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Credit: Jeremy Dwyer-Lindgren/Woodland Park Zoo

Cisco, zoo's sole Harris's hawk, passes away
Geriatric raptor was one of the first birds to live at the Raptor Center

SEATTLE—A legendary raptor at Woodland Park Zoo, a 36-year-old Harris's hawk named Cisco, has passed away. Harris's hawks can live up to 20 to 25 years in human care and 10 to 12 years in the wild.

Due to Cisco's advanced age, the raptor keepers had been closely monitoring the hawk over the last couple of years through daily observations of his health and quality of life. As an exceptionally elderly hawk, Cisco was under treatment for age-related issues, like most geriatric animals and humans. "Because of arthritis, cataracts, declining body condition, and loss of vision in the right eye due to retinal degeneration, Cisco was no longer able to take part in free flights at the zoo; however, he was still being exercised and socialized regularly," said Dr. Misty Garcia, associate veterinarian at Woodland Park Zoo. Cisco had been on a prescribed program of joint supplements and laser therapy for many years and for the last three years on an increasing number of medications to manage his arthritis.

Cisco arrived at Woodland Park Zoo in 1988 as a 6-month-old juvenile and was one of the first raptors to live at the zoo's new Raptor Center, which opened the same year. The Raptor Center, which was co-founded by two, now retired raptor keepers, was established to help visitors appreciate and care about birds of prey in the wild. During the free-flight programs, raptor keepers demonstrated the flight prowess of Cisco and other raptor residents and shared natural history, personality factoids and the conservation status about each species during the zoo's free-flight programs.

"Cisco was a special, wonderful bird and accomplished many firsts throughout his lifetime at Woodland Park Zoo. He trained many animal keepers how to work with raptors in an ambassador animal role. As an amazing flyer, he especially enjoyed interacting with his favorite keepers during the programs and in his golden years," said Regina Smith, a lead animal keeper at Woodland Park Zoo. "The Ambassador Animals team will greatly miss our senior statesman, and the loss of Cisco has been very hard for everyone that has ever worked with him and for the zoo family."

"For more than three decades, Cisco's premier role was flying in the zoo's free-flight programs, delighting visitors with his beauty, precision and grace. He rightly earned a reputation as a 'guard bird,' using his dragon-like scream to alert his animal keepers of any outside intruders," said Susie Semler, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "We will miss this elegant and intelligent raptor who will continue to soar in our hearts."

Woodland Park Zoo's raptors are part of its ambassador animals program, which helps build guests' empathy for animals and promotes ways to take action for wildlife. The free flights provide essential exercise for the raptors' physical and



behavioral health and are an important module of Woodland Park Zoo's excellent animal care program.

The Harris's hawk prefers desert, arid scrub and savanna, agricultural lands, and even marshy open country with scattered trees and patches of woodlands. Unlike most raptor species, the Harris's hawk is more social and can often be seen alone or with another hawk, and often hangs out in small family groups. It ranges from the southwestern U.S. through Mexico and in appropriate habitats as far south as Argentina.

While the Harris's hawk does not range in Washington state, Woodland Park Zoo supports and participates in raptor research in the shrub steppe habitats of eastern Washington. Initiated by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the research focuses on migratory raptor species of the shrub steppe to help scientists better understand the reasons behind population declines and manage habitat impacts such as lead pollution, fires and wind power development.

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

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