

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

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Media contact: Gigi Allianic, Meghan Sawyer
woodlandparkzoopr@zoo.org

Press invited to watch western pond turtles being prepared for release to protected site

Shellebrate 30 years of saving western pond turtles!

WHAT: The press is invited **Wednesday, July 28** to watch more than 35 western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) being prepared for release to the wild. The juvenile turtles will be released in August to a protected site in the state.



In “shellebration” of the 30th anniversary of the [Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project](#), the public—for the first time ever—is invited to watch Woodland Park Zoo animal management staff and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists prepare the turtles, including weighing, measuring and notching shells for identification. This process is part of the recovery project to help prepare the turtles for the next chapter of their lives—living in protected wetlands where they can submerge in vegetation, bask on logs, swim among mud banks, and dine on insects, amphibians and aquatic plants.

Under the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project, the turtles were collected from the wild as eggs and given a head start on life under the care of Woodland Park Zoo; the head start improves their chance of survival in the wild.

Unlike turtles in the wild, the head start turtles are fed at the zoo throughout the winter; by summer they are nearly as big as 3-year-old turtles that grew up in the wild. Once the turtles reach about 2 ounces—a suitable size to escape the mouths of non-native predatory bullfrogs—they are returned to protected sites in their natural range and monitored by biologists.

WHEN: **Press photo op: Wednesday, July 28, 10:00 a.m.–noon**

WHERE: Enter through Woodland Park Zoo’s **SOUTH ENTRANCE at N. 50th St. & Fremont Ave N.** This entrance is located near the Rose Garden. PR staff will escort the press to the Chicken Barn located in the Family Farm.

VISUALS: Staff and biologists preparing turtles, including weighing, measuring and notching shells for identification.

INFO: In 1990, only about 150 western pond turtles remained in two populations in the state of Washington and the species nearly became extinct. In 1991, Woodland Park Zoo and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) joined forces to recover western pond turtles by initiating a head start program. In 1993, the state listed the western pond turtle as endangered.

In 1999, Oregon Zoo joined the recovery team and, over the years, other nonprofits, government agencies and private partners have contributed to the multi-institutional conservation project.

Collaborative recovery efforts over the last three decades have resulted in more than 2,300 turtles being head started and self-sustaining populations re-established in two regions of the state: Puget Sound and the Columbia River Gorge. Surveys indicate that approximately 800 of the released turtles have survived and continue to thrive at six sites.

Become a ZooParent!

Show support and celebrate the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project by becoming a Digital ZooParent and adopting a western pond turtle! All ZooParent adoptions help fund the care of all the animals at Woodland Park Zoo, as well as support the zoo's wildlife conservation programs in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. To become a western pond turtle Digital ZooParent or to check out the other available ZooParent animals and levels, visit www.zoo.org/zooparent.

Help save turtles

- Reduce pollutants to turtle habitat by eliminating chemical pesticides from your gardening practices.
- Improve the quality of wildlife habitat by joining a habitat restoration program in your community.
- Use a reputable source when purchasing or adopting pet turtles and make sure the species is legal to own and the animals have been sourced legally.
- Take care to not release unwanted pets or animals into wild habitat—non-native species can outcompete or prey on native turtles. Call your local animal shelter to find a new home for an unwanted pet.
- Support Woodland Park Zoo and other organizations working to conserve endangered turtles.

Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit zoo.org for the latest information on the zoo's face covering policy. Zoo hours through September 6: 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

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