collected enables scientists to assess the vulnerability of populations to habitat threats and predict their ability to recover from decline.

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