

PRESS RELEASE

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See video of the otter pups at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uG56A-qBmQY> and blog at: <http://bit.ly/riverotterpups>

Zoo's river otter gives birth to four pups First-ever documented river otter birth at the zoo

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo is excited to announce that a North American river otter gave birth to four pups on March 16. The baby otters are the first offspring for mom Valkyrie and dad Ziggy, both 5 years old.

As far back as the zoo's animal records go, it is the first river otter birth documented in the zoo's 119-year history.

The zoo's animal health team was able to do a wellness check on the pups and confirmed two females and two males. The pups weigh between 10 and 12 ounces each.

The gestation period for river otters is 68 to 72 days. Pups are born blind and completely helpless, relying solely on mom for care during their first year. They open their eyes at about a month old.

Over the next several weeks, Valkyrie and her pups will remain in an off-view, climate-controlled den where the new family can nurse and bond in a quiet environment. Animal care staff are closely monitoring the new family via a den cam. "The first year is crucial for otter pups. Because Valkyrie is a first-time mother, we want to be sure she's providing appropriate care for each pup," said Deanna DeBo, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "We're happy to report each pup has a fully belly, a good sign they're nursing. She's being a good mom and providing attentive maternal care."

The father, Ziggy, is currently separated and can be seen in the Northern Trail exhibit with the zoo's other river otter, a 21-year-old male named Duncan.

Valkyrie and Ziggy were introduced to each other in 2015 under a breeding recommendation through the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' Otter Species Survival Plan, a conservation breeding program across accredited zoos and aquariums to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of otters.

North American river otters are semi-aquatic members of the weasel family. Their habitat ranges over most of North America in coastal areas, estuaries, freshwater lakes, streams and rivers; they can be found in water systems all over Washington state. River otters consume a wide variety of prey such as fish, crayfish, amphibians and birds. At the top of the food chain, river otters are an excellent reflection of the health of local ecosystems.

All otter species are considered threatened while five of the 13 species are endangered due to water pollution, overfishing of commercial stock and habitat destruction. To help Woodland Park Zoo contribute information to sustainable breeding, husbandry and public awareness of the river otter, adopt the species through the zoo's [ZooParent](#) program.

In addition to river otters, the award-winning Northern Trail habitat is home to grizzlies, elk, gray wolves, mountain goats and Steller's sea eagles. The Northern Trail will be reimaged



through the lens of the Pacific Northwest's exceptional ecosystem and will open in 2020 as Living Northwest. Funds raised through the Living Northwest Initiative will create a new exhibit experience that will be a revitalization of the Northern Trail and will become a hub for engaging zoo guests and community members around discovery, species recovery, human-wildlife coexistence, and saving the wildlife and ecosystems right here at home for the benefit of every species.

To donate to the Living Northwest Initiative, visit www.zoo.org/donate.

Zoo hours through April 30 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.

Founded in 1899, Woodland Park Zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives. The zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the wild through more than 35 wildlife conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. 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. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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