

## PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: See photos on the zoo's blog at <http://bit.ly/dwarfcrocs>

### **Two dwarf crocodiles, survivors of zoo fire, retire to Florida! *St. Augustine Alligator Farm offers displaced animals a new home***

SEATTLE—A pair of West African dwarf crocodiles have retired to sunny Florida at their new home, the [St. Augustine Alligator Farm](#). The crocodiles were displaced after a fire in December at Woodland Park Zoo damaged their building; they were living in a temporary enclosure on zoo grounds.

The crocodiles traveled from Seattle by way of Delta Airlines in temperature-controlled cargo and in specialized crates.

The male and female crocodiles are 49 years old. The male is exceptionally large at more than 6 feet and 175 pounds; in contrast, the female is a couple feet smaller and weighs 40 pounds. Dwarf crocodiles can live up to 75 years.

The two crocodiles lived together at Woodland Park Zoo since 1973 and represented the only crocodile species at the zoo. They produced 14 offspring and their surviving offspring were long ago moved to other zoos as far away as South Africa.

According to Jim Darlington, curator of reptiles at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm, the crocodiles will continue to live together in an outdoor area complete with crocodile comforts. Their temporary enclosure features flowing artesian well water that leads to a comfortable pool for two and plenty of sand for basking in Florida's warm sunshine. "Future plans have this impressive pair moving to their very own larger habitat where visitors can experience our newest crocodiles. At the St. Augustine Alligator Farm, this pair will proudly represent its ancient species in the only complete collection of all 24 species of living crocodylians to be viewable by the public," said Darlington.

At Woodland Park Zoo, the crocodiles lived in the zoo's Day and Night Exhibit building where the fire caused significant structural damage, including holes in the roof and collapsed internal structures. About 182 animals—reptiles, amphibians, and a couple of mammals—were safely rescued from the fire and relocated to other animal buildings on zoo grounds. The animals remain off public view except for a reticulated python which shares an exhibit with an Indian python.

Because there is still much uncertainty about the extent of damage, the zoo has been focused on identifying interim housing for the displaced animals. "The welfare of these animals remains our priority. While the rescued animals continue to do well in temporary housing on zoo grounds, the crocodiles require a large pool for optimal animal welfare," said Jennifer Pramuk, PhD, an animal curator and expert in reptiles and amphibians at Woodland Park Zoo. "Many croc fans will be disappointed they'll no longer be able to see these amazing reptiles here, but we're so grateful to St. Augustine Alligator Farm who kindly offered them a new home. St. Augustine Alligator Farm has high caliber staff and is one of the best zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums in North America that is home to reptiles. We'll miss these crocodiles very much but we know they'll be in excellent hands."

Dwarf crocodiles are a special type of small crocodile species found in the tropical rivers and swamps of sub-Saharan West Africa and West Central Africa. They thrive in swamps and rain forest rivers but have also been found in savanna flood zones where they soak up the extra moisture during the wet season and dig burrows in heavy mud to aestivate during the



subsequent dry season. West African dwarf crocodiles have a knob on their snouts which distinguish them from Congo dwarf crocodiles. Like most crocodile species, dwarf crocodiles are endangered due to overhunting, persecution and habitat deconstruction.

At this time, the Day and Night Exhibit building remains unsafe to access and the Seattle Fire Investigation Unit has not been able to determine the cause of the fire. The zoo continues to be involved in numerous inspections, evaluation efforts, and conversations with fire, city and insurance personnel. The damage is being assessed, including the structure and building's mechanical and electrical system. Re-occupation of the Day Exhibit side of the building will depend on damage assessment to the entire building and strategies to replace all of the utilities.

Since the rescued animals were relocated to other buildings at the zoo, Pramuk reported that some animals have been busy breeding and reproducing. Among the new offspring are: 50 tiger-legged monkey frogs—a first-time breeding at the zoo for this species; four shield-tailed agamas (lizards found in Somalia and Ethiopia); 12 axolotls (Mexican salamanders); and five Burmese vine snakes.

News and updates on the fire can be found at <http://www.zoo.org/fire>. To donate directly to amphibian and reptile care, visit <https://www.zoo.org/donate> and designate "Reptile and Amphibian Care."

Zoo winter hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) for information and how to become a member.

Founded in 1893, the St. Augustine Alligator Farm is one of Florida's oldest zoological attractions. For over a century, it has entertained millions of visitors, lured by the awesome presence of captive reptiles, long regarded in the popular imagination as at once mysterious, dangerous and frightening. A true piece of Florida, the St. Augustine Alligator Farm has inspired popularization of the alligator in the national consciousness and helped to fashion an image for the state.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future. For more information, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org).

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