



Northwest Trek
Wildlife Park

METRO PARKS TACOMA

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WOLVERINES ARE BACK AT NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK

Brother and sister pair Ahma and Rainier return to explore an expanded home with all the superhero strength, smarts and agility of this iconic Northwest species

Eatonville, Wash. - They're smart, strong and full of personality – and they're back at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.



Brother-and-sister wolverines Rainier and Ahma, both born at Northwest Trek, have returned home, and they will make their official public debut July 13-14 in a newly renovated, 10,800-square-foot habitat.

They have plenty of trees, boulders and logs to climb and explore, giving Northwest Trek guests a chance to see the

“superhero” strength, agility and personality of this rare Northwest mammal.

“Wolverines are the quintessential Pacific Northwest animal,” said Zoological Curator Marc Heinzman. “The species is perfectly shaped by evolution to thrive in the mountains through hard work and determination. People rarely have the opportunity to see that, so we’re excited that our guests will have the opportunity to view and learn about them at Northwest Trek.”

The largest land species in the mustelid (weasel) family, wolverines are known in both biology and popular culture for their sheer ferocity. With large feet for traction in snow, powerful

muscles for fighting and digging, a solid body, long sharp claws, fierce snarl and indomitable nature, they can take on both large predators (including bears) and harsh alpine conditions.

And as their scientific name –*Gulo gulo*, or gluttonous glutton – suggests, they’ll eat almost anything, living or dead.

Those abilities have earned them a fearsome reputation. They are rarely seen in the wild, and will run from humans.

Wildlife biologists still have a lot to learn about wolverines due to their wide range over terrain that’s very hard to access, Heinzman said.



Rainier, the brother, is slightly larger and a little “goofy.”

Rainier and Ahma were born in 2009 and 2007 at Northwest Trek in different litters from the same parents. Rainier was named for our local mountain; Ahma is Finnish for ‘wolverine’. Each spent some time living at other zoos before recently returning home to meet each other for the first time.

They get along extremely well, said keeper Wendi Mello. Ahma, though smaller and more cautious, is dominant, which is typical for females in the weasel family. “They are so intelligent and

curious, even goofy,” Mello said. “They love exploring their environment, and enjoy any enrichment item we give them. They play and wrestle with each other, and are very interested in people.”



Ahma, the sister, is smaller and a little more cautious.

Wolverines are also naturally athletic, and the pair loves to climb, run and explore a habitat that’s been renovated and expanded just for them. Trees, fallen logs, boulders and hollow snags abound, with several complex climbing structures and even a stream to splash in. As wolverines naturally cover a wide territory, the new habitat is now 13 times the size of the former wolverine exhibit.

Rainier weighs about 35 pounds, is 3 feet long and 20 inches tall. His sister’s stats: 21 pounds, 2.5 feet long, 15 inches tall.

North American wolverines are rare in the wild, with fewer than 300 in the lower 48 U.S. states and around three dozen in Washington state. Due to their dwindling numbers, they are candidates for protection both federally and by Washington state. The animals live in remote mountain wilderness in northern and western states. As females need a snow den to raise young, climate change is further reducing their range and numbers.

“Wolverines are scrappy, adaptable and smart,” says Mello. “They’re survivors in a harsh environment. I’m so excited for our guests to meet them here.”

For more information, visit www.nwtrek.org/wolverine.

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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 is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.

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