

Assiniboine Park Zoo Mourns Passing of Aurora the Polar Bear

For immediate release: Winnipeg, June 23, 2022 – It is with great sadness that the Assiniboine Park Zoo announces that one of its polar bears, Aurora, passed away on Tuesday, June 21, during a dental procedure. The nine-year-old polar bear has lived at the Zoo since 2013 and will be missed by all staff, volunteers, and visitors who knew her.

Aurora has experienced recurring dental issues since she was rescued and transferred to the Zoo as a young cub. It is believed her teeth were damaged from eating rocks and sticks in her attempt to survive without the care and protection of her mother.

At the Zoo, Aurora has received ongoing veterinary care to relieve her pain, treat infection, and prevent her tooth problems from developing into much larger health issues. Tuesday's procedure was performed under anesthesia with the assistance of a specialized veterinary dentist.

The procedure went well, but as the team was preparing to reverse the anesthesia, Aurora went into cardiac arrest. Veterinary staff and animal care professionals did absolutely everything they could to save her, but sadly she passed away.

Though further tests will be conducted, preliminary investigations into an underlying condition or cause of death are inconclusive.

“Everyone at the Zoo is deeply saddened by this sudden loss,” said Grant Furniss, Sr. Director, Zoological Operations, Assiniboine Park Zoo. “Aurora was a beautiful polar bear and a wonderful ambassador for her species. She was loved by the team who cared for her every day and will be tremendously missed.”

Aurora was transferred to the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre in October 2013 when she was approximately one year old. She was found wandering near the Churchill airport. Despite an extensive search, her mother was not found.

Experts agree that polar bear cubs orphaned in their first year of life cannot survive on their own without their mother's protection and the opportunity to learn critical survival skills. This is based on research and data gathered over decades. Our Zoo offers them a second chance to live a fulfilling life in human care. It is our hope that by seeing and learning from these bears, people will be inspired to make changes in their own lives that can have positive effects on climate change and the future for polar bears in Manitoba.

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