

## **Meet Ecki, the zoo's newest tree kangaroo!** **Endangered tree kangaroo joey emerging from mother's pouch**

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo's baby Matschie's tree kangaroo, known as a joey, is now venturing out of his mother's pouch! In time, the male joey, named Ecki, will leave the pouch permanently as he gradually grows more confident and independent.



"Ecki" is named after a beloved elder from one of the remote Papua New Guinea villages that works with Woodland Park Zoo to [help protect tree kangaroos](#) and their habitat. The joey and his mother, 11-year-old Elanna, live behind the scenes in an off-view habitat at the zoo.



### **A Joey's Journey:**

While Ecki is just now being introduced to the world, he was actually born eight months ago. When joeys are born, they're only the size of a jelly bean! Within just one to two minutes of birth, that tiny baby has to crawl from the birth canal, through the mother's fur, and into the pouch to immediately begin nursing. That's exactly what Ecki did, and he's been tucked away in his mom Elanna's pouch ever since, growing strong into the joey seen today.

But while Ecki may have been hidden from view, the zoo's dedicated animal care staff constantly monitored him and his mother to make sure that both were healthy and meeting expected milestones. One way they were able to do that is through "pouch checks," where keepers looked inside Elanna's pouch to check on the joey.

"Training Elanna to cooperate with pouch checks required a solid foundation of trust between Elanna and her keepers. Using positive reinforcement, our keepers trained Elanna to come down to a platform when asked, place her front feet onto a white tube, and extend the time holding still in this position. At the same time, keepers slowly desensitized Elanna to gently touching and opening her pouch until they were able to see inside it," said Animal Care Manager Rachel Salant.

Finally, keepers spent some time slowly introducing cameras and cell phones near Elanna so that she would be comfortable with having the devices around to record video of her pouch.

As part of all of the zoo's animal training sessions, Elanna had the choice to leave any session at any time, so any video recorded was because Elanna fully allowed it. The result is a rare up-close look at a tree kangaroo joey in his early stages of life, and it's incredible to watch.

In the coming months, Ecki will become fully weaned from his mother, and eventually grow independent. In the meantime, animal care staff will continue to observe Ecki and Elanna to make sure both are happy, healthy and thriving.

**Visuals:**

- [B-roll video](#) of Ecki poking out of Elanna's pouch, munching on leaves
- Video** of various pouch checks (available upon request)
- Photos** of Ecki and Elanna

**Want to help save endangered tree kangaroos?**

Woodland Park Zoo is home to the [Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program](#) that is working to protect the endangered tree kangaroo and help maintain the unique biodiversity of its native Papua New Guinea in balance with the culture and needs of the people who live there.

Consider supporting the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program here:

<https://www.zoo.org/tkcp/donate>

Founded in 1899, Woodland Park Zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives. The zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the wild through more than 30 field projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. 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. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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