

6-MONTH-OLD GRIZZLY BEAR CUB ARRIVES AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK AND QUICKLY SETTLES INTO HIS NEW HOME, EATING AND PLAYING

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Eatonville, Wash. – He’s been at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park for barely a day, and he’s already made himself at home.



That’s as it should be.

A 6-month-old orphaned grizzly bear cub arrived at the wildlife park near Eatonville from Anchorage, Alaska, Wednesday morning, eagerly ate his first meal and playfully tackled the logs and other natural “toys” keepers had thoughtfully placed in his den.

“He is quite healthy, and he’s in great body condition,” Northwest Trek veterinarian Dr. Allison Case said.

She thanked Alaska Zoo Curator Shannon Jensen and her team for taking wonderful care of the cub after he was discovered malnourished and alone near Nome a few months ago. His still-nursing mother was killed by poachers. The Alaska zoologists nursed the cub back to health with bottle feedings, eventually graduating him to solid food, too.

“He’s a really playful, happy bear,” Northwest Trek bear keeper Angela Gibson said.

Northwest Trek, which recently revamped its empty grizzly bear exhibit in anticipation of taking in orphaned bears, is delighted to provide a home for the nearly-90-pound cub, Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman said. He soon is to be joined by an orphaned yearling from Montana. That cub’s mother was killed by a rancher after she attacked his pigs.

It will be some time before the bears make their public debut at Northwest Trek. They must first get to know their keepers and settle into their new home.

Gibson described the cub from Alaska as a good-humored bear who responds well to keepers and demonstrates signs of the attentive training he received in Alaska.

He's decisive, too. The cub ate immediately upon his arrival at Northwest Trek, then quickly set about arranging the "furniture," (logs and other bear-appropriate structures) in his den, "just the way he wanted it," Gibson said.

Gibson is the equivalent of a surrogate "mom" to the bear, watching over him, feeding him every few hours, seeing to his comfort and safety, often speaking to him in a calm, reassuring voice. She comes in at 6 a.m. and is on duty each night for his 9:30 p.m. feeding, too. He receives formula three times a day and specially formulated bear chow three times a day, as well as apples, peaches, pears and other produce, plus sustainable salmon. As he grows, keepers will introduce him to new foods slowly, as his mother would have: berries, plants, insects and other meat – as well as produce that replicates a bear's wild diet.

Gibson compares him to a toddler – albeit a nearly 90-pound one. He's already sniffing every inch and exploring each corner of his den. And he made it quickly known with his playful demeanor that he was appreciative of the logs and other bear-cub-appropriate "toys" his keepers have set out for him.

Just hours after his arrival aboard an overnight flight, he chewed on and ate some maple and Douglas fir "browse" - the leaves, twigs and branches of trees.

Every day will bring a new first, a new adventure or training period for the cub. And in the next few weeks, his companion "brother bear" should arrive from Montana.

Once the second rescued cub arrives, keepers will come up with slates of prospective names for the pair, keeping with the Northwest Trek tradition of using meaningful geographic names or the names of plants, trees and other flora. Guests will then have the opportunity to vote for their favorite names for each cub.

A grizzly bear brother and sister, Hudson and Denali, lived at Northwest Trek for nearly a quarter century until they died well into their geriatric years.

Now, a new generation is arriving to inspire the wildlife park's guests to learn more about bears and the actions individuals can take to limit human-bear conflict. Grizzly bears are endangered in Washington, their species fallen victim to hunting and habitat loss, Heinzman said.

The species plays an important role in the forest ecosystem, and Northwest Trek is a partner in efforts to restore grizzly bears to remote areas of the North Cascades.

"This bear cub is the beginning of decades more bear history for Northwest Trek," Heinzman said. "I am excited for what's to come."

For more information, go to <https://www.nwtrek.org/grizzly-cubs-are-coming>.

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Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, 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 is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

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