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## **GERIATRIC CLOUDED LEOPARD HUMANELY EUTHANIZED AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO**

*Raja was zoo's first clouded leopard and fathered zoo's first clouded leopard cubs*

TACOMA, Wash. – Veterinarians at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium humanely euthanized Raja, a 15-year-old clouded leopard, Thursday after an exam showed signs of muscle wasting and continued chronic medical issues.

Raja was the Tacoma zoo's first clouded leopard and sired its first clouded leopard cubs in 2003.



Zoo veterinarians had been treating Raja for chronic bowel, kidney and pancreatic disease for many years. Four days ago, the geriatric cat stopped eating and taking his medication and was very thin, said zoo head veterinarian Karen Wolf.

"It became a quality of life decision," said Wolf.

Raja was six weeks old when he arrived at Point Defiance Zoo in 1998. He was one of the zoo's first animal ambassadors, visiting schools and participating in up-close encounters with zoo visitors.

Staff credit him with sparking the zoo's commitment to clouded leopard conservation in zoos and in the wild.

"Raja was a very special animal and was responsible for all that we do now to conserve these highly endangered cats," said Maureen O'Keefe, a zoo senior staff biologist who cared for Raja for 12 years. "He inspired our staff and our visitors to care about clouded leopards and to take action to ensure their long-term survival in the wild."

Point Defiance Zoo staff members are partners in the global effort to study clouded leopards and educate the public about the habitat destruction that threatens their existence.

Tacoma zookeepers founded the nonprofit Clouded Leopard Project 13 years ago ([www.cloudedleopard.org](http://www.cloudedleopard.org)), and the group works closely with the zoo and The Zoo Society in fundraising efforts for conservation projects. Zoo staff members also conduct and support clouded leopard conservation work in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Point Defiance Zoo is home to five adult clouded leopards and one clouded leopard cub, Tien, who was born at the zoo in May.

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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).*