

PRESS RELEASE

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Magical snowy owl chicks hatch at Woodland Park Zoo

SEATTLE—All you Harry Potter fans will be thrilled with Woodland Park Zoo's newest hatchlings: a pair of snowy owl chicks! The last hatching of the species at the zoo was nine years ago.

The owlets join the host of animals born or hatched at the zoo since the pandemic including: tawny frogmouth, tapir, gorilla, agoutis, penguins, scaly-sided mergansers, pudu and mountain goat.



First-time parents, mom June and dad Dusty, and their brood live in the Northern Trail habitat. "Mom sits on the nest most of the time, a sign of good maternal care. The owlets are beginning to venture outside the nest, so visitors may have the chance to see them on the ground," said Kevin Murphy, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo.

The parents were paired under the Snowy Owl Species Survival Plan, which is a cooperative, conservation breeding program across zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population.

The population of snowy owls in their natural habitat is decreasing and the species is vulnerable. As these raptors migrate south, they come into more contact with human civilization. Snowy owls die from flying into utility lines, wire fences, cars, airplanes (at airports) and other human structures. Some owls are even killed by hunters; changes in the arctic climate also may be a looming threat for this species. Owls in general are in decline because of habitat loss, introduced disease and poisoning from improperly used rodent poison.

The zoo's Northern Trail habitat will be reimaged through the lens of the Pacific Northwest's exceptional ecosystem and will open in stages throughout 2020 and 2021 as the Living Northwest Trail. Funds raised for the project 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 Trail, please visit [zoo.org/donate](https://www.zoo.org/donate).

What about those magical owls

- The fluffy white snowy owl is the heaviest North American owl and one of the largest in overall size. Males are nearly pure white and the female's white plumage is highlighted with dark brown bars and spots.
- The snowy owl prefers open areas for its breeding range, including tundra and grasslands. During winter it seeks treeless habitat to the south including prairies, marshes or shorelines.
- The arctic-dwelling snowy owl is migratory and nomadic.
- When there are changes in availability of prey, particularly a scarcity of lemmings, large numbers of owls will fly to southern Canada and the northern U.S., including Washington state, in search of food. This phenomenon is known as an irruption.

How to help snowy owls

On both their breeding and wintering grounds, the diet of snowy owls can range widely to include rodents, rabbits, hares, squirrels, weasels, wading birds, seabirds, ducks, grebes and geese.

Locally, everyone can take action by avoiding the use of pesticides, chemical herbicides, and rodenticides in their backyards to support a healthy community for local and migratory bird

species. Using these products has an impact on the foods that birds eat—anything ingested by rodents would then be ingested by owls.

Woodland Park Zoo has reopened—visit now! Go to www.zoo.org to purchase timed-entry admission tickets and to learn about changes to help keep zoo visitors, animals and staff safe and healthy. For additional ways to support your zoo, consider a membership or contribute to the Relief Fund at www.zoo.org/relief. The zoo appreciates the community support!

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