

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: For the safety and welfare of the orangutans, press access to Godek is not permitted during the introduction process. The zoo will keep you posted on when access can be provided. Visit the zoo's blog for more details on Godek: <http://blog.zoo.org/2017/08/meet-new-orangutan-of-forest-godek.html>.

Meet new orangutan of the forest, Godek ***The red ape marks the zoo's first new orangutan since 1989***



SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo would like to introduce Godek, an 8-year-old, male Sumatran orangutan who arrived this summer from Cheyenne Mountain Zoo (Colorado Springs, Colo.). Today was the first time Godek was introduced to the public indoor exhibit.

The new orangutan currently weighs 75 pounds and is still growing. At 8 years old, Godek is at a natural age when orangutans would separate from their mothers and become independent.

[Four other orangutans currently live at the zoo](#) in two groups: 49-year-old Chinta and 46-year-old Melati, both females; and 36-year-old female Belawan and 28-year-old male Heran. The last time a new orangutan was introduced to the zoo's family of orangutans was in 1989 when Heran was born. [Towan](#), the father of Heran, died in 2016 at age 48.

After completing a standard quarantine earlier this summer at the zoo's veterinary hospital, Godek was moved to the orangutan exhibit where he has been getting to know his new keepers and other orangutans in off-view dens.

The plan is for Godek to be successfully socialized and live with the older females, Chinta and Melati. For the past couple of weeks, Godek has had interactions with Chinta and Melati through "howdy" sessions, which allow restricted physical contact with a safety barrier separating the orangutans, such as mesh screening. Because of her sweet and mellow disposition, Chinta was chosen to break the ice, explained Pat Owen, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "During the first howdy introduction, Godek did the usual spitting and pushing against the mesh at Chinta, which is normal behavior during introductions. Chinta chose to remain at the mesh and didn't balk at his displays. By day two, Godek was more receptive to Chinta and their interactions have been positive and calm," said Owen. Several days later, Godek met Melati through howdy sessions. "We're pleased to report these sessions have been going very well and we're seeing only positive signs from the three orangutans."

Yesterday, Chinta and Godek shared space together for the first time in the indoor exhibit. Keepers said the two wrestled, ate together, playfully grunted, and explored each other's faces and bodies.

The orangutans live in the zoo's Trail of Vines exhibit. As introductions continue, viewing will be limited and determined on a day-by-day basis.

Godek means "sideburns" in Indonesian. According to keepers at his former home, the juvenile orangutan is gentle and quiet but also very playful. A very agile orangutan, he is known for his slacklining and Spider-Man style antics and enjoys relaxing in hammocks.

"Godek is a bit on the shy side," said Owen, "but that's understandable since he's surrounded by new faces and new stimuli. As he transitions to his new keepers, surroundings, and Chinta and Melati, we are seeing positive signs he's becoming more comfortable day by day."

Introductions to the outdoor exhibit will begin this week. This will mark the first experience for Godek in an open canopy exhibit. "Because it's been nearly three decades since the zoo has had a younger, more agile orangutan, we did a thorough inspection of the exhibit and made various modifications to ensure Godek's safety," said Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "As part of our standard protocol for new animal introductions, our zookeepers and a safety team will be in place during the outdoor introductions. This will be an exciting time to watch Godek experience his first time in an exhibit without a netted top. As we do with all of our animals, we'll follow the cues of Godek and the other orangutans."

Godek was moved to Woodland Park Zoo under the recommendation of the Orangutan Species Survival Plan (SSP), a conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of orangutans. While it will be several years before Godek reaches sexual maturity, the SSP will identify a female orangutan to move to Woodland Park Zoo in 2018 as a future breeding mate for Godek.

Orangutans, a critically endangered species, belong to the family Hominidae, which includes all four great apes: gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans. Distinct species of orangutans live on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra in Southeast Asia. Overpopulation, logging, agriculture, conversion of forests to oil palm plantations, and other human activities are rapidly destroying forest environments required by orangutans for survival.

Learn about Woodland Park Zoo's partnership with [Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program](#) in Borneo, whose focus is to help build a future where orangutans and other wildlife can thrive alongside local villages.

Summer zoo hours: 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.

Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo's long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats through more than 35 field projects 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 ecological health and sustainability.

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