

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New butterfly exhibit opens this summer Zoo reports another record-breaking attendance year**

SEATTLE— A new exhibit for North American butterflies and a stage for up-close experiences with animals such as skunks and pot-bellied pigs are among the new features coming to Woodland Park Zoo in 2016.

The butterflies and new “ambassador animals” will highlight a previously underused area of the zoo near the popular Zoomazium. The new outdoor stage is expected to be a real highlight for zoo guests who want to get up close and personal with these animals. In addition—to mark its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary—Zoomazium will see a refreshment of its programming and technology.

Right next door will be the new Butterfly Garden, a completely new exhibit to replace one closed during the 2009 recession. Zoo guests will enter a covered area, stroll among free-flying butterflies, and explore the various habitats of North American butterfly species while learning about the biology, behavior, and threats facing these beautiful winged insects and other pollinators.

“These two new experiences, along with new programming in Zoomazium, will activate an exciting and interesting new area of the zoo,” said Bruce Bohmke, Woodland Park Zoo acting president and CEO.

“We are still finalizing the selection of animals for this new ambassador animals program,” Bohmke said, “but whether it’s a raccoon, a skunk, or a laughing kookaburra, we think visitors of all ages will be fascinated encountering these small animals up close.”

Zoo staff are eager to bring these new programs to the community for 2016 to build on what has been a very successful 2015.

With its new Banyan Wilds exhibit showcasing tigers and sloth bears, and a very successful WildLights festival, the zoo in 2015 set an attendance record of 1.3 million guests. It was the third consecutive year of record-breaking attendance at the zoo.

Of those attending the zoo this past year, 92% visited the new Banyan Wilds exhibit. The \$15 million exhibit—which renovated the heart of the zoo and removed the last of any iron-barred enclosures—took guests into the fragile world of Malayan tigers and sloth bears. Not only can visitors experience these giant animals up close, and talk with zookeepers about how they work with tigers, but the interactive exhibit also shows actions that individuals in Seattle can take to help save animals in the wild. New interactive materials in Banyan Wilds in 2016 will invite zoo guests to sign up for the zoo’s Tiger Team and receive periodic updates on these highly endangered cats and how to help save the 3,200 tigers remaining in the wild.

“Thanks to the community’s support, 2015 was a banner year for Woodland Park Zoo. Connecting the hearts and minds of more than one million visitors a year to the wonders of nature gives us hope that we, collectively, can take meaningful action to help ensure a brighter future for our planet for all living things,” said Bohmke. “The exciting, up-close experiences planned for this year are sure to be crowd pleasers.”

For information about Woodland Park Zoo, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

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