

CALENDAR ADVISORY

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Watch pond turtles get weighed, measured and checked before their release #IAmLivingNorthwest: Discover, recover and co-exist with local wildlife

WHAT: For the second time ever, Woodland Park Zoo is inviting the community to watch its turtle experts and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists prepare more than 35 western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) for release to the wild.

As part of the [Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project](#), the juvenile turtles will be released in August to protected wetlands in the state. Hear from the biologists and zoo docents about the recovery project and ask all kinds of questions about turtles.

Turtle fans will be able to watch the turtles be weighed, measured and their shells notched 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 biologists collect the eggs from wild nests and bring them to the zoo where they are incubated for two to three months. Under the care of the zoo's animal keepers, the turtles are given a head start on life—they are fed a hearty diet throughout the winter safely away from predators. By the time summer rolls around, they are bigger than wild turtles at that age and big enough to escape the mouths of invasive bullfrogs; they must be at least 2 ounces to be released. Every August, they are returned to local protected wetlands and monitored by WDFW biologists.

WHEN: **Wednesday, July 27, 9:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.**

WHERE: The turtles will be prepared for release at Woodland Park Zoo's Chicken Barn in the Family Farm. With zoo admission, enter at the zoo's South Entrance at N. 50th St. & Fremont Ave. N. or the West Entrance at Phinney Ave. N. between N. 55th & N. 56th Sts.

INFO: Western pond turtles help to balance local wetland ecosystems. 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.



Over the last several years, an emerging shell disease threatens decades of recovery progress for the wild population. Through a grant in 2021 from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) granting program, Woodland Park Zoo and collaborating institutions are researching this new shell disease and how it occurs in managed care environments and turtle rearing practices.

Help save turtles and keep their local habitats clean and healthy

- Avoid pesticides when you garden.
- Dispose of litter properly.
- Call a rescue organization when you need to rehome aquatic pets.
- Volunteer to clean up local habitats.

Become a ZooParent!

Show support for 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.

Woodland Park Zoo advocates for saving species and spaces around the Pacific Northwest through its [Living Northwest Program](#), including western pond turtles, wolves, wolverines and many others. The recently reimaged Living Northwest Trail exhibit and its companion website, "[We Are Living Northwest](#)," provide visitors with numerous conservation actions to take to help the species that share the region's iconic landscapes. Anyone can share how they are living Northwest using #IAmLivingNorthwest on social media—they may even be featured on the website!

Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit www.zoo.org for information. Summer zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. daily.

Accessibility: Information about accessibility and resources, one-to-one aides, sighted guides, mobility equipment rentals, and a sensory map and tools can be found at www.zoo.org/access. For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact zooinfo@zoo.org.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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