



WASHED ASHORE

ART TO SAVE THE SEA

Sculpture exhibit of 10 larger-than-life sea creatures made from trash opens April 22 at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

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Tacoma, Wash. – Imagine a 20-foot-long Weedy Sea Dragon constructed entirely of plastic and other pieces of trash that washed up on Pacific Northwest beaches.

Think about a 9-foot-tall, 1,800-pound Tufted Puffin named Sebastian James who also is made of the stuff humans discard that wends its way into the ocean, often choking sea birds and other animals.

Check out Chompers the Shark's toothy grin. All plastic. A stark reminder that the things we use in our daily lives often wind up as waves of trash in the seas – even if we try to recycle them in a responsible way.

Ten larger-than-life sea creatures from the Washed Ashore Project will dot the grounds at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium from April 22-Oct. 21. To be sure, they will entertain people for hours.

Try to spot the toy robot embedded somewhere on Steve the Weedy Sea Dragon's body.



Marvel at the fertilized “eggs” stored on his tail, just as a male weedy sea dragon would do in the ocean. But in this case, they’re not soon-to-be sea dragons, but rather cut-apart single-use plastic water bottles filled with colorful bottle caps. Look for a bowling pin in Priscilla the Parrot Fish, a dog leash and plastic cooler on Octavia the Octopus, or

detergent bottles on Natasha the Turtle.

It is art like never before seen in Tacoma. It’s trashy. It’s flashy. It’s colorful and engaging.

But underneath that beauty is a very ugly truth. Every one of these sea animals is made of pollution – most of it plastic - that washed ashore from the Pacific Ocean onto some 300 miles of Oregon beaches.

One of the sculptures, that Weedy Sea Dragon named Steve, will make its worldwide debut at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

Washed Ashore artist and creative genius Angela Haseltine Pozzi completed the brightly colored red, blue and yellow creature late last month at her studio in Bandon, Ore.

Her transformational traveling exhibit is called Washed Ashore, Art to Save the Sea, and each sculpture stands tall as a testament to the staggering amount of trash that winds up in the world’s ocean each day, each week, each year.

“We’re bringing this exhibit to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium to emphasize our deep commitment to teaching our visitors that their daily actions have consequences far beyond what they might imagine,” said Karen Povey, the zoo’s Curator of Conservation Engagement.





“By passing up or choosing alternatives to single-use items like plastic straws, drink cup lids, bottles and bags, we will be protecting our seas and saving the lives of the animals that live in them.”

“While the message is serious, we think these creations are so fun, so whimsical that children will beg parents to bring them back to the zoo again and again to see them and hunt for the unusual items of which they’re made,” Povey said.

Each sculpture is accompanied by an interpretive sign that

gives its name, information about the animal it depicts, and an “I Spy”-style list of plastic items that visitors can hunt for among the mountain of trash that Pozzi turned into an appealing sea creature or shore bird.

Gertrude the Penguin will tower over arriving guests at the Zoo's Entry Plaza. She's 8 feet, 6 inches tall, 8 feet wide and weighs in at 1,500 pounds. A standing Blue Sea Jelly to be placed near the lower entrance to the North Pacific Aquarium is 12 feet tall, 2 feet wide and weighs – literally – a ton.

Members of the zoo's Conservation Engagement team are planning a spring and summer full of activities to emphasize the importance of the animals that live in the ocean, how each fits into delicate ecosystems and how plastic trash flows into waterways because it's improperly disposed of or escapes the waste stream. They also will provide visitors with real-world tools to "Go Plastic-Free to Save Our Sea," which is the overarching thematic message of the exhibit's appearance in Tacoma

It's not uncommon to see photographs of sea birds or sea otters tangled in plastic, of rescue crews removing straws from sea turtles' nostrils and of the bellies of necropsied sharks and whales full of manmade plastic items in a variety of forms. Those are the very real consequences of the trash humans let mount up in the oceans. The problem is so great, in fact, that scientists have labeled it an emergent environmental crisis.

About eight million tons of plastics – the equivalent of a dump truck load every minute – winds up in the ocean every year. If left unchecked, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2020, scientists said in a 2016 World Economic Forum



report.



Creating intriguing, eye-popping sculptures from ocean trash is a second-career calling for Pozzi, who grew up in Olympia and taught art to students of all ages in Vancouver, Wash. and Portland, Ore. schools for three decades.

The Washed Ashore project is a non-profit community art organization that utilizes a handful of staff and an army of volunteers to transform tons of trash from the Pacific Ocean into the stunning artworks.

To date, she and her team have created nearly 70 sea creatures constructed mainly of plastic pollution. They've been shown at zoos and other venues across the nation and featured on PBS' News Hour.

The exhibit was a natural for Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's conservation-minded visitors, zoo Deputy Director John Houck said.

And its appearance this spring and summer coincides with the zoo's sharper focus on marine mammals and other animals that live in and depend on the seas. The zoo is building a 35,000-square-foot, \$51.6 million Pacific Seas

Aquarium that is scheduled to open in the summer of 2018.

“The voters of Tacoma care deeply about their zoo and want to do what they can to help the environment,” said Andrea Smith, president of the Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners. The aquarium is being financed in large measure by bond funds approved by the electorate in 2014.

“We see Washed Ashore as an opportunity for families to learn more about the connection between our actions and the ocean - and do it in a very fun way,” she added.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is “walking the talk,” having worked with Lancer Catering to eliminate the sale of single-use plastic water, soda and juice bottles from its café and vending machines early this year. Wildlife Trading Co., which runs the zoo’s gift shop, no longer sends visitors out the door with purchases in single-use plastic bags. The zoo long ago eliminated the use of plastic straws and drink-cup lids.

“By passing up or choosing alternatives to single-use items like plastic straws, drink cup lids, bottles and bags, we will be protecting our seas and saving the lives of the animals that live in them.”

Since the zoo receives some revenue from concession sales, the decision will affect our bottom line.

“While it’s too early to say how much it will cost in lost revenue, we believe strongly that it’s the right thing to do,” Houck said.

“The zoo has been a conservation leader in the Puget Sound region for 112 years,” he added. “We are proud to continue that tradition in 2017 with Washed Ashore, which will have people smiling and laughing at these improbable works of art.

“We invite you to look closely,” he added. “Come back often and bring your friends. Be entertained. But also be informed. These sculptures speak to the enormous problem of plastics in our ocean. And to the steps we all must take to combat this growing problem.”

Contacts

Kris Sherman: 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or kris.sherman@pdza.org

Whitney DalBalcon: 253-404-3637; 253-278-6343; whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

Photo captions

- 1. Priscilla the Parrot Fish**/Courtesy of Denver Zoo
- 2. Steve the Weedy Sea Dragon**/Nathan Howard, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
- 3. Sebastian James the Tufted Puffin**/Courtesy of Washed Ashore
- 4. Chompers the Shark**/Courtesy of Brevard Zoo
- 5. Gertrude the Penguin**/Courtesy of Denver Zoo
- 6. Octavia the Octopus**/Courtesy of Sea World
- 7. Lidia the Seal**/Courtesy of Denver Zoo