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Tacoma, Wash. – Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater opens a new super-hero themed live animal show at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium May 12.

"Captain Adventure vs. Dr. Do-Nothing: The Quest to Get Outside!" is a fast-paced production featuring a superheroine, a superdog, a dastardly villain, 13-16 animals and five zoo staff to entertain and inform children and adults alike

It's got catchy music that will make visitors want to sing along, colorful costumes, and a profound message about the importance of getting out into nature.

There's nothing like it in the Puget Sound area. And the audience plays a role.

The production runs all summer, but Opening Day with its superhero theme is particularly appropriate for Mother's Day weekend. Moms, who are superwomen in their own right, get into the zoo for half-off general admission on May 12.

The show features an array of animals showing off their amazing talents on an outdoor stage decorated with a forest theme.

Low-flying barn and eagle owls skim right over visitors' heads; there's a slow-moving two-toed sloth; a rope-climbing parrot; a coati scampering up a tree; and an aardvark digging up bugs. A majestic bald eagle, a tortoise, an iguana, a Canada lynx and other animals also are in the cast.

And, of course, Herald the Wonder Dog amazes the audience with his ability to fetch a pair of binoculars, sniff out a water bottle in a hedge and fly across the stage.

Some two dozen animals are available for the production but not all appear in each show, senior staff biologist Maureen O'Keefe said.

The shows change from morning to afternoon to give the animals a rest and visitors some variety, O'Keefe added.

The Zoo believes that the show, with its "Get Outdoors" message, is a perfect antidote to the nature-deficit disorder that affects America's young people, said John Garner, Conservation & Education Manager at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

The wonders of the outdoors trump television and video games, Garner added.

"Captain Adventure shares the wonderful experiences that families can have discovering nature and the role they can play in helping to share their findings with scientists," Garner said. "Amateur naturalists are becoming increasingly important in helping biologists understand more about our plant and animal communities."

The show is free with zoo admission, a perfect addition to a family "staycation." It's easy to get to, a pleasure to watch and gives kids and adults ideas for getting outdoors and enjoying the world around them.

**Show times May 12 to June 17 are:** Noon weekdays and noon and 3:30 p.m. on weekends **Show times June 18 through Labor Day are:** Noon and 3:30 p.m. daily

Zoo staff members spend months writing and perfecting the script, using positive-reinforcement training with the feathered, furred and reptilian stars and arranging for specially written songs, music and other sound effects. Costumes are bright and inventive, and Dr. Do-Nothing carries a futuresque, smoking "mind ray" that looks like it came straight out of "Buck Rogers."

The fact the show takes place literally in the backyards of Puget Sound area residents fits squarely with the theme and the message the show imparts.

"The goal of Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater is to inspire audiences to get outdoors and connect with nature," O'Keefe said. "This year's show encourages people to get involved through Citizen Science projects such as backyard bird counts, beach walks and frog watches.

"People don't have to be an expert to get involved, "she said. "They just have to care about the environment."

That message fits in with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's dual missions of providing an opportunity for visitors see its fine collection of animals and stressing conservation and preservation of the environment.

By show's end, the forces of living a life in concert with nature defeat the evil Dr. Do-Nothing after the powerful pieces of an antidote to his mind ray are located and used to "explode" it.

The show concludes with the audience joining in a pledge to "think outside, explore the outdoors and have amazing adventures."

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).