

Precious turtles get prepared for release to the wild
Watch pond turtles be weighed, measured and checked

WHAT: Nearly 40 western pond turtles will be prepared for release in the wild. Woodland Park Zoo is inviting the community to watch its turtle experts and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists weigh, measure, and assess data on these endangered western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) to ensure they meet healthy parameters to survive on their own in a protected site.



As part of the [Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project](#), the juvenile turtles will be released in August to protected wetlands in the region. Hear from the biologists and zoo docents about the recovery project and ask all kinds of questions about turtles.

This will be the first time that visitors can watch the work-up on the western pond turtles in the zoo's new Cathy Herzig Basecamp Northwest and Turtle Head Start Center, which opened last fall.

Visitors of all ages will be able to watch the biologists weigh, measure and notch the turtles' shells for identification. This process is part of the recovery project to help prepare the turtles for 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.

In addition to watching the turtles being processed, visitors can enjoy an activity station: a turtle sensory bin to search for turtle eggs, turtles, and elements of their habitat in this hands-on digging activity; and a felt board to guide a western pond turtle through its life cycle.

WHEN: **Wednesday, July 26, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.**

WHERE: The turtles will be prepared for release at Woodland Park Zoo's new Cathy Herzig Basecamp Northwest and Turtle Head Start Center. Enter at the South Entrance at N. 50th St. & Fremont Ave. N. or the West Entrance at Phinney Ave. N. between N. 55th & N. 56th Sts.

INFO: Under the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project, the 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 hatchling turtles are given a head start on life—they are fed a hearty diet throughout the winter safely away from predators. By the time summer rolls around, they are bigger than wild turtles at that age and big enough to escape the mouths of invasive bullfrogs; they must be at least 2 ounces to be released. Every August, they are returned to local protected wetlands and monitored by WDFW biologists.

Western pond turtles 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 (WDFW) 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.

Summer 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. For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact zooinfo@zoo.org.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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