

PRESS RELEASE

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See video: <https://youtu.be/fV9J-6IE12I>

For more photos, visit the zoo's blog: <http://bit.ly/JibiniTheOwl>

Zoo introduces new milky eagle owl, Jibini!

SEATTLE—Meet Woodland Park Zoo's newest and youngest member of its ambassador animal team, Jibini (ji-BEAN-ee), a Verreaux eagle owl, more commonly known as a milky eagle owl. The male bird is the first of this species at the zoo.

An eagle owl immediately begs the question, “is it an eagle or an owl”? The “eagle” part is a size reference. This bird is technically a very large owl—one of the largest in the world.

After arriving as an egg from Zoo Atlanta, Jibini hatched on January 28 under the watchful eye of Woodland Park Zoo's dedicated keepers. He was smaller than a tennis ball at the time and, like many bird species, he was mostly featherless except for some fuzzy down, and his eyes hadn't opened yet.

For the first few weeks, Jibini spent most of his time in an incubator to help keep him warm. Animal care keepers checked on him every couple hours round the clock to fill his tummy with nutritious bits of mice, talk to him and make sure all his needs were being met.

The milky eagle owl is not endangered, but like many birds of prey that need large territories, it is threatened by habitat loss and is a very misunderstood species. It most likely earns its name from its distinctive, bare whitish-pinkish eyelids that are easily visible during a blink or a nap—a feature no other owl species has. Jibini earned *his* name from that too. The zoo's keepers, who have fallen head over wings for him, wanted to keep with the dairy theme of the species name, so they chose to call him Jibini, which means “cheese” in Swahili. Swahili is one of the languages spoken in [sub-Saharan Africa](#) where this owl is a native species.

It is a myth that mice love to eat cheese—typically they don't. But it's 100% true that this “cheese” loves to eat mice! Jibini, like most owls, loves snacking on his “meesus pieces.” As he grows he will likely sample other favorite owl delicacies too, such as quail, rat and rabbit. In nature, a milky eagle owl is an opportunistic predator—meaning that anything it catches can be on the menu. Common meals include hedgehogs, weasels, other birds, reptiles and amphibians. These giants of the raptor world can even prey on small monkeys!

More than 3 months old now, Jibini is already full grown with a wingspan of nearly 5 feet. Most young birds are the same size as adults by the time they're able to take wing, and Jibini is no exception. At hatching, he weighed less than 2 ounces and now is about 3.7 pounds.

Jibini outgrew his original incubator “nest” pretty quickly so he recently moved into a spacious flight pen at the zoo's Raptor Barn where he has plenty of room to stretch out and exercise those huge wings. According to his keepers he's a quick learner, is building more confidence every day and is ahead of the curve on reaching milestones. That means he's already taking lots of short practice flights, hopping on and off of perching, and figuring out how to use his big feet for takeoffs, landings and grabbing hold of things. They say he is easy going, loves to participate in training sessions with all his keepers on the team, and has shown quite a talent for napping, even when lots of activity is going on around him—though they're pretty sure he wakes up for snack time!

In the coming months, Jibini will continue to work with his keepers—they are his family—to master the most important role of being an ambassador animal: meeting and greeting people and helping to educate them about owls.



The zoo can't wait to introduce Jibini to the community once the zoo reopens!

Please visit www.zoo.org/relief to help support the animals at Woodland Park Zoo. While the zoo is temporarily closed to the public, the exceptional animal care and veterinary teams, and other staff continue to work to provide dedicated care to more than 900 animals. As a non-profit organization, the zoo is relying on the community now more than ever to help these wonderful animals continue to thrive. Contributions, both big and small, will help creatures of all sizes.

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