



## JUST IN TIME FOR MOTHER'S DAY: POINT DEFIANCE ZOOKEEPERS RESCUE THREE STRANDED DUCKLINGS FROM A STORM DRAIN

*At Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, keepers' care for creatures great and small is always just ducky – whether the animals are part of the zoo, or just passing by*

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TACOMA, Wash. - "Peep. Peep. Peep." When Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Senior Staff Biologist Marc Duncan heard the small noises coming from the depths of a storm drain at about 4:15 p.m. today, he instantly knew there were ducklings in trouble.



Then he spotted a mama mallard surrounded by eight tiny baby ducks in the nearby grass – and looking around as if she'd lost something.

These were not zoo animals, this ducky family was just passing through, apparently having come on to the zoo grounds from Point Defiance Park.

Duncan realized there must be more of the flock stranded in the storm drain, which sits at the side of a road just inside the zoo's perimeter. He quickly called in reinforcements.

**Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Staff Biologist Suzanne Akerman gingerly transfers a rescued duckling to Senior Staff Biologist Marc Duncan after she rescued the baby duck from a storm drain. It was one of three tiny ducklings rescued by zookeepers on Thursday afternoon.**

Three other zookeepers and one of the zoo's maintenance and operations staff members rushed to the rescue. Another stood by on the phone.

The slatted metal storm drain cover was heavy, and didn't want to easily budge.



Maintenance technician Paul Sackmann grabbed a long metal stake from the zoo's operations shop and hurried to the site of the stranded ducklings.

"The cover hadn't been opened in a while," Sackmann said. "We whammed it and yanked on it and it finally moved."

While they worked on the cover, Senior Staff Biologist Maureen O'Keefe and other zoo staff members kept an eye on mama and her brood, trying to corral them a bit so they didn't get too far away.

Deftly handling a long net, Staff Biologist Suzanne Akerman peered into the drain and saw the tip of a beak emerge from a pipe. She and Duncan tried to get the mother duck to call for her baby.

Soon, one duckling emerged from the pipe, and Akerman gingerly scooped it up in the net, carefully removed it and passed it to Duncan, who set it on the ground and pointed it towards mom. The tiny duckling, estimated at no more than a week old, waddled off to join its siblings. Two more ducklings soon emerged from the pipe and the drain in the same way.

In all, the zookeepers rescued three stranded ducklings. And just in time for Mother's Day, mama mallard and her now group of 11 babies happily wandered off into the bushes.

"It was a team effort," Akerman said. "With some patience, we saved all three ducklings."

After the rescue, they covered the drain so newborns won't be able to fall through again.

"They were fluffy and seemed to be happy to be reunited with mom and the rest of their family," Akerman said. "There's not much cuter than a baby duckling. We were very happy we could help."

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*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources. A member of the [Metro Parks Tacoma](#) family, the zoo creates a legacy of sustainability for future generations through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities; it also embodies Metro Parks' mission of creating healthy opportunities to play, learn and grow. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). [The Zoo Society](#), a 501(c)(3) organization, is an instrumental partner in the conservation, animal-welfare and education initiatives.*

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