

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: For more photos, visit the zoo's blog: <https://blog.zoo.org/2019/05/celebrating-long-life-goodbye-to-junior.html>

Zoo mourns the loss of geriatric jaguar

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo has humanely euthanized its geriatric male jaguar, Junior, due to a major decline in health and quality of life. Junior was 20 years old.

The life expectancy of jaguars in zoos is 18 years. The big cats live longer in zoos than in their natural range because of the evolving field of zoo medicine, including improved husbandry and management techniques, excellent animal care, better nutrition, increased medical knowledge, and diagnostic and therapeutic techniques.

As a standard procedure, the zoo's animal health team will perform a necropsy (an animal autopsy) and the cause of death will be pending final pathology tests in several weeks.

Junior had been living off public view since sustaining a suspected stroke in late 2017. Under the zoo's prescribed care plan for the geriatric cat, the animal care team closely monitored his condition and physical abilities, making accommodations for his limitations that enabled him to negotiate ramps and other den features, and to enable him to use all available spaces, including regular access to an outdoor area.

"We are very sad to say goodbye to this special animal. He was a great cat who brought our Jaguar Cove habitat alive with his stealth and masculinity. Zoo visitors were in awe of seeing this beautiful jaguar up close and learning about these big cats in their natural range," said Erin Sullivan, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "Our animal keepers did an amazing job of maintaining a good quality of life for Junior, despite his physical limitations over the last year and a half. He lived a long, enriched life and we'll really miss him."

See video of Junior swimming in Woodland Park Zoo's Jaguar Cove pool:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQRemkGhYZU>

Junior arrived at Woodland Park Zoo in 2005 from Santa Cruz Zoo in Bolivia under the Jaguar Species Survival Plan, a cooperative, conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of jaguars.

Jaguars are solitary animals and hunt and live alone except during mating season. Nayla, a 13-year-old female, is the sole remaining jaguar at Woodland Park Zoo. In 2013, she and Junior had three cubs, which currently live at other zoos. "We could potentially acquire a new male jaguar this summer based on a recommendation of the Jaguar Species Survival Plan," said Sullivan.

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 111 Species Survival Plans, overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, these plans also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects.

The jaguar is the third largest cat in the felid family after tigers and lions, and the largest feline in the Western Hemisphere. The cat is listed as "near threatened" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Habitat loss and fragmentation of wild areas, retaliatory hunting by ranchers, loss of wild prey due to overhunting by humans, and killing for trophies and trafficking of body parts are major threats



facing the jaguar. Jaguars have lost more than 20% of their historic range over the past 14 years, still existing in 21 countries from the United States, to Mexico and Latin America.

Since 2003, Woodland Park Zoo has invested more than \$125,000 in 20 different jaguar conservation projects dedicated to preserving wild jaguars and their habitat. Supported projects covered 13 of the 21 remaining countries with jaguar populations.

To help Woodland Park Zoo contribute information to sustainable breeding, daily care and public awareness of jaguars, adopt the species through the zoo's [ZooParent](#) program.

Spring/summer hours through September 2: 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. daily. September 3 through September 30: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Founded in 1899, Woodland Park Zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives. The zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the wild through more than 35 wildlife conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo's long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Visit www.zoo.org and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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