

CALENDAR ADVISORY

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Photos for media:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=4199&k=a53bdc5e3f>

Public invited: graduation preparation for class of 2025 turtles for release to the wild



WHAT:

As college, high school, and middle school students prepare for graduation commencement, Woodland Park Zoo is getting its own class of 2025 ready for their graduation. These aren't students, however—they're a class of western pond turtles. The turtles were brought as eggs to the zoo last summer, hatched and given a head start on life under the care of dedicated experts.

On **Tuesday, May 20**, the public is invited to pre-graduation activities to watch Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists weigh and measure each of the juvenile turtles—a final “test” to confirm they are big enough to escape the mouths of invasive bullfrogs. Visitors of all ages will have the opportunity to connect with biologists and zoo docents, learn about the zoo's efforts in recovering the state's endangered western pond turtles and check out turtle-themed activities.

Each turtle that passes will embark on 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.

The turtles are a part of the collaborative [Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project](#). Every summer, WDFW 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 fed a hearty diet throughout the winter safely away from predators. By summer, they reach the sweet spot of weighing at least 2 ounces—too big to fit in the mouths of bullfrogs—and are larger than wild turtles at that age. Every summer, the juveniles are returned to local protected wetlands and are monitored by WDFW biologists.

WHEN:

Tuesday, May 20, 10:00 a.m.–noon

WHERE:

The turtle activities will take place at Woodland Park Zoo in Cathy Herzig Basecamp Northwest. Visitors may enter through the West Entrance at 5500 Phinney Ave. N. or South Entrance at 750 N. 50th St., Seattle WA 98103

INFO:

Western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) 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 joined forces to recover western pond turtles by initiating a head start program. In 1993, the state listed the western pond turtle as endangered.

Help save turtles and keep their local habitats clean and healthy

- Never release unwanted home or classroom pets, animals, or plants into the wild, such as rivers, streams, lakes or stormwater ponds. Most unwanted pets will not survive in the wild and may suffer before death. If it does manage to survive, it may harm the environment.
- 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.

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. ADA ramp access for Historic Carousel. For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact zooinfo@zoo.org.

To learn more about Woodland Park Zoo or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [BlueSky](#) and [TikTok](#).

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