



Jammin' with Jellies

OPENING MAY 29



New exhibit at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium mesmerizes visitors with the haunting beauty of billowing bells and flowing tentacles

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Contacts:

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

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

TACOMA, Wash. – Diaphanous life forms pulse through the water, blood-orange stripes radiating across and down bell-shaped tops as filaments of tentacles trail behind. These are Japanese sea nettles, alive with the stunning beauty only nature can supply.

Next door, baby-blue blubber jellies glide through their own salt-water home, their bells constantly in motion like otherworldly beating hearts – or elegant spaceships on a mission of exploration. But then, there is the rest of their bodies. These jellyfish don't have tentacles; rather they're equipped with stubby arms that look more than a bit like bluish-gray cauliflower.

The Japanese sea nettles and blue blubber jellies are just two of four species of jellyfish brought to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium for Jammin' with Jellies, an all-new exhibit, which opens May 29 in the North Pacific Aquarium.



A third tank holds an array of crystal jellies, so clear you can see every portion of their delicate anatomy.

A fluorescent green ring lines the bottom of their bells. But it's not really green; it just appears so because of the way light bounces off its photo-luminescent proteins.

Across the way, egg yolk jellies drift in their own watery space, looking exactly like their name implies, as if someone cracked open special marine eggs and dumped their yolks and whites into the sea.

Visitors can stand on both sides of this tank, a perfect set up for photo-ops through the glass.

Staff biologist Dr. Chad Widmer is the scientific architect of Jammin' with Jellies, a one-of-a kind exhibit created in collaboration by an

in-house Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium team. The fun and interactive experience is designed to show people that these animals are at once spellbinding and illuminating.

Jellies also are common to Puget Sound, and their presence – or absence - can tell scientists quite a bit about the health of the seas, Widmer said.

For this exhibit, he and other staff biologists at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium collected many jellies just down the hill from the zoo in Puget Sound.

Jellyfish have no bones, no brains, no blood. They catch prey with stinging tentacles, but most are harmless to humans. As the medusae drift through the sea, they help maintain the delicate life balance of the world's oceans, feasting on zooplankton, small crustaceans and other life forms. And...becoming snacks themselves, gobbled up by sharks, turtles, birds, crabs, sea anemones and sea stars.

Jammin' with Jellies tells the story of these creatures and shows what they can teach us all about serious topics like overfishing and climate change. It also gives visitors information on how they can take individual action to help protect the world's oceans and the animals that live in them.

But if it is serious in one regard, it's just plain fun in several others. A huge, colorful wall mural greets

visitors at the door. Background music sets the tone for letting your mind drift along with the stars of the show. And there are jelly-themed crafts, activities and costumes for kids.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium | 5400 N. Pearl St. | Tacoma, WA 98407 www.pdza.org



The exhibit is built to change, and zoo aquarists will be able to move different species into the exhibit from time to time, so visitors will be able to see “jelly-scapes” as varied as the oceans.

“We can display anything from anywhere in the world – from deep seas to the tropics,” Widmer said. “The most flexible jellyfish exhibit in the world is right here at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.”

So it’s a great time for folks to make their way to the North Pacific Aquarium to do a little Jammin’ with Jellies – and step into an underwater world of wonder.

“People love jellies because they are so mesmerizing,” Widmer said. “Just stand and watch them for a while. You get drawn in. It’s awesome!”

Jammin’ with Jellies Grand Opening Weekend

What: Grand Opening Weekend of Jammin’ with Jellies

When: May 29-May 31, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day

Where: Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, 5400 N. Pearl St., Tacoma

Activities (10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day):

- **Jelly Jam Session:** Visitors can dance to their own tune and play instruments made from recycled materials like buckets, glass bottles, lids, pipes and shakers.

- **Design a Jellyfish:** Visitors can mix and match bells, tentacles and oral arms of various shapes, materials on a magnetic board to design their own unique jellyfish.
- **Plankton Party:** Peer through a microscope at plankton and discover its importance in the marine food web.
- **Hats Off to Jellies:** Visitors can try on a custom-made jelly hat costume, move like a jelly and discover that jellies eat as they drift through the oceans.
- **Jelly Craft:** Visitors can create their own jellyfish to take home using paper plates and streamers.

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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) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).