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**BABY STEPS: NEWBORN MOOSE ROAMS WITH MOM,
THRILLS VISITORS AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK**

Moose calf is the first to be born at park in 15 years

EATONVILLE, Wash.--Northwest Trek Wildlife Park's newest resident is just a few days old but is already a popular attraction with visitors.

The moose calf, believed to have been born July 17, is sticking close to its mother and has been observed nursing regularly. The calf lives in the park's Free Roaming Area, where some visitors on the Northwest Trek tram have caught a glimpse of the newborn.

This is the first moose calf born at the wildlife park in 15 years.

Because staff members haven't been able yet to get close to the calf, the baby's gender and exact size are unknown. Keepers estimate the calf is about 30 pounds and is gaining strength every day. It likely will nurse through the summer and stay with its mother through breeding season this fall.

So far, the two animals are showing all of the appropriate behavior for a newborn calf and a caring mother, Northwest Trek Deputy Director Alan Varsik said. Mother Connie moose is consuming plenty of calories to support her calf.

"She's bonding well with her calf," Varsik said. "So far everything looks good."

Within a couple of weeks, park officials expect to determine the calf's gender. Northwest Trek staff members are discussing how to conduct the naming process, Varsik said.

July 17 also marked the 40th birthday of the wildlife park, which was donated by David T. and Connie Hellyer to conserve and educate the public about native Northwest animals.

The calf's mother (named for park cofounder Connie Hellyer) and father Ellis (named for former longtime park Deputy Director Dave Ellis) were brought to Northwest Trek in 2012 as orphans. Both are 3 years old and, as

residents of the 435-acre Free Roaming Area, wander at will. Northwest Trek is also home to another female moose.

Moose are herbivores that eat twigs, roots, woody stems, branches, and leaves. An adult moose can weigh more than half a ton.

Visitors to Northwest Trek can see traditional animal exhibits and take a 50-minute tram tour, which winds through stands of trees and along meadows that are home to bison, Roosevelt elk, big horn sheep, moose, and other animals.

Connie and her calf have been spotted several times from the tram, Varsik said, indicating the two are generally willing to venture close to the route.

“We can’t guarantee you’ll see the moose mother and calf on a tram tour, but views have been fairly frequent so far,” he said.

Northwest Trek is open from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. For more information, go to www.nwtrek.org.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park, a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma, is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2015. It is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.