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SUMATRAN TIGER JAYA DIES AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

TACOMA, Wash. – Jaya, a 13-year-old female Sumatran tiger, who came to Tacoma as a cub and gave birth to her own four litters of cubs, died this afternoon at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.



Jaya (Ji-ya) had been in critical condition since Tuesday and receiving round-the-clock care from the zoo’s veterinary and zoological teams.

When her condition further worsened this afternoon, zoo veterinarians, led by head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf, made the decision to humanely euthanize her.

“Jaya’s liver and gastrointestinal tract weren’t functioning correctly and she was battling an aggressive bacterial infection,” said Wolf. “We did everything we could to treat her, but it wasn’t enough and her bodily functions all began to fail.”

“Jaya was one of the most beautiful cats I have ever known,” said Karen Goodrowe Beck, the zoo’s general curator. “She embodied all of the best characteristics of her species and inspired me and all who cared for her to work tirelessly for the conservation of tigers in the wild,” said Goodrowe Beck.

Jaya first showed signs of illness last week and underwent anesthesia, when the zoo veterinary team learned of the disease in her liver. Her liver and gastrointestinal tract were inflamed and she stopped eating on Monday. A further examination revealed an aggressive bacterial infection. On Tuesday, she

was placed in a medically-induced state of immobilization and a team of veterinary and other zoological staff members administered medications, fluids and nutrients around the clock.

Veterinarians plan to do a full necropsy on Jaya this evening.

Zoo Deputy Director John Houck described Jaya as an outstanding ambassador for her species.

“We are very saddened by the loss of Jaya, who was such a well-loved member of the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium family and our community,” Houck said. “Jaya inspired our visitors to care deeply about tigers and to take action to save them in the wild. She will be greatly missed.”

Jaya’s influence went far beyond Tacoma.

“She was a wonderful mother who made a monumental contribution to increasing the genetic diversity of tigers in North American zoos,” said Goodrowe Beck, who serves as vice chair of the Sumatran Tiger Species Survival Plan® in North America.

Sumatran tigers are critically endangered. In 2004, Jaya and her sister Suriya were the first of the species to arrive at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Today, the zoo is home to five Sumatran tigers, including Jaya’s most recent litter of cubs – Kirana, Indah, and Dari – born in 2014. These cubs, along with cubs from three other litters, were part of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ Sumatran Tiger Species Survival Plan®, a conservation breeding program to ensure a genetically diverse population of Sumatran tigers.

People who wish to express their condolences and remembrances of Jaya may do so by posting comments on the zoo’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Ptdefiancezoo or sending cards to Point Defiance Zoo staff, 5400 North Pearl St., Tacoma, WA 98407.

Those who would like to make donations to The Zoo Society’s Dr. Holly Reed Conservation Fund in Jaya’s honor may do so at www.pdza.org/donate or by calling The Zoo Society at 253-404-3651.

Only about 300 tigers remain in the wild on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. About 70 Sumatran tiger live in North American zoos.

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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).