

PRESS RELEASE

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Media download link for photos:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=3674&k=dbd5adf20c>

Blog: <https://bit.ly/farewellGoodwyn>

Zoo mourns the loss of its only male elk *Geriatric elk lived a long, enriched life*



SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo has said goodbye to its only male elk, Goodwyn (good-win). The 20-year-old elk was euthanized due to a significant decline in health and quality of life. The life expectancy for elk in human care is 18 to 22 years; in their natural range, 16 years.

According to Dr. Tim Storms, director of animal health at Woodland Park Zoo, the geriatric elk had been declining in mobility and losing weight for several months, which is not uncommon for aging animals. “We did a complete exam of Goodwyn in March, including radiographs of his limbs, and found arthritic changes in multiple joints, especially his knees. We initiated a formal process to evaluate his quality of life and track indicators of his welfare daily. This is a standard process that we activate for any individual once there is a concern for its well-being,” said Storms. “Goodwyn’s caretakers had him under close observation and we prescribed analgesics and joint medication to address his arthritis and keep him comfortable as long as possible.”

Goodwyn was born and lived at Pueblo Zoo in Colorado until he arrived at Woodland Park Zoo in 2011. While he never had any offspring, he leaves behind herdmates Buttons, Lily and Willow, all females. The zoo hopes to bring in a young male elk in the near future.

“I’ll always remember Goodwyn’s handsome face waiting for me at the fence every day to feed him his favorite ‘elk cookies.’ Goodwyn was sweet, good-natured and a little goofy sometimes. His presence will be greatly missed by those of us who had the privilege of taking care of him and our visitors will miss seeing him in the Living Northwest Trail elk meadow,” said Karen McRea, an animal keeper at Woodland Park Zoo.

The expansive elk exhibit is designed to offer visitors an opportunity to view wolves in the foreground to help teach visitors about the critical predator-prey relationship between elk and wolves in their natural habitat.

Two subspecies of elk range in Washington state: Roosevelt elk, which are primarily on the west side of the Cascades, and Rocky Mountain elk, which are primarily on the east side. Goodwyn was Rocky Mountain, as is Buttons, and Lily and Willow are Roosevelt.

As a standard procedure, the zoo’s animal health team will perform a postmortem exam to further diagnose factors that may have contributed to Goodwyn’s decline.

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 reimagined Living Northwest Trail exhibit is home to the zoo’s elk and other native wildlife. The 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!

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