

PRESS RELEASE

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Woodland Park Zoo's oldest gorilla, Amanda, passes away *Geriatric gorilla was an exemplary mother*

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is mourning the loss of Amanda, a 50-year-old female gorilla, who was humanely euthanized today due to a severe decline in health. During the last couple of weeks, the geriatric gorilla's appetite and activity level were declining.

Amanda was the grandmother of the zoo's newest baby gorilla, Kitoko, born in March. She was the oldest western lowland gorilla living at the zoo and among the oldest in North America.

In zoos, female gorillas can live in to their 40s and 50s. In the wild, the life expectancy is 30 to 35 years. At 50 years old, Amanda was well into advanced geriatric age, practically double in human years.

Amanda was raised at Toronto Zoo. In 1994 she moved to Woodland Park Zoo where she successfully raised three daughters, including Uzumma, the mother of Kitoko.

"For 26 years at Woodland Park Zoo, Amanda offered a window into the magnificent world of gorillas for our zoo family and community," said Martin Ramirez, mammal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "Known for her sweet disposition and being an exceptionally good mom, Amanda showed attentive, nurturing maternal love and care for her daughters. We are going to deeply miss this beautiful animal. We're grateful Amanda lived a long, vibrant life thanks to the love and care provided by our animal care and animal health teams."

Amanda had been living in the off-view dens since last fall due to age-related blindness and other degenerative issues. Because of her visual impairment, Amanda could no longer safely navigate the public outdoor habitats. Living in the off-view, indoor dens allowed the gorilla keepers to monitor her closely every day and meet her special needs.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the zoo announced it had constructed a new sunning yard that allowed Amanda to be outdoors for part of each day as she chose to. "We're glad Amanda had the opportunity to enjoy springtime sun and fresh air during the last couple weeks of her life," said Ramirez. "Amanda still had social interaction with other gorillas and her human caretakers through sounds, smell and touch."

As a standard procedure, the zoo's animal health team will perform a necropsy (an animal autopsy) to determine the cause of death. "Results will be shared nationally among scientific colleagues to help advance the understanding of medical issues in gorillas," said Dr. Tim Storms, an associate veterinarian at Woodland Park Zoo. The cause of death is pending final pathology tests in several weeks.

Many animal species are living longer in zoos largely due to the evolving field of zoo medicine. "Improved husbandry and management techniques, geriatric care, enhanced species-specific nutritional plans, medical breakthroughs, diagnostic and therapeutic techniques, and comprehensive enrichment programs have contributed to extending the life expectancies of animals in zoos," said Storms.



In addition to Uzumma and Kitoko, the other gorillas living at the zoo are Kitoko's dad, Kwame; female Nadiri and her daughter, Yola; and female Akenji. Male Vip and female Jumoke live together in a separate group.

Woodland Park Zoo supports conservation efforts for the western lowland gorilla and mountain gorilla through the [Mondika Gorilla Project](#) and [Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund](#).

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.

To celebrate Amanda's life and save gorillas, visit www.zoo.org/ecocell. Or adopt a baby gorilla through [ZooParent Digital Adoptions](#). Funds go directly to Woodland Park Zoo's Relief Fund dedicated to amazing animal care.

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