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### **POPULAR BURMESE PYTHON EUTHANIZED DUE TO A FRACTURED BACK**

*Odie, whose age was estimated at 27, suffered from significant spinal disease*

TACOMA, Wash. - Zoo veterinarians euthanized Odie, an elderly Burmese python, Tuesday after he fractured his spine. A necropsy showed severe spinal disease, Dr. Karen Wolf said.

Veterinarians don't know exactly how the break occurred in the 102-pound, 12-foot, 2-inch snake, Wolf said. He was healthy and moved well when zoo staff brought him out for some sun two weeks ago.



"His spine was so severely diseased, the fracture might have occurred during routine movement in his Discovery Hut exhibit," Wolf said.

"It's distressing to lose any animal at the zoo," she added. "Odie was not moving normally, not eating and in apparent pain," she said. "X-rays very clearly showed the fracture."

The necropsy performed Tuesday afternoon confirmed significant abnormalities in Odie's bone structure, including the large spinal break.

Wolf sent tissue and blood samples out for testing to learn more information about the cause of the snake's disease. She believes the results will aid in research and education.

Odie, whose age was estimated at 27, has long been a favorite at Point Defiance Zoo &

Aquarium. Children, in particular, were impressed with his size and movement. His presence helped educate zoo visitors about the lives of reptiles. Staff biologists brought him out of his exhibit periodically to enjoy the sunshine. When they did so, it took four people to safely handle the heavy snake's long body.

He made two appearances on the grass this summer, and was a huge hit with zoo visitors, who lined up to see him.

"Burmese pythons are native to much of Southeast Asia and Indonesia, but have established breeding populations in the Florida Everglades where they are a significant threat to the Everglades ecosystem," zoo Deputy Director John Houck said.

Their lifespan is 25 to 30 years.

Odie, the zoo's only Burmese python, was donated by a private individual in 1990. There are no immediate plans to acquire another, Houck said.

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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).*