

PRESS RELEASE

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Rhinos coming to the zoo in 2018 ***New Assam Rhino Reserve to spotlight wildlife trafficking*** ***and the turtle extinction crisis***

SEATTLE—Wildlife trafficking continues to put species on the brink of extinction—globally and locally. This is why Woodland Park Zoo stands with the community in their commitment to end illegal wildlife trade. In spring 2018, one of the world's most iconic symbols of poaching is coming to the zoo: **rhinos**.



This will mark the first time rhinoceros will be at the 92-acre conservation institution in its 118-year history.

Greater one-horned rhinoceros, Asian brown tortoises, and demoiselle cranes will be showcased in the **Assam Rhino Reserve**, a new, temporary exhibit that will amplify attention on the cruelty of poaching, the illegal trade and the turtle extinction crisis.

Two years ago, 70% of Washington state voters passed the nation's first citizen initiative to stop wildlife trafficking, making Washington the first state in the country to help save 10 endangered animal species groups from extinction, including rhinos. "One million people in our community came together to make it clear—we stand for saving species," said Woodland Park Zoo President and CEO Alejandro Grajal, PhD. "Rhinos are not only impressive animals by virtue of their massive size and charisma, but are iconic symbols of illegal wildlife trafficking. While there is recent good news about the greater one-horned rhino making a recovery, the five surviving species of rhinos still face a precarious future. Bringing rhinos to the zoo allows us to tell a powerful conservation story about hope—the vast network of partners, including zoos, that is focused on saving the greater one-horned rhino and the need to continue working to protect all rhino species."

Although Washington state passed I-1401 with overwhelming voter support, the fight to stop wildlife trafficking in the U.S. is far from over. Right now the federal government is considering amendments to the Endangered Species Act, which may impact the U.S.'s ability to enforce wildlife trafficking laws. When critical needs for action arise, the exhibit will prominently feature ways for zoo guests to make their voices known to lawmakers. "Never has there been a more critical time to energize people—of all ages—into action. This is the time to spark a social movement that harnesses a community of people who will channel their awe and love of these animals into taking meaningful action to stop wildlife trafficking and bring back rhinos and other imperiled species from the brink of extinction without losing hope," said Grajal.

Five species of rhinos survive today: black, white, greater one-horned, Sumatran and Javan. In the last 200 years, the rhino population has plummeted from one million to fewer than 30,000 worldwide.

There are currently no Asian rhino species living at an institution accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums in the Pacific Northwest. "Assam Rhino Reserve may provide the very first opportunity for many kids and adults in our community to have this rare, up-close encounter with a rhino. We're excited to introduce this new species to our region," added Grajal.

Greater one-horned rhinos are mostly solitary animals except for moms with young or sub-adults or adult males gathering at wallows or to graze. "The two young rhinos coming to Woodland Park Zoo may be able to share space at least part of the time. Alternatively, they will have rotational access to the various yards and pool," said Woodland Park Zoo mammal curator Martin Ramirez. "We plan to offer our guests up-close experiences once the rhinos

adjust to their new surroundings and our animal care staff, and are properly trained for this activity.”

Also known as the Indian rhino, the greater one-horned is second in size only to the white rhino, weighing 4,000 to 6,000 pounds. It has a single horn that is about 8 to 25 inches long; a gray-brown hide with skin folds gives it an armor-plated appearance. Once found across the entire northern part of the Indian subcontinent, the population plummeted due to sport hunting, human conflict, poaching for their horns for use in traditional medicine and habitat loss. Because of conservation efforts by government and NGOs working together, World Wildlife Fund said the population has increased from as few as 350 animals just a few decades ago to more than 3,500 by 2015 in the Terai Arc Landscape of India and Nepal, and the grasslands of Assam and north Bengal in northeast India.

A male and female Asian brown tortoise will make their new home in the Assam Rhino Reserve; the pair has been living at the zoo in temporary housing on grounds since they were displaced by a fire last December that caused major structural damage to the Day and Night Exhibit. “More than one half of the world’s turtle species are threatened with extinction,” said Jennifer Pramuk, PhD, an animal curator and expert in reptiles and amphibians at Woodland Park Zoo. “Everyone likes turtles and this new experience will not disappoint. Zoo guests will learn how they can take meaningful action at home to help turtles, particularly species in Asia where they continue to be overharvested for food and captured for the illegal pet trade.” The zoo has more than 40 years of expertise in caring for and successfully breeding Asian turtle species.

The zoo has a long history of caring for cranes, such as the endangered red-crowned and white-naped, and has a successful breeding program. The demoiselle crane returns to the zoo since the species was last cared for here in 2009. The beautiful bird will offer guests more opportunities for an inside look at the zoo’s long and active partnership supporting field conservation for other crane species in eastern Russia.

To donate to Assam Rhino Reserve, visit www.zoo.org/donate. Stay tuned for exciting updates on the zoo’s web at www.zoo.org and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/woodlandparkzoo).

Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo’s long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats through more than 35 field projects 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 ecological health and sustainability. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/woodlandparkzoo), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/woodlandparkzoo) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/woodlandparkzoo).

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