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The world's rarest goose makes its debut at the zoo *Meet the new pair of nene, the Hawaiian goose*

SEATTLE—Visitors to Woodland Park Zoo can now meet the rarest goose in the world, the nene (pronounced *nay-nay*), also known as the Hawaiian goose. This is the first time the species has been here in the zoo's 123-year-old history.

The male, 11 years old, and female, 5 years old, can be seen in the zoo's Conservation Aviary walk-through along with other bird species including tawny frogmouths and Nicobar pigeons.

Found only in Hawaii, the nene is the largest native land animal in the state. With a current population of approximately 3,800 nene in its native range, it is the sixth most endangered waterfowl species worldwide.

Once numbering in the thousands, the population dropped to only 30 birds by the early 1950s due to predation by invasive species such as feral dogs, cats, rats, and mongoose in addition to hunting. For the past six decades, breeding and reintroduction projects by wildlife conservationists in Hawai'i and England have helped bring the nene back from the brink of extinction, but numbers remain critically low.

The zoo's pair of nene were paired under the Nene Species Survival Plan under a breeding recommendation. [Species Survival Plans](#) are cooperative programs across accredited zoos to help ensure healthy, genetically diverse, self-sustaining populations of select species or subspecies. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, Species Survival Plans also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects. Only about 60 nene are currently living in accredited zoos.

"Visitors are going to be in awe of these rare birds. Our nene have quickly adapted to their new home at the zoo and continue to bond together. They're curious and mellow, and they've already found a favorite rock to perch on and peer over at the animals in our Family Farm," said Shawn Pedersen, bird curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "We're very excited to share our new pair with the community. We hope they'll breed and we have nene goslings next spring."

Today in their native habitat, the nene continues to face threats, particularly fatal collisions by speeding motorists or people feeding them, which makes them accustomed to people and cars. It is illegal under Hawai'i state law to feed nene, a federally protected species.

More About Nene

- The Hawaiian creation chant mentions nene as being guardian spirits of the land. For Native Hawaiians, the nene are seen as a symbolic joining force between the mountains and the coast because of their seasonal movements.
- The nene is the state bird for Hawai'i. The Hawaiian name nene comes from its soft, almost gentle call.
- Descended from the giant Canada goose, it is believed that the nene migrated to the Hawaiian Islands more than 500,000 years ago.
- The nene has specially adapted feet—padded toes, claws and reduced webbing on their feet than their distant relatives—that allow them to walk, climb and run across rugged ground and lava rocks.



- One of the favorite foods of the nene is the bright red ohelo berry that grows on lava and is related to the cranberry.
- It is unlawful to touch, feed, harass or chase the nene; in their native habitat, each bird is banded.

Be sure to visit the new nene during regular zoo hours: 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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