

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Baby gorilla Yola is ready to meet the community** ***Public debut is June 7 for 6-month-old gorilla***

SEATTLE—Since Woodland Park Zoo's baby female gorilla, Yola, was born six months ago, she has captured the hearts and minds of gorilla fans and the community through heartwarming photos, videos and updates—all while living behind the scenes with her mom and other gorillas. Well, wait no longer because Yola is ready to meet her fans at last!

Yola will make her public debut **Tuesday, June 7**, in the outdoor gorilla exhibit with her mom, 20-year-old Nadiri, and other members who live with her, 38-year-old male, Leonel (aka Leo), and 14-year-old female, Akenji. The baby western lowland gorilla and her group will be in the exhibit for a couple hours a day, starting approximately 1:00 p.m. and depending on weather; hours will increase incrementally throughout the summer. Another group of gorillas can be seen in the exhibit during the morning.



For new photos of Yola, see "[Yola fits right in with her gorilla family](#)" and new video [here](#). Follow #GrowWithYola for updates and to share your own photos and stories.

Nadiri, a first-time mom, gave birth last November to Yola naturally, but because she didn't show strong maternal skills, the zoo's gorilla staff and veterinary team had to step in immediately to provide 24/7 care. Nadiri didn't have experience with motherhood, so the zoo prepared for different outcomes while she was pregnant, including human intervention.

Yola remained in the gorilla dens where she could have round-the-clock exposure to her mom and other gorillas. "Based on research and experience over the last two decades, we have learned it's critical for a baby gorilla to be immersed in the world of gorillas starting at day one," said Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "Living full time in the visual or physical presence of her mom and other members of her group has allowed her to learn the complex social cues of gorillas. She is not confused in any way—she knows she's a gorilla and not a human."

Socializing Yola with her mom and group has been a very lengthy and careful process. "Providing full-time care for an infant gorilla while ensuring she's growing as a gorilla requires extensive planning and day-to-day evaluations. Thanks to the countless hours our gorilla and veterinary teams have dedicated to caring for this precious gorilla and teaching her to be a gorilla, Yola and her mom have formed a strong bond, which continues to grow stronger and stronger," said Ramirez. Staff discontinued overnight care a month ago when Nadiri began sleeping with Yola through the night. "Both mom and baby are comfortable with each other and Nadiri is more attentive and protective of her. They have both come such a long way together."

Yola's father is 37-year-old 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. The other gorillas currently living at Woodland Park Zoo are: females Amanda, 46; Jumoke, 31; Uzumma, 8; and male Pete, 48.

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.

“Yola is a powerful symbol of hope for her cousins in the wild. As our guests and people in the community connect with this baby gorilla, Yola has the power to inspire them to learn about her species and move people to care and act on behalf of gorillas,” said Alejandro Grajal, PhD, Woodland Park Zoo’s new president and CEO. “We want people to care about gorillas like we do, and to join us in taking action every day to make sure there is a bright future for gorillas and other wildlife and their habitats.”

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.

Hours through September 30: 9:30 a.m.– 6:00 p.m. daily. Admission through September 30: Adult (13–64) \$19.95; Child (3–12) \$12.25. Free for children 2 and under year round. Active, retired, and veteran U.S. military and their families, seniors and people with disabilities receive an admission discount. Zoo members receive free zoo admission year round. Parking: \$6.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet’s future. For more information, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org)

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