

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release | August 12, 2019
Media contact: Gigi Allianic, Meghan Sawyer
206.548.2550 | woodlandparkzoo@zoo.org

Editor note: Visit the zoo's blog for more photos and info: <http://bit.ly/carnivorespotter>

Be a *carnivore spotter* and help scientists document sightings of carnivores

SEATTLE—*Was that a coyote I just saw in my backyard? I just saw a black bear during a hike! I hear a bobcat!* Such sightings of carnivores and interactions are on the rise as these wild species move into areas with increasing human densities. Woodland Park Zoo is asking the community to help document sightings by becoming a *carnivore spotter*.



People of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities living in the greater Seattle metropolitan area can contribute to important research by reporting sightings, interactions and vocalizations using the web-based tool, **Carnivore Spotter**: www.zoo.org/carnivorespotter.

At the center of the project are terrestrial mammals including black bears, bobcats, cougars (aka mountain lions), coyotes, red foxes, raccoons and river otters. Although not part of the order [Carnivora](#), opossums are also included in the study.

"We're so excited to have our community contribute to this important research. Conservation can't happen without engaging people. Through the mobile-friendly Carnivore Spotter tool, the citizens of the greater Seattle region can help us expand our knowledge of urban carnivores and promote coexistence," said Robert Long, PhD, director of Woodland Park Zoo's Living Northwest Program and a carnivore research ecologist.

The Carnivore Spotter tool lets users submit information about the species and number of animals seen, the date, the time, the location of sightings (via phone GPS or "select on map") and more.

Users are encouraged to upload not only photos and videos, but also audio clips. "Do you hear a bobcat caterwauling? Is that a coyote howling? Whatever you hear, we want to hear them, too!" added Long.

The intuitive interface is easy to navigate and provides helpful identification resources for each of the species. Users can also explore the sightings that other participants have contributed, filtering by the type of carnivore, the neighborhood, or the dates and time of day to see if patterns can be found in the observations.

According to Katie Remine, another Woodland Park Zoo researcher involved in the project, there are increasing reports of carnivore sightings, especially coyotes, in Seattle. "Through this study we want to raise awareness about the carnivores that share habitat in our urban areas and that they belong in those areas as much as humans do. Many of these animals often get a bad rap and are feared because of misperceptions about the extent of their risk to people and their pets. We want to use real data to explore the benefits and risks related to the presence of carnivores," said Remine.

Carnivore Spotter is part of the Seattle Urban Carnivore Project, a collaborative research project launched in 2018 by Woodland Park Zoo and Seattle University scientists to explore how urban carnivores live and interact with people across the greater Seattle area.

"I am very excited about this collaboration between Seattle University and Woodland Park Zoo because it provides a great opportunity to train our students in authentic scientific research," said Mark Jordan, PhD, associate professor of biology at Seattle University.

“By involving the zoo and community members, the project takes this research out of the ivory tower and puts it directly in the hands of the people who stand to benefit the most from our findings related to coexisting with carnivores.”

The Seattle Urban Carnivore Project is currently collecting image data using dozens of remote cameras deployed across a range of urban to rural locations across greater Seattle. Carnivore Spotter will complement data retrieved from the cameras including how they're interacting with people and informing strategies that can be applied to conflict “hot spots.”

The Seattle Urban Carnivore Project is part of a multi-city research effort, the [Urban Wildlife Information Network](#), coordinated by Lincoln Park Zoo's Urban Wildlife Institute. The Network is a partnership of researchers across the country who use standardized wildlife-monitoring protocols to understand the ecology and behavior of urban wildlife species. By pooling data across multiple North American cities, the network is seeking to understand why animals in different cities behave the way they do, and what patterns hold true around the world.

The Seattle Urban Carnivore Project is among several field conservation projects that Woodland Park Zoo supports through its [Living Northwest Program](#). From western pond turtles and Oregon silverspot butterflies to raptors and river otters, the projects focus on species recovery, habitat protection, wildlife education and human-wildlife conflict mitigation across the Pacific Northwest.

Visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500 for information about Woodland Park Zoo.

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](#).

###