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BELOVED CANADA LYNX HUMANELY EUTHANIZED AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

9-year-old Yukon, one of the stars at Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater, suffered from end-stage kidney disease

Tacoma, Wash. – Yukon, a 9-year-old Canada lynx who starred in the Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater show at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, was humanely euthanized today due to terminal kidney disease.



Senior staff biologist Maureen O'Keefe and Yukon at Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater.

In recent months, veterinarians fitted a port under his skin so he could be given fluids daily to help his failing kidneys function better. He also received many other medications to manage his disease.

Staff biologists frequently took Yukon on walks around the zoo as part of his mission to educate the public about Canada lynxes.

Last fall, zookeepers took his fluids along with him on those walks. Despite those efforts, his health continued to deteriorate and greatly compromised his quality of life, head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf said.

"The progression of chronic renal disease can be slowed but it is an irreversible process regardless of treatment," Wolf said.

Zoo general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck praised the veterinary staff and Yukon's keepers for their years-long efforts to keep Yukon in the best health possible.

"They ensured he had a long, full life," Goodrowe Beck said.

Yukon arrived at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in June of 2004. He was acquired to be part of the zoo's education programs and soon became a favorite of visitors.

He frequently starred in daily Close Encounters presentations and in the summer season Wild Wonder Outdoors Theater shows.

"He was an ambassador for his species and helped teach thousands of zoo visitors, particularly children, about these animals," Goodrowe Beck said.

Canada lynxes are medium-sized cats native to the forests of Canada, Alaska, Washington and other northern states. They can live up to 15 years.

Veterinarians diagnosed kidney disease in Yukon when he was very young, Wolf said. They will perform a necropsy at the zoo's animal health care facility to better assess the degree of damage to his kidneys and determine whether other disease was present.

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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).