

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Media download link for photos:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=4015&k=b455d57067>

Photos: newborn pups. Individual otter: mom Valkyrie. Two adults: mom Valkyrie, dad Ziggy

## **Pups should make for an ottersome summer! *Mama gives birth to pair of otter pups***



SEATTLE—It's otter happiness at Woodland Park Zoo for the birth of two North American river otters! The pups were born March 29 and are the second litter for mom Valkyrie and dad Ziggy, both 9 years old. The last birth of the species at the zoo was in 2019.

During a neonatal check-up, the zoo's animal health team have confirmed the pups to be a female and a male. The teeny pups currently weigh 10 ounces each—about the weight of five fun-size Snickers bars!

The gestation period for river otters is 68 to 72 days. Pups are born blind and are completely helpless, relying solely on mom for care during the first year. They open their eyes at about a month old. Stay tuned for fun updates at [www.zoo.org/zoobabies](http://www.zoo.org/zoobabies).

Valkyrie and the newborn otters are currently living in an off-view, climate-controlled den so that the new family can nurse and bond in a quiet environment for several weeks. Animal care staff are closely monitoring the new family via a den cam. Dad Ziggy is currently separated from the family and can be seen in the Living Northwest Trail habitat.

Valkyrie gave birth for the first time in 2019 and successfully raised all four pups to their first year. "The first year is crucial for otter pups. Valkyrie was an attentive first-time mom to her pups and she's demonstrating those maternal skills again for this new litter," said Erin Sullivan, an animal curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "Post-natal care by mama is moving along swimmingly. Each pup appears to have a full belly, an assuring sign they're nursing and receiving attentive maternal care, and they're wiggly and active."

While otters look like they were born to swim, it is necessary for the moms to give pups swimming lessons. "Before the pups can be introduced to the outdoor habitat, they must fully master swimming in the pool safely and navigating the terrain," said Sullivan. "Mom Valkyrie will teach them how to swim in a kiddie pool in the den. The pups are going to make a huge splash throughout the summer! People of all ages are going to have a great time watching them water play, frolicking, diving and gliding," said Sullivan.

The birth of the otters is under a breeding recommendation for Valkyrie and Ziggy through the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' Otter [Species Survival Plan](#), a breeding program across accredited zoos and aquariums to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of river otters.

### **Otter Facts**

- North American river otters are semi-aquatic and members of the weasel family.
- These energetic and incredibly social animals learn by playing. This helps them establish social bonds and practice their hunting techniques. Otters need to eat a lot so they can play a lot!
- Their habitat ranges over most of North America in coastal areas, estuaries, freshwater lakes, streams and rivers; they can be found in water systems all over Washington state.
- River otters consume a wide variety of prey such as fish, crayfish, amphibians and birds. At the top of the food chain, river otters are an excellent reflection of the health of local ecosystems.
- While five of the 13 existing otter species are endangered due to water pollution, overfishing of commercial stock and habitat destruction, the North American river otter population is not endangered.

### **How to Help Otters**

- Become a Carnivore Spotter and report and share sightings, interactions, and vocalizations of carnivores—including river otters, black bears, bobcats, cougars and coyotes—throughout the greater Seattle area:  
[www.zoo.org/carnivorespotter](http://www.zoo.org/carnivorespotter).
- Become a [ZooParent](#) and help provide exceptional care for the new river otter family and all of Woodland Park Zoo's amazing animals and support wildlife conservation efforts in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

In addition to river otters, Living Northwest Trail is home to brown bears, lynx, elk, mountain goats, snowy owls and Steller's sea eagles. Be inspired to discover, recover and coexist with local wildlife: [#IAmLivingNorthwest](#).

Current zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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](http://www.zoo.org/access). For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact [zooinfo@zoo.org](mailto:zooinfo@zoo.org).

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