

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | January 26, 2017  
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### **Life after zoo fire: new tree frog tadpoles and lizard and turtle eggs** ***Assessments continue for damaged building***

SEATTLE—Frogs, lizards, and turtles show that life goes on after surviving a fire in December at Woodland Park Zoo. The fire damaged the Day and Night Exhibit building where the animals resided.



Since being safely evacuated from the building through a heroic effort by Seattle Fire Department and the zoo's animal care staff, a pair of tiger-legged monkey frogs have produced 50 tadpoles—a first-time breeding at the zoo for this species. In addition, shield-tailed agamas (lizards found in Somalia and Ethiopia) and Asian yellow-margined box turtles have produced eggs, which are in development. The turtle species is endangered in the wild and is part of a Species Survival Plan, a cooperative breeding program among accredited zoos to manage the health and growth of the population.

See the zoo's blog for video and photos of the tadpoles: <http://bit.ly/wpzfireupdate>.

"We observed the monkey frogs in a 'love embrace' on Christmas Eve. The fact that these animals could breed and reproduce after a fire and being placed in temporary housing is a testimony to the excellent care and dedication provided by our animal care staff. This is wonderful news and a sign of hope after the fire," said Jennifer Pramuk, PhD, animal curator and an expert in reptiles and amphibians at Woodland Park Zoo.

The frogs, lizards and turtles were among 182 reptiles, amphibians, an armadillo and a Matschie's tree kangaroo safely rescued from the fire and relocated to other animal buildings on zoo grounds. The animals remain off public view except for a reticulated python which is on view with an Indian python in another exhibit. The tree kangaroo, a geriatric animal, was humanely euthanized a week ago due to declining health.

The fire occurred in the Day and Night Exhibit building, with the Night Exhibit side of the building sustaining significant structural damage, including holes in the roof and collapsed internal structures. The Night Exhibit side of the building had closed in 2010 and no longer housed animals except for six turtles hibernating in the basement at the time of the fire—two black-breasted and four Indochinese box—which did not survive the heat and smoke.

Since the fire, the zoo has been involved in numerous inspections, evaluation efforts, and conversations with fire, city and insurance personnel. "The entire building remains unsafe to access and the Seattle Fire Investigation Unit was unable to determine the cause of the fire," said Bruce Bohmke, Woodland Park Zoo's chief operations officer.

Due to much uncertainty about the extent of damage, efforts are underway to identify interim housing for the displaced animals including potential exhibit modifications over the next several months. "Several animals will remain at the zoo due to their advanced age and pre-existing health conditions and we are working with our colleagues at other accredited facilities to re-home some of our venomous snakes and other animals that we might re-acquire in the future," added Bohmke. Another group of animals have been identified to stay at the zoo due to the husbandry expertise of zoo staff and history of caring for these species or because they are significantly endangered and are managed under Species Survival Plans (managed conservation breeding programs). "We hope to place these animals on exhibit for our guests and are focusing on ways to make this happen."

Over the next several weeks, the zoo will continue to assess the damage, including the structure and building's mechanical and electrical system. Re-occupation of the Day Exhibit side of the building will depend on damage assessment to the entire building and strategies to replace all of the utilities.

The fire has sparked community support for the zoo. "We are very grateful for the outpouring of support by our community. This means so much to our zoo family during a challenging time," said Bohmke.

Stay tuned for news and updates on the fire at <http://www.zoo.org/fire>.

Zoo winter hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) for more information and how to become a member.

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