

PRESS RELEASE

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See new video of a Woodland Park Zoo Egyptian tortoise noshing on a strawberry:
<https://youtu.be/5rxZn6PPzyM>

Zoo spotlights Egyptian tortoises on World Turtle Day ***Tortoises, survivors of zoo fire, return to public exhibit***

SEATTLE—Today is **World Turtle Day**, the perfect time to join Woodland Park Zoo in paying tribute to saving turtles in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.



This year, the zoo celebrates Egyptian tortoises and their return to public exhibit. The 12 tortoises were among approximately 182 animals—reptiles, amphibians, and a couple of mammals— that were displaced last December when a fire damaged their building. Turtle fans can once again see the tortoises, along with several ornate girdled and ornate spiny-tailed lizards, in the zoo's Adaptations Building.

Turtles have existed on the planet for more than 220 million years. Today, more than 50 percent of the world's known turtle species are facing extinction, making these reptiles one of the most endangered groups of animals on the planet.

The Egyptian tortoise is among the top 40 tortoises and freshwater turtles at a very high risk of extinction. Native to northeast Africa and the Middle East, the second smallest tortoise species in the world is primarily threatened by habitat loss, introduced predators and the illegal pet trade. Only small populations of the species remain in Libya and, despite its name, the species is now extinct in Egypt.

Under the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for Egyptian tortoises, Woodland Park Zoo has hatched 89 of the tortoises since its first successful hatching in 2004. SSPs are cooperative conservation breeding programs to help ensure healthy, self-sustaining populations in North America.

Locally, Woodland Park Zoo has partnered with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for 26 years to recover [western pond turtles](#), including raising and releasing turtles back to protected wetlands to bring the imperiled species back from the brink of extinction. The zoo also supports the [Turtle Survival Alliance](#).

"It's not too late to save turtles. Everyone can join us in coming to their rescue," said Jennifer Pramuk, PhD, an animal curator and expert in reptiles and amphibians at Woodland Park Zoo. "People of all ages can do some very practical things in our everyday lives to help these special animals. From clean gardening at home and not releasing unwanted pets or animals into wild habitat to visiting the zoo to help support field conservation and limiting plastic use can all have a huge impact on these animals and all wildlife. Let's all do our part to help ensure turtles thrive into the future."

Woodland Park Zoo's summer hours are 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. For information and to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org.

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