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MISSING EAGLE OWL FOUND SAFE IN POINT DEFIANCE PARK

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium staff locate Forrest in trees near Fort Nisqually after two-plus day search

TACOMA, Wash. – Forrest is home. Staff members from Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium located the nearly 9-year-old Eurasian eagle owl near Fort Nisqually just before 5 p.m. today.



He is healthy but hungry, they reported.

Teams of staff members searched the trails of Point Defiance Park for more than two days, calling Forrest by name, hooting into the trees and using whistles in the hope of getting his attention.

Forrest was apparently startled during a routine practice session on Wednesday afternoon and flew into the park. He is trained to fly from point to point during the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater shows at the zoo.

Zookeepers looked for him until dusk Wednesday, then continued their search through the park in the rain on Thursday. They resumed at first light today.

They concentrated their search in the Fort Nisqually area this afternoon after hearing hoots in the vicinity on Thursday.

“We found him in the area of the park where we thought he would be,” senior staff biologist Maureen O’Keefe said.

Zoo staff member Laura Strong spotted Forrest in a tree shortly before 5 p.m. He flew to another tree where zookeepers were congregating. And when zookeeper Suzanne Akerman called to him and showed him his food dish, Forrest flew to her feet. She picked him up and he was transported back to the zoo.

Though birds have briefly flown away from the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater, they've always stayed in the immediate vicinity and returned, zoo deputy director John Houck said.

"We're relieved that Forrest is back," he added. "His safe return is a testament to the attention and concern of our staff, who have a wonderful relationship with every animal in their care. Their search was tireless."

Houck also thanked the Point Defiance Park hikers, joggers and walkers who joined in the search when they heard about it, many keeping their eyes skyward as they continued on their paths. Volunteer birders also joined in this afternoon when the Tahoma Audubon Society issued a plea for them to put their spotting skills to work. Members of the public phoned and emailed tips.

"This community always steps up in times of need," Houck said. "We are grateful for that and offer our sincere thanks to all who helped in the search for Forrest."

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).