

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: For new video of the baby gorilla and the name reveal click [here](#).

The baby gorilla has a name! **Woodland Park Zoo announces name of baby gorilla**



SEATTLE -- Nearly 3,500 community members weighed in to name Woodland Park Zoo's baby gorilla. Born November 20, 2015, the 4-month-old female gorilla now has a name of her own: **Yola** (rhymes with *Lola*), which means "firefly" in the African language, Hausa (HOW-suh).

Through a naming contest, community members (including residents of the U.S. and Canada) submitted female names from the African languages of Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo. The baby gorilla's caretakers served as the judging panel and selected the winning name for the baby gorilla. "We chose Yola because this infant has been a spark that has solidified the bonds within her mom's group," said Hugh Bailey, lead gorilla keeper at Woodland Park Zoo. "Also, as the only grandchild of Congo (deceased), she keeps the 'fire' of his lineage alive."

One lucky winner—Bruce Erhardt of Orting, Wash.—will take home the grand prize: a one-year annual Woodland Park Zoo membership for one family; one ZooParent gorilla adoption; one opportunity to join a gorilla staff member for a private meet and greet for up to five people at the public viewpoint of the gorilla exhibit once the baby is on view; and one framed photograph of the newly-named gorilla infant.

Yola is the offspring of 20-year-old mom Nadiri and 37-year-old dad Vip, who has sired six other offspring with three different females at the zoo. He currently lives at the zoo in another group with two females.

"Nadiri is a first-time, inexperienced mom," said Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "Knowing that, we planned for different outcomes while she was pregnant, including the need for human intervention."

Nadiri gave birth naturally but did not show strong maternal skills initially; as a result, staff immediately stepped in for the safety and welfare of Yola and to allow the new mom to rest. Since her birth, the zoo's gorilla and veterinary staff have been providing 24/7 care for Yola behind the scenes in the gorillas' sleeping quarters in a den next to Nadiri.

Several times a day, Nadiri and Yola spend time together in the same den. "While Nadiri hasn't picked up her baby yet, she is becoming more comfortable with her and we're seeing more progress. As the baby becomes more mobile and active, Nadiri's interest in her is growing and so is bonding," said Ramirez.

The zoo will continue with introduction sessions as long as the sessions remain positive. Currently, there is no time frame for when she will be on exhibit.

Nadiri and Yola carry very valuable genes for the Gorilla Species Survival Plan (SSP), a North American 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 other gorillas currently living at Woodland Park Zoo are: females Amanda, 46; Jumoke, 30; Akenji, 14; Uzumma, 8; and males Pete, 48, and Leonel, 38.

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](#). 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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