

PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: See more on the zoo's blog: bit.ly/youretheswanforme. B-roll is available here: <https://bit.ly/2SveWbX>

Injured wild trumpeter swan finds new home and love at the zoo ***Multiple organizations team up to rescue and rehabilitate swan***

SEATTLE—As love is celebrated on Valentine's Day, a new pair of trumpeter swans have found love and a new home at Woodland Park Zoo. The zoo is pleased to introduce swans Sarah and Cygmond.

The female swan, Sarah, was injured last summer on Whidbey Island after flying into power lines. Northwest Swan Conservation Association facilitated the rescue with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Puget Sound Energy's Avian Protection Program.

Cygmond, an 8-year-old male trumpeter swan, relocated from Kansas City Zoo to be a companion for Sarah.

The swans made their official debut on Valentine's Day following a period of socialization and acclimating to their new home and caretakers. "It's great to see Sarah and Cygmond are compatible and doing well. Pending genetic testing, our hope is they'll produce offspring that can potentially be released to suitable habitat in the Midwest where ongoing recovery programs are in place," said Mark Myers, bird curator at Woodland Park Zoo.

Zoo-goers can enjoy swan watching at the Temperate Forest habitat where Sarah and Cygmond live.

Sarah, estimated to be 6 to 7 years old, was rescued and brought to Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. A diagnostic exam performed by its veterinary team revealed a malaligned fracture in her wing, which appeared to be an old injury and prevented her from gaining full altitude and distance to fly freely. She was dehydrated and underweight, and testing found low levels of lead in her system.

The rehabilitation center's prescribed treatment plan for the injured swan included chelation therapy for lead poisoning, gavage feeds, anti-parasitics and overall diagnostics throughout her stay.

"Although Sarah was feisty when we received her, she adjusted quite well to being in human care and to her new surroundings. She progressed to eating a healthy diet, swimming, preening and expressing other natural swan behaviors," said Alysha Evans, Manager, LVT, at Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. "Although she has recovered, her injuries minimized her chances of surviving in the wild, so we're very pleased that Woodland Park Zoo could provide a home for the rehabilitated swan."

The collaborative rescue was made possible by Puget Sound Energy's [Avian Protection Program](#), which works with field partners WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife rehabilitators, and other organizations to help address bird-related utility equipment incidents regionwide, including electrocutions, collisions and problem nests.

"Puget Sound Energy is committed to protecting birds and their habitats in our service area, so when we found this injured swan we knew we had to do everything we could to help her," said Mel Walters, PSE's Consulting Resource Scientist. "We're proud that our Avian



Protection Program has been in place for decades helping reduce the number of injurious contact between birds and our electric equipment.”

Lead poisoning, caused by ingesting lead shot and sinkers, is a concern for swans and other birds in the state. According to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, 14% of birds that collide with power lines have testable levels of lead, which causes weakness and inability to fly fully. “Lead exposure leads to weakened flying, which hampers their ability to avoid power line collisions,” said Daniel Zimmerman, a biologist with WDFW. “Lead can sequester in the birds’ bones which can later leach out during their migration preventing them from making it to the breeding grounds in Alaska and can inhibit breeding success.”

Trumpeter swans are the largest native waterfowl in North America and heaviest flying birds, weighing in at more than 25 pounds and reaching 6 feet in length. Trumpeter swans form pair bonds at 3 to 4 years old and stay together throughout the year, moving together in migratory populations. They can be found living in shallow ponds, lakes, rivers, and marshes and feeding in harvested agricultural fields during migration and winter.

Trumpeter swans are annual visitors to Washington state and British Columbia in the winter months. Major threats to the birds are lead poisoning caused by ingesting lead shot and mortality from collisions with power lines. Visit the [Northwest Swan Conservation Association](#) for information on the Pacific Coast population of trumpeter swans.

In Washington state, waterfowl hunters must use non-toxic ammunition only. Lead shot is not legal for waterfowl hunting. People can call 360.466.4345, ext. 266 to report dead, sick, or injured swans in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish and other western Washington counties.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.

Winter zoo hours through April 30: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily. Save 30% off summer admission rates now through March 31: www.zoo.org/visit.

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