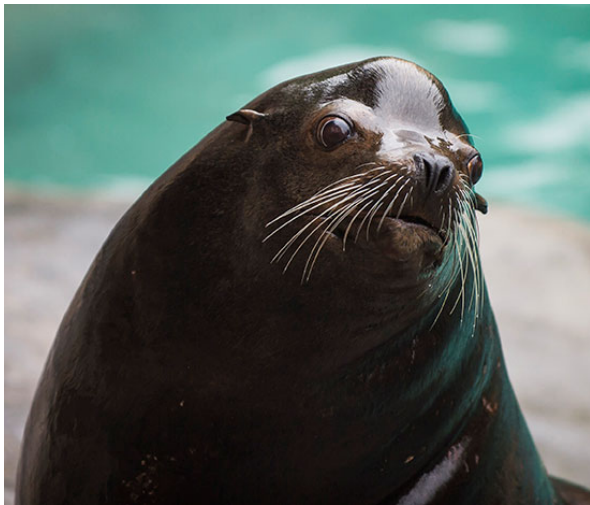




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AGED SEA LION CHINOOK DIES AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM



necropsy, or animal autopsy, are pending.

TACOMA, Wash. – Chinook, an aged California sea lion, died today at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium following a sudden decline in his health.

The zoo's head veterinarian, Dr. Karen Wolf, said Chinook had been showing signs of lethargy and a loss of appetite. The veterinary and animal care teams intervened today to provide him with extra fluids, vitamins and other supportive care but he died shortly after the procedure.

“Our preliminary necropsy of Chinook showed multiple abnormalities in his lungs and other tissues,” said Dr. Wolf. Further results from a comprehensive

Chinook arrived at Point Defiance Zoo in 2016. He was captured as an adult near the Bonneville Dam and relocated in an effort to save stocks of endangered salmon returning up the Columbia River to their spawning grounds. The distinctive brand on his back was placed there by National Marine Fisheries officials both as a way to study marine mammals long-term and to identify those predatory sea lions who were depleting stocks of endangered salmon.

Chinook represents the wonderful kinds of conservation stories for which Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is known, said general curator Dr. Karen Goodrowe. “We are grateful we were able to provide him a second chance and a great home in Tacoma for many years.”

“He was a charismatic, curious and energetic animal who enjoyed learning new behaviors and working with his animal care team,” said assistant curator Amanda Shaffer. “He will be greatly missed.”

Chinook was estimated to be about 20 years old. The median life expectancy for California sea lions in human care is 23.

California sea lions range from the waters of Prince William Sound in Alaska down through the Puget Sound region, all along the western coast of the United States and into Mexico.

Point Defiance Zoo is home to four other sea lions: Eloise, Boomer, Neah and Matia (pronounced May-sha).

“Chinook was an incredible ambassador for his species who helped us educate our community about actions we all can take to reduce plastic pollution, save local endangered species, and maintain a healthy ocean,” said Dr. Goodrowe.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and 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).

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