



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Dec. 3, 2015

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CELEBRATE POLAR BEARS' BIRTHDAYS AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO ON DEC. 19

Boris turns 30 this year, and Blizzard is 20 – milestones worthy of a party complete with special treats

TACOMA, Wash. — How do you celebrate a polar bear's brrrrrrrrrrthday?

Why, with frosting on their windows, ice treats and a special cake, of course. These Arctic animals like their treats cold, you know.



Boris and Blizzard, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's two polar bears, are set to slurp up and scarf up these special gustatory enrichments between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Dec. 19 during a birthday party worthy of their roles as iconic ambassadors for their species.

It's a very special occasion for these two.

Boris, who was rescued from a traveling circus several years ago, turns 30 this year. Blizzard, who came to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium as an orphan from Canada at just 15 months old, turns 20.

And everyone knows those birthdays with zeros are milestones worthy of particularly special celebrations. Plus, it's fitting that they occur in December, when the weather turns cold, just the way polar bears like it. (Though we can't promise it will be ZERO degrees!)

Enrichments such as special food items are designed to stimulate the bears both mentally and physically as they figure out how to get to the treats and then expend some energy doing so.

Watching the bears frolic, meanwhile, warms the hearts of zoo visitors.

But for all the fun, this is serious business, too. The Polar Bear Birthday Party will include a keeper talk about Boris and Blizzard and the important role they play in helping humans understand the perils their species faces in the wild.

Polar bears are a very real example of the effects of climate change. 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.

At Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, zookeepers and members of the education team provide visitors with a list of simple actions everyone can take to save energy, reduce carbon emissions and help address the causes of climate change.

One is as simple as not idling a car while waiting in a parking lot or drive-through restaurant, thus reducing carbon emissions. Turning down a thermostat by just a couple of degrees in the winter and keeping it a bit higher in the summer can save enormous amounts of energy.

For more information about ways to help curb climate change, go to www.pdza.org/climate-change.

For more information about the zoo, go to www.pdza.org

Seasonal daytime zoo hours: 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays.

Zoolights hours: 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. nightly through Jan. 3 (except for a one-night closure on Dec. 24.)

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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).