

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **“Cute-o-meter” is off the charts with new otter pups at the zoo Four Asian small-clawed otters born in December**

SEATTLE—*What could be cuter than a litter of squealing, chirping otter pups? Not much!*

Four Asian small-clawed otters were born December 9 at Woodland Park Zoo to 7-year-old mother Teratai (pronounced tear-a-tie) and 11-year-old father Guntur (pronounced goon-toor). The birth represents the third litter for the parents. The sex of the pups has not been determined.



The new pups currently live off view in a maternity den with their parents and three older sisters. **See video and photos of the pups on the zoo's blog:**  
<http://blog.zoo.org/2017/01/our-gift-to-internet-tiny-otter-pups.html>

“The whole family pitches in to raise the pups,” explained Pat Owen, a collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo. “Mom nurses the newborns, and dad and older siblings provide supportive care. Occasionally, the adults go outdoors in the public exhibit but not for long. They prefer staying indoors to focus on caring for the pups.”

The parents have successfully raised two previous litters to adulthood and are giving the same level of appropriate care to their new pups. “Our animal care staff keeps a close eye on the new pups but remains hands off as much as possible with little to no intervention except for wellness exams,” said Owen. Next week the zoo’s veterinary staff will perform the pups’ first neonatal exam which will include weigh-ins and vaccinations.

Asian small-clawed otters are the smallest otters among the 13 otter species. Gestation lasts 60 to 64 days. At birth, these otters weigh just 50 grams, no more than the weight of a golf ball. Born without the ability to see or hear, the pups depend on the nurturing care of both parents until they begin developing their senses at about 3 weeks old.

“The pups have fully opened their eyes and are becoming more mobile,” said Owen. As their mobility increases, the parents and older siblings will teach them how to swim—first, in a plastic tub. After mastering the tub, they will graduate to the next level: the outdoor exhibit and large pool where they will be taught to dive a few inches deep in the large pool, with their vigilant family by their side. The pups will be officially introduced to zoo-goers when they can swim and safely navigate the outdoor exhibit.

Asian small-clawed otters are markedly more vocal than most otter species with at least 12 different vocalizations, including whistles, buzzes, twitters, chirps or staccato chuckles. The species ranges throughout southern and southeastern Asia, including areas of India, Indonesian islands, Malaysia, Southeast Asia, Taiwan, southern China and Palawan in the Philippines. With rapidly declining habitat, range and population, the species moved from near threatened status in 2004 to the more serious vulnerable category in 2008. The population in the wild is unknown, with some estimates at 5,000 and others at far fewer. While all otter species have protected status under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and killing is prohibited in most range countries, enforcement remains very limited. Poaching and water pollution remain its highest threats.

Woodland Park Zoo is also home to North American river otters, the focal species of a field study launched last year, [River Otters of Western Washington: Sentinels of Ecological Health](#). The study focuses on otter population biology and their contaminant loads along the length of the Green-Duwamish River. The community can contribute to the study as *otter*

*spotters* to help collect information on North American river otters, which are virtually unstudied in Washington waters.

Zoo winter hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

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 in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future.

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