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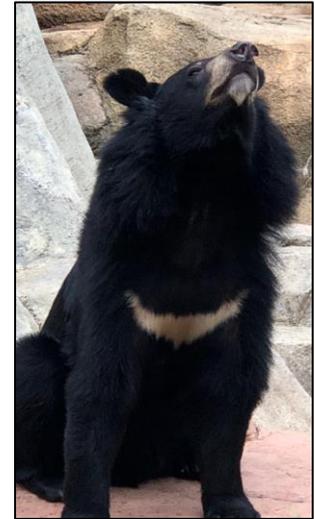
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Jackson Zoo Welcomes Asiatic Black Bear

Jackson, Miss.— Animal care staff at the Jackson Zoo are pleased to announce the arrival of a new species to the park at 2918 West Capitol Street, the Asiatic black bear. Two-year-old “Meeko” arrived in late November from the Metro Richmond Zoo in Mosely, Virginia, and has been getting to know his keepers and new home.

Asiatic black bears are omnivorous (eating both plants and meat), can weigh up to 250 lbs., and can live up to 30 years in protected habitats like zoos and refuges. Although Meeko was hand-raised from infancy, his wild cousins are primarily found in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of southeastern Asia, and so are also known as Himalayan black bears or Tibetan black bears. Since they often have a pale half-moon of fur on their chest, they are also commonly referred to as Moon bears. It shares a close common ancestry with its the cousin, the American black bear, but the Asiatic black bear has a longer mane, and a slightly longer snout. Their sense of smell is acute, and it is how they recognize their territory, avoid predators like tigers, wolves, and humans, and forage for food. In fact, Meeko has been seen “sniffing” in the direction of guests that stop and say hello.



Unlike their American cousins, Moon bears are listed as Vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) endangered species list, as their numbers are dwindling from habitat loss and illegal hunting. With only approximately 50,000 left in the wild, the Jackson Zoo staff hopes that Meeko will help people better understand and raise awareness of the importance of sustainable practices, even so far away from the endangered habitats. Sustainability is using ecology, economics, politics, and culture to ensure the continuation of all the planet’s biological systems indefinitely. The Jackson Zoo works with other organizations and accredited zoos across the nation to help raise awareness of ways we can help endangered wildlife and ecologies, with twenty-five cents of every admission going towards local and national conservation efforts.

Guests of all ages can visit Meeko and the other nearly 400 animals every day of the year between 9 am and 4 pm, except Christmas Day (the zoo will close at 2 pm on Christmas Eve). Adult admission is \$8.00, children ages two-12 years are \$5.00, under two are free, and there are senior, military, and group discounts available. People can also “like” [Facebook.com/JacksonZoo](https://www.facebook.com/JacksonZoo) for real time announcements and activities, and follow @JacksonZoo on Instagram, which is updated several times a day by the Jackson Zookeepers. Opportunities for animal sponsorship and other ways to support the Jackson Zoo can be found at jacksonzoo.org/support.

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The Jackson Zoo is accredited by the Zoological Association of America, and certified by the Better Business Bureau. The mission of the Jackson Zoo is to provide visitors with a quality recreational and educational environment dedicated to wildlife care and conservation. For more information, visit The Jackson Zoo online at jacksonzoo.org, or on [facebook.com/JacksonZoo](https://www.facebook.com/JacksonZoo).

