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RARE MALAYAN TAPIR JAMBI DIES AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Geriatric, distinctive looking animal was one of the first at the zoo's Asian Forest Sanctuary

TACOMA, WASH. – A geriatric Malayan tapir suffering from heart and respiratory problems was euthanized at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium today.

Jambi, one of the first animals to populate the zoo's Asian Forest Sanctuary when it opened in July of 2004, suffered from congestive heart failure and attendant respiratory problems, zoo head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf said.



At 27, he was near the end of the lifespan range for Malayan tapirs, an endangered species.

“He was an aging animal who was significantly declining in health,” zoo General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck said. “Our veterinary staff worked for months to provide him with medication that would relieve his symptoms and make him more comfortable.”

At the same time, zoological staff changed his diet in an ongoing effort to coax him to eat and take his medications.

But Jambi's health continued to decline; he was eating very little and spending much of his day lying down.

“We are extremely saddened by this loss,” Goodrowe Beck said. “Jambi was an integral part of the group of Southeast Asian species that came to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium eight years ago to populate the Asian Forest Sanctuary exhibit.”

Wolf and the veterinary staff performed a necropsy today in an effort to determine and understand Jambi's disease. A CT scan will be performed on his skull for evaluative purposes.

Jambi came to Tacoma from the National Zoo in Washington, D.C.

Malayan tapirs are herbivores native to the dense lowland rainforests of Southern Burma, the Malay Peninsula, Thailand and Sumatra.

Their appearance is striking: The front of their bodies is black, then a white or gray saddle covers their backs. Males weigh up to 850 pounds. Jambi's unusual, barrel-shaped physique and rubbery nose made him a favorite at the zoo, with children and adults often puzzling over the lumbering animal and trying to guess his lineage.

The International Species Information System, a global network of animal management professionals, lists about 60 tapirs in North America and about 190 worldwide. Some 3,000 are estimated to live in the wild.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium would like to continue to work with this species, but there are no tapirs currently available, Goodrowe Beck said. Jambi was a vital part of the zoo's education efforts and conservation messages regarding the link between human destruction of critical habitat and the dwindling numbers of many species in Southeast Asia.

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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).