



## CELEBRATE POLAR BEARS AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO DURING TWO WEEKEND EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

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TACOMA, Wash.—We think polar bears are so extraordinary we've decided to celebrate them with not one but two public events in November at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

**Polar Bear Weekend:** Nov. 4-5 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Step into the Arctic Tundra to meet the zoo's polar bears and understand what wild polar bears need to survive. Zoo guests can watch footage of wild polar bears in Churchill, Canada from Polar Bears International. Plus, be sure to catch the 11:30 a.m. Keeper Chat to learn more about the polar bear twins, Astra and Laerke, and their lives at the zoo.

Other activities will include:

- **Awesome Adaptations:** Examine a polar bear's paws, teeth, and claws to discover how well adapted they are for their frozen Arctic home.
- **Fun with Fur:** Explore fur from Arctic animals and find out how each is uniquely suited to help the animal survive.

Of course, Astra and Laerke will receive special enrichment toys and treats from keepers! Learn more [here](#).

**Polar Bear Birthday:** Nov. 18-19 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Astra and Laerke are turning 3! Celebrate their birthday with them all weekend long. Come to the 11:30 a.m. Keeper Chat and watch the sisters enjoy a birthday cake and some of their favorite enrichment toys and treats. Before you leave, snap a selfie with our Paws Up For Polar Bears photo op and sign a birthday card for the bears! Learn more [here](#).

### About Astra and Laerke

Twin sisters Astra and Laerke came to Point Defiance Zoo in June as two-year-old cubs.

Astra is a true force with a personality as large as her size. She is confident, independent, and very curious. You'll likely catch Astra swimming in her saltwater pool or playing with her enrichment toys.

Laerke (pronounced LAIR-keh) is more cautious and gentle than Astra, but don't let that fool you. She's still a mighty, powerful bear! Learn more about the polar bear twins [here](#).

## **Polar Bear Conservation**

Point Defiance Zoo is a leader in polar bear research and conservation, working with non-profit Polar Bears International (PBI) and other partners to help study and protect polar bears in the Arctic. The effects of climate change on the Arctic are visible, and the numbers show it. The ice isn't freezing up as quickly, forcing the bears to spend more time on land where food is scarce. The Western Hudson Bay population of polar bears included 1,100 bears in the 1980s. Now, there are just over 600. That's a nearly 50 percent decline in only 40 years.

Declining sea ice reduces the time polar bears can hunt seals, increases their fasting period, and forces them to rely on their fat stores for extended periods. If the Arctic continues to warm at the current rate, we will see fewer polar bears in fewer places across the Arctic. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission has even designated the species as facing a high risk of global extinction.

When guests visit Point Defiance Zoo, they can chat with keepers and educators to learn more about what they can do to help the future of polar bears. To learn more about protecting polar bears, guests can also [visit the zoo's website](#).

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