

PRESS RELEASE

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Zoo loses elderly gorilla, Vip *Deceased gorilla was father of Yola and first gorilla born in the Netherlands*

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is sad to announce that Vip, a 42-year-old western lowland gorilla, passed away this morning. For the past few weeks, the male gorilla had been lethargic and not eating well. A recent immobilization and examination did not reveal anything significant.

Vip was renowned as the first zoo gorilla born in the Netherlands. Named for being a **Very Important Primate**, the male ape had seven daughters, including 5-year-old Yola and 13-year-old Uzumma, who is the mother of 1-year-old Kitoko. Vip lived at Franklin Park Zoo in Boston before moving to Woodland Park Zoo in 1996. At the time of his death, Vip lived with his female companion, Jumoke.

“Losing one of our gorillas is deeply sad for our zoo family. During his 25 years at Woodland Park Zoo, Vip was dearly loved by the zoo’s staff, volunteers, members, donors, visitors and the community. In his own right, he became a very important primate to all of us,” said Martin Ramirez, curator of mammals at Woodland Park Zoo.

“Vip was a very striking gorilla. While zoo guests would mistakenly think he was grumpy because of his very low brow ridge, he was quite the opposite. He was an excellent companion and took great interest in each of his daughters,” added Ramirez. “As an attentive dad, he led his group with patience, playfulness and kindness. This is a very difficult time for us and a great loss for the North American gorilla population. We will really miss this amazing, very important primate.”

At 42 years old, Vip was a geriatric gorilla. “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 concern for an individual’s well-being,” said Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo’s director of animal health. “Vip had been under close observation by his attentive caretakers and on a prescribed program of analgesics and joint medication.”

Vip was anesthetized in 2015 for successful sinus surgery along with a routine cardiac ultrasound and EKG as part of the zoo’s preventive health program for its great apes, in 2017 for emergency umbilical hernia surgery repair and in February 2021 for a diagnostic exam. “We’re very grateful to the team of human medical specialists and veterinary consultants who over the years have generously donated their time and expertise on behalf of our beloved gorilla,” said Collins.

The median life expectancy for male western lowland gorillas is 32 years old, although gorillas in zoos can live in to their 40s and 50s because of the evolving field of zoo medicine—improved husbandry and management techniques, excellent animal care, better nutrition, increased medical knowledge, and diagnostic and therapeutic techniques.

Vip and the zoo’s gorillas have inspired tens of thousands of guests to care about gorillas and take actions to help preserve them into the future. Here’s how to help: Every visit to Woodland Park Zoo supports conservation of animals in the wild. Join the zoo by recycling old cell phones and other used handheld electronics through [ECO-CELL](#) to help preserve



gorilla habitat. Funds generated from ECO-CELL support the [Mondika Gorilla Project](#) and [Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund](#).

The other gorilla family living separately from Vip's group are: Kwame, Nadiri and her new baby Zuna, Uzumma and son Kitoko, Yola and Akenji,

As a standard procedure, the zoo's animal health team will perform a necropsy (an animal autopsy) to further diagnose the cause of death and to share the results nationally among colleague scientists to help advance the understanding of medical issues in gorillas.

For more information about Woodland Park Zoo, visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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