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POLAR BEAR CONSERVATION WEEKEND SET NOV. 5-6 TO CELEBRATE ICONIC ARCTIC ANIMALS

Tacoma, Wash. – “Chill out” with a couple of cool bears – and learn how to shrink your carbon pawprint – during a special weekend at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Nov 5-6.

Polar bears Boris and Blizzard will share the spotlight during Polar Bear Conservation Weekend. The bears can be seen swimming in their 11-foot-deep saltwater pool and enjoying special enrichment treats.

Enrichment helps to maintain an animal's quality of life by ensuring a stimulating environment. It encourages species-typical behaviors, which is good for their physical and mental health. Enrichments may include favorite food items, toys or other objects with which the animals play.



Each day at 2:30 p.m., the public can meet a zookeeper who cares for Boris and Blizzard, learn about their role as ambassadors for their wild counterparts, and ask questions about them.

Polar bears in the wild are under pressure due to global warming. When people burn carbon contained in fossil fuels, the resulting carbon dioxide surrounds the Earth like a blanket. Carbon dioxide traps heat and warms the Earth, causing Arctic ice to melt. Polar bears depend on Arctic sea ice as their platform from which to hunt seals. But as Arctic ice melts, leaving the bears struggling to catch the prey they need to survive.

Polar bears are listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List as “vulnerable,” meaning the species is imperiled in the wild.

Polar Bear Conservation Weekend will empower zoo visitors with actions they can take at home to help preserve sea ice in the Arctic – and polar bears everywhere.

For example, turning off one's car engine when waiting for 30 seconds or more is one way to reduce carbon emissions. Skipping the drive-through, consolidating errand trips, and taking alternate forms of transportation are some of the ways visitors can reduce idling in their vehicles.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium long has partnered with Polar Bears International to educate members of the public about the plight of polar bears in the wild. The zoo is a PBI Arctic Ambassador Center, a designation that recognizes the zoo's considerable efforts toward sustainability, environmental stewardship and climate change education.

Thanks to this partnership and grants from The Zoo Society's Dr. Holly Reed Wildlife Conservation Fund, several zoo staff members have visited Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, to observe polar bears in the wild and learn how to better educate members of the public about them.

This year, the fund awarded a grant to aid in tracking male polar bears in Western Hudson Bay, Canada using GPS technology.

More information about polar bears and how to help the species is available at www.pdza.org/polar-bear and www.pdza.org/climate-change.

Throughout November, the zoo will be open 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday through Monday and closed on Tuesday and Wednesday. The zoo will also be closed for Thanksgiving on November 24.

For more information, visit www.pdza.org.

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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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