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## **POLAR BEAR GLACIER DIES OF CANCER AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM**

*Veterinarians treated the 19-year-old bear with groundbreaking chemotherapy for months*

**TACOMA, Wash.** – Glacier, a 19-year-old polar bear who underwent groundbreaking chemotherapy for liver cancer, died Wednesday evening at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

A necropsy performed Thursday showed Glacier died of complications from a large liver tumor, head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf said. He also had extensive heart disease and fluid surrounding his lungs.



“Our entire zoo family is saddened by the loss of Glacier,” General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck said. “He was a magnificent ambassador for his species, helping hundreds of thousands of zoo visitors to connect with polar bears and learn more about the perils they face in the wild.”

Goodrowe Beck praised the zoo’s veterinary team and the zookeepers who cared for Glacier.

“The job our staff has done is nothing short of remarkable,” Goodrowe Beck said. “Their exhaustive research into possible treatments, their willingness to use new therapies on a polar bear and the dedication with which they administered those treatments is inspiring.”

Veterinarians first detected a mass in Glacier’s abdomen last February during a routine physical exam, Wolf said. A heart murmur was discovered at the same time. Follow-up testing confirmed the presence of a large liver tumor and compromised heart function.

The zoo’s veterinary team worked for nearly all of 2015 with experts across multiple disciplines, including cardiology, radiology, surgery and oncology, to formulate and implement a treatment plan for Glacier.

With the help of Dr. Lisa Parshley of Olympia Veterinary Cancer Center, the zoo's veterinary staff and Glacier's keepers began administering a treatment regimen of intravenous and oral chemotherapy in April.

"Glacier was extremely sick from two very bad diseases when we first diagnosed him, Wolf said. "He was not moving well, he was sleeping more, he wasn't interacting with zookeepers and he was uncomfortable."

The chemotherapy and heart medications he was receiving dramatically reduced Glacier's symptoms, relieved his pain and significantly improved his quality of life over the last eight months, Wolf said. She believes the record of his treatment will add to the body of scientific knowledge on caring for polar bears - and possibly other species of bears as well.

As he began to feel better, Glacier regained his appetite, participated regularly in his training, wandered near the stream, climbed on the hills and swam in the saltwater exhibit pool in the Arctic Tundra area of the zoo.

He was a 15-month-old orphaned cub when he arrived at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium from Canada in 1997.

Polar bears are not only majestic animals, they are an iconic symbol of the battle against climate change as melting Arctic sea ice threatens their ability to hunt for the seals that are their main source of food.

The species is listed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN. The median life expectancy for a male polar bear in the wild is 20.7 years, according to statistics from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium has two other polar bears, Blizzard, 19, and Boris, 29. Polar bears are on exhibit daily in the zoo's Arctic Tundra area. As animal ambassadors for their species, they help zoo visitors to know and understand the plight they face in the wild. Zookeepers and members of the zoo's education team provide actions visitors can take in their daily lives to save energy, reduce carbon emissions and help address the causes of climate change.

One such action is as simple as not idling a car while waiting in a parking lot or drive-through restaurant.

The Zoo Society's Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund supports research to better understand polar bears' biology and the effects of climate change on the species.

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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).*