

Meet Fitz – your new favorite feline!

Young male jaguar finds new home at Woodland Park Zoo

Woodland Park Zoo has a new resident hailing all the way from Texas! Fitz, a 2-year-old male jaguar, arrived recently from Houston Zoo.



Fitz arrived in December, and spent his first month in Seattle under veterinary observation at the zoo's Animal Health hospital, which is standard procedure for new animal arrivals. Once the veterinary team ensured Fitz was healthy and ready to move into his new home at Tropical Rain Forest, he was given plenty of private time away from the public eye to settle in and bond with his new animal keepers. The zoo's temporary closure means there are less people around, and Fitz is making the most of that time by exploring his new digs.

"Fitz is very gentle and attentive," said Erin Sullivan, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "From the start, he's been good about coming up to us for training sessions, even as he was still learning the ropes of his new surroundings."

Fitz joins Nayla, a 13-year-old female in the Tropical Rain Forest – but they live separately and there aren't any plans to introduce them to each other. Jaguars are solitary animals, choosing to hunt and live alone except for mating season and moms raising cubs.

"Nayla had a litter of cubs in 2013, and there is no breeding recommendation in place by the Jaguar Species Survival plan," explained animal curator Mark Myers.

The Jaguar Species Survival Plan is one of more than 110 Species Survival Plans (SSPs) that Woodland Park Zoo participates in. The conservation breeding programs help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of jaguars in North American zoos. Overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, the plans are led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior and genetics.

Fun Fitz Facts

- Even though Fitz likes to act tough at times, his former keepers at Houston Zoo say he's actually a softie who startles easily. When Fitz starts stalking or hunting, it really demonstrates the skill and strength that all jaguars possess.
- The fastest way to Fitz's heart is food! His favorites are raw eggs, goat's milk and bones, but he still excitedly scarfs down his normal daily diet.

- Jaguars are the largest feline species in the Western hemisphere, but Fitz is relatively small for a male, weighing in at 125 pounds. He's 2 years old, so he has plenty of time to fill out a bit.
- Fitz's birthday is July 20, so he'll turn 3 this summer!

How You Can Help Save Jaguars

Jaguars are listed as "near threatened" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Habitat loss and fragmentation of wild areas, retaliatory hunting by ranchers, loss of wild prey due to overhunting by humans, and killing for trophies and trafficking of body parts are major threats facing the jaguar. Jaguars have lost more than 20% of their historic range over the past 14 years, still existing in 21 countries from the United States, to Mexico and Latin America.

Since 2003, Woodland Park Zoo has invested more than \$125,000 in jaguar conservation projects dedicated to preserving wild jaguars and their habitat. Currently the zoo supports the Northern Jaguar Project, a binational non-profit dedicated to protecting the northernmost jaguars in Mexico and the southwestern US.

To help Woodland Park Zoo contribute information to sustainable breeding, daily care and public awareness of jaguars, adopt the species through the zoo's [ZooParent](#) program.

Where to Find Fitz

Woodland Park Zoo is temporarily closed following state recommendations to slow the spread of the coronavirus. When the zoo reopens, Fitz will be visible during regular zoo hours at Tropical Rain Forest.

While we are closed to the public during these unprecedented times, our exceptional Animal Care team and other staff have carried on work to provide dedicated care to more than 900 animals. As a non-profit, we are relying on our community now more than ever to help these wonderful animals continue to thrive. Contributions, both big and small, will help creatures of all sizes.

Please visit www.zoo.org/donate to help support Fitz and the all of the animals at Woodland Park Zoo.

###