



NEW MAGICAL ANIMAL SHOW KICKS OFF SEASON OF WONDER AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO

Plus, Budgie Buddies and Bugs Alive! are back, and they all begin May 7-8

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 4, 2022

TACOMA, Wash.—Abracadabra? More like abraca-armadillo! The brand-new, magical live animal show kicks off at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater May 7-8.

During the show, the live audience is introduced to a wizard who cares for mythical creatures and arrives in Tacoma with a broken magical staff. To restore the staff, the wizard must learn how to care for animals from the keepers at Point Defiance Zoo. The keepers teach the wizard how they train animals to participate in their own health care and provide daily enrichment to stimulate their natural behaviors.

“Caring for animals can sometimes seem like magic,” said assistant curator Maureen O’Keefe, one of the people who plays the wizard in the new show. “Keepers work hard to develop strong, trusting bonds with the animals and ensure they live healthy, stimulating lives.”

Rocket, a new rescued dog, makes his debut as “Professor Dumbledog” in the action-packed show.

“Keepers teach the wizard that one way to care for dogs, like Professor Dumbledog, is by letting him stretch his legs and have a drink of water after a long trip,” explained O’Keefe.

Other examples include encouraging Tilli the aardvark to dig like she would in the wild, offering Forrest the eagle owl opportunities to fly every day, and giving Walnut the beaver plenty of branches to chew to keep his teeth healthy.

“We also teach the wizard that it’s not just about making sure the animals are healthy. It’s also about passion and dedication,” said O’Keefe. “We want all the children in the audience to leave the show knowing that caring for animals also means loving them.”

Not every animal will appear in every show, but the cast of more than a dozen includes Clark the king vulture who will fly overhead, clouded leopard Banyan who will saunter across the stage, and tree-climbing tamandua Gonzo who will extend his long tongue for a snack.

“We’ve worked hard to create a fast-moving and fun show that children and adults will enjoy,” said O’Keefe. “We’re excited to get back on stage with a cast of animals that are inspiring ambassadors for their species.”

Here is the schedule for the show:

May 7-June 17

Monday-Friday: 12pm

Saturday and Sunday: 12pm and 3pm

June 18-Sept. 5

Daily: 12pm and 3pm

Budgie Buddies and Bugs Alive! are Back

On the same weekend (May 7-8), the [budgies are back](#) for the spring and summer season. The colorful Australian birds will fly right up to guests and eat seeds from a stick. Zoo visitors may purchase the seed sticks- \$2/general public, \$1.50/members.

Plus, the zoo’s popular Bugs Alive! program returns with a new home at the [Little Explorers Nature Play Garden](#). Keepers will host live bug presentations on a stage in the garden, and people of all ages can meet bugs like a Chilean rose tarantula, Peruvian cave roach or emperor scorpion and discover the important roles bugs play in our daily lives. A large video monitor will show the audience a magnified view of the bugs during presentations.

At the new Nature Play Garden, watch as butterflies, birds, bees and countless other insects delight in the garden. Children can balance on a log, hop between stones, or experiment with natural components like sticks, wood blocks and bark chips to create freely at the Builder’s Deck. Every visit to the Nature Play Garden is free with paid admission or membership to Point Defiance Zoo.

The new show at Wild Wonders Outdoor Theater is presented with support from Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital and Kitsap Credit Union. The Little Explorers Nature Play Garden is presented by TAPCO Credit Union and supported by Watson’s Greenhouse & Nursery. The play elements are provided by grant support from TOTE Maritime.

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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).

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