



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Arizona Game and Fish Department

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What

Join biologists as they work to protect native turtles at the Phoenix Zoo and Papago Park

Did you know the turtles in the “moat” at the entrance of the Phoenix Zoo undergo routine management to help protect native turtles and other aquatic species in the area? Every year, it is estimated that hundreds of unwanted pet turtles are released into this Papago Park pond and other community lakes by their owners.

[View video of the 2017 trapping](#)

The first non-native species turtle trapping was held at the Phoenix Zoo in 1999. Since then, more than 970 individual turtles, representing 19 species, have been captured and nearly 580 have been removed. All female non-native turtles will be removed from the pond and placed with the Turtle and Tortoise Preservation Group to reduce population growth and keep from overcrowding.

This will help prevent non-native species from traveling to nearby waters where they could out-compete, spread disease to or prey on native turtles and other native aquatic wildlife. Non-native male and all other native turtle species found at the pond will be returned to the water to continue to provide zoo visitors the unique opportunity to view them from the bridge upon arrival. Turtles will be trapped and measured, weighed, their sex determined, species verified and marked for identification.

The event is held in conjunction with World Turtle Day on May 23, and is the focus of an educator’s workshop, which provides professional development through Game and Fish Department’s Focus Wild education program. World Turtle Day aims to promote turtle conservation efforts.

When

Friday, May 18 to Sunday, May 20

Traps will be set between 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., and checked for turtles at noon and 4 p.m. on Friday. Traps will be rechecked at 8 a.m., noon and 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Trap checking takes approximately two hours

Where

Papago Park pond at the Phoenix Zoo entrance

455 N. Galvin Parkway

Phoenix, AZ 85008

Contact

AZGFD PIO Nathan Gonzalez at (480) 290-2276

Phoenix Zoo Director of Communications Linda Hardwick at (602) 663-3254

Who

- Cristina Jones, Arizona Game and Fish Department turtles project coordinator
- Bradley Poynter, Phoenix Zoo conservation and science manager
- Andy Reischmann, Phoenix Herpetological Society

Additional Information

In 2017, 22 turtles were caught during the trapping; 20 of those were red-eared sliders (pond sliders), a common household pet. Many of the smaller turtles had evidence of previous captivity, indicating they were most-likely intentionally released by their owners.

Turtles will be live-trapped using fish as bait. This is a good opportunity for families to watch wildlife management in action, and learn about responsible turtle and small-pet ownership.

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