

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Zoo's oldest gorilla to have a major medical exam to investigate critical geriatric issues**

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo's animal health team and local medical specialists will perform a medical exam this week on Amanda, a 49-year-old female gorilla. She is the oldest western lowland gorilla currently living at the zoo and among the oldest in North America.

The geriatric gorilla will be anesthetized for the procedure. A team of radiologists and an ophthalmologist will volunteer their time and expertise to work alongside the zoo's animal health team. In addition to conducting a battery of tests, diagnostic work will include abdominal and cardiac ultrasounds, and diagnosis and treatment for visual issues.

The medical exam is a part of Woodland Park Zoo's specialized geriatric care program. "Because of Amanda's advanced age, anesthesia is a relative risk for this geriatric patient. However, it's critical we investigate recent geriatric issues, including a recent concern with Amanda's vision," said Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo's director of animal health. "The exam will help us detect any life-threatening issues so we can provide the best treatment available and ensure she remains comfortable."

Amanda has been on a prescribed program of antibiotics and analgesics, and vitamin and mineral supplements for overall health.

The evolving field of zoo medicine, including improved husbandry and management techniques, geriatric care, species-specific nutritional plans, medical breakthroughs, diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, and comprehensive enrichment programs, has extended the life expectancies of animals in zoos.

In zoos, female gorillas can live in to their 40s and 50s. In the natural range of gorillas, the life expectancy is 30 to 35 years.

In part to address the longer life expectancies for many animal species, Woodland Park Zoo has a formal process to evaluate quality of life daily, sometimes multiple times daily, over the course of weeks or months once there is a specific concern identified for an individual's health or well-being.

According to Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo, the gorilla keepers conduct multiple checks daily on the older gorillas. "They closely monitor food and fluid intake and mobility, and make note of any changes to their vision and dentition," said Ramirez.

Amanda was raised at Toronto Zoo and has lived at Woodland Park Zoo since 1994. She has successfully raised three daughters, including Uzumma who is expecting her first baby in mid-March 2020. "Amanda was an excellent mom to her offspring, always showing attentive and nurturing maternal behavior," said Ramirez.

"Over the 25 years Amanda has lived at Woodland Park Zoo, our zoo family and community have fostered a special connection with this sweet animal. But, like people, animals age," said Ramirez. "The common aches and pains that affect elderly people also affect animals. While Amanda doesn't show any mobility issues yet, she is physically slowing down. She continues to receive the best care possible and love from our gorilla keepers and veterinary team."



Amanda lives with 40-year-old male Vip and 34-year-old female Jumoke. Living in a separate group are Amanda's daughter, 12-year-old Uzumma, 18-year-old male Kwame, 23-year-old Nadiri, 3-year-old Yola and 18-year-old Akenji, all females.

Woodland Park Zoo supports conservation efforts for the western lowland gorilla and mountain gorilla through the [Mbeli Bai Gorilla Study](#) and [Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund](#). To help support these important projects, the public can drop off used handheld electronics (cell phones, MP3 players, handheld games, e-readers, digital still and video cameras, GPS, portable hard drives, etc.) at the zoo. The handheld electronics are turned over to ECO-CELL, which operates a strict NO LANDFILL program and reimburses organizations for their recyclable contributions. ECO-CELL reuses mineral ore from these devices to reduce the demand for unsustainable coltan mining in the Congo that destroys habitat for critically endangered gorillas. The zoo directs funds from ECO-CELL toward the Mbeli Bai Gorilla Study, Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund and other great ape conservation projects.

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 300,000. Gorillas are endangered for the following primary reasons: poaching for the bushmeat trade; habitat destruction caused by logging, mining, and slash and burn agriculture; infectious diseases such as the Ebola virus which has recently become a great threat, killing many gorillas; and climate change, which is causing the drying of the region, creating negative impacts on forest ecology and species.

For more information about Woodland Park Zoo, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

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