PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

Otter pups ready to meet the public!
Press preview: Friday, May 17

WHAT: *Oh my heart!* Woodland Park Zoo's four otter pups have advanced to swimming in and exploring their public outdoor habitat. The press is invited Thursday, May 16 for an exclusive peek at the 8-week-old pups before the zoo opens its doors to the public.

The pups currently weigh between 4 and 5 pounds each.

Swimming doesn't come naturally to otter pups—the moms have to teach them how to swim. The pups' mom, Valkyrie, began by giving her pups swimming lessons in a small pool in their private den. Lessons involve the mom grabbing the pups by the scruff of their necks and dunking them in and out of the water. The pups then graduated to the next level: the outdoor pool in the public habitat.

The otter animal care team plans to give mom and her pups daily access to the public habitat, however, a regular viewing schedule may be unpredictable over the next few weeks as the pups acclimate to the outdoor setting.

The North American river otters—two females and two males—were born to mom Valkyrie and dad Ziggy, both 5 years old. They are the first offspring for the parents and, 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.

WHEN: **Press preview: Friday, May 17, 8:45-9:30 a.m.** (The zoo opens at 9:30)

WHERE: Northern Trail at Woodland Park Zoo. Meet PR staff at the West Entrance at Phinney Ave. N. between N. 55th & N. 56th Sts. Park in the Penguin Lot at N. 55th St. & Phinney Ave. N. or Otter Lot off N. 59th St. & Phinney Ave. N.

INFO: 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 reimagined 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.

Spring/summer zoo hours are 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 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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