

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

For immediate release | July 24, 2023
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Watch turtles being prepared for release to the wild Pond turtles will be weighed, measured and checked

WHAT: Turtle power! The press is invited **Wednesday, July 26**, as Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists join Woodland Park Zoo in preparing more than 35 western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*) for release to the wild. As part of the [Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project](#), the juvenile turtles will be released in August to protected wetlands in the state.

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.

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 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.

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

WHERE: Enter at Woodland Park Zoo's West Entrance at Phinney Ave. N. between N. 55th & N. 56th Sts. PR staff will escort press to Cathy Herzig Basecamp Northwest and Turtle Head Start Center.

VISUALS: Biologists preparing turtles, including weighing, measuring and notching shells for identification. An activity station for visitors: 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.

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.

Become a ZooParent!

Show support for the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project by becoming a Digital ZooParent and adopting a western pond turtle! All ZooParent adoptions help fund the care of all the animals at Woodland Park Zoo, as well as support the zoo's wildlife conservation programs in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. To become a western pond turtle Digital ZooParent or to check out the other available ZooParent animals and levels, visit www.zoo.org/zooparent.

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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