

Woodland Park Zoo celebrates armadillo's milestone birthday ***Zoo's three-banded armadillo turns 25***

SEATTLE-Woodland Park Zoo's three-banded armadillo, Maria, turned 25 years old on April 20, 2016; she is the oldest living three-banded armadillo in zoos in North America. To celebrate her big milestone, Maria was treated to a festive birthday "cake" adorned with her favorite treat, bugs.



Zookeepers and local Girl Scout troop 44261 created Maria's birthday cake out of cardboard, tissue paper and straws (used for candles); they also crafted birthday decorations including flowers made from tissue paper. "We wanted to do something special to commemorate her milestone birthday," said Alyssa Borek, zookeeper at Woodland Park Zoo. "There's a lot to celebrate, she's a quarter of a century old, she's the oldest three-banded armadillo in North America and she's surpassed the life expectancy by almost 10 years." Most armadillos live to be about 16 years old.

Maria was born at San Antonio Zoo on April 20, 1991, and moved to Woodland Park Zoo in 2000. She currently lives in the grotto in the Day Exhibit with the Burmese Mountain tortoise. Maria is known for her amazing architecture and construction skills. "She builds amazingly deep and long burrows in the exhibit that are able to withstand the weight of a person walking over them," said Borek.

Armadillo is a Spanish word meaning "little armored one" and refers to the bony plates that cover their back, head, legs and tail. Armadillos are the only living mammals that wear such shells. The three-banded armadillo is the only armadillo that can roll completely into a ball to protect itself from predators and thorny vegetation. Armadillos dig burrows and sleep prolifically, up to 16 hours per day, foraging in the early morning and evening for beetles, ants, termites and other insects.

Visit the zoo's [blog](#) to read more about Maria's birthday celebration.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats through more than 40 field projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a

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