

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | February 3, 2017

Media contact: Gigi Allianic, Alissa Wolken
206.548.2550 | woodlandparkzoo@zoo.org

New otter pups get their first veterinary exam *2-month-old pups are healthy and thriving*

SEATTLE—Four Asian small-clawed otters born at Woodland Park Zoo received their first veterinary examination today. The zoo's animal health team assessed their overall health, measured and weighed the pups, and administered vaccinations.

See photos of the exam [here](#).

The wellness exam is a part of Woodland Park Zoo's exemplary animal care program. The exam revealed the pups to be three males and one female. They currently weigh between 0.6 to 0.7 kilograms (1.3 to 1.5 pounds).

Dr. Darin Collins, Woodland Park Zoo's director of animal health, gave the pups a clean bill of health. "We're pleased to report all four pups are robust and healthy. They have fully round bellies and are within normal growth range at this age," said Collins. "All pups have healthy appetites, are gaining increased mobility and are socializing with their family members, all good signs they're thriving."

The pups 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 new pups currently live off view in a maternity den with their parents and three older sisters. Raising otter pups is a family affair—the whole family plays a role in raising the pups. Mom nurses the newborns, and dad and older siblings provide supportive care. Occasionally, the adults go outdoors for short periods in the public exhibit but primarily spend their time indoors to focus on caring for the pups.

Pat Owen, a collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo, said, "The pups are exploring their surroundings, pouncing and chewing—the first signs of playing. They're very similar to puppies at this age. They mostly eat and sleep but will start running and chasing each other fairly soon."

The parents and sisters will soon teach the pups how to swim in the safety of a shallow tub. After they master the tub, the pups will be given access to the outdoor exhibit where they will learn how to dive a few inches deep in the large pool, with their family keeping a close watch. "The pups will make their debut to zoo-goers when we're confident they can swim and safely navigate the outdoor exhibit. This could potentially happen by early March," said Owen.

Otter fans interested in receiving updates on the pups, other animal and conservation news, upcoming events and special offers, can sign up for MyZooNews at www.zoo.org/signup.

Asian small-clawed otters are the smallest otters among the 13 otter species. They 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. The population in the wild is unknown, with some estimates at 5,000 and others at far fewer. With rapidly declining habitat, range and population, the species moved from near threatened status in 2004 to the more serious vulnerable category in 2008. Poaching and water pollution remain its highest threats.



Woodland Park Zoo also is home to North American river otters, the focal species of a field study launched in 2016, [River Otters of Western Washington: Sentinels of Ecological Health](#). The zoo's study focuses on collecting scat from otters along the length of the Green-Duwamish River to study their contaminant loads as a representation of the ecological health of the whole system. 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 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.

###