



## POINT DEFIANCE ZOO SMASHES ATTENDANCE RECORD IN 2019

*Over 1 million guests visit Zoo and Northwest Trek*

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TACOMA, Wash. – They came in waves, breaking records for the second year running to experience the wonders of the state-of-the-art Pacific Seas Aquarium in its first full year of operation at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Visitors by the thousands came to meet sea turtles, hammerhead sharks, eagle rays and more in the new aquarium and to celebrate the births of animals, including eight endangered red wolf pups and an endangered Malayan tapir calf.

Last year, 825,937 guests walked through the turnstiles, the largest total in Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s 114-year history.

“We’re delighted that the new Pacific Seas Aquarium is wowing people of all ages and adding a new level of excitement to an already extraordinary zoo experience,” said Tim Reid, president of the Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Commissioners. “We’re also very grateful to Tacoma voters for approving a 2014 bond issue that made the Pacific Seas Aquarium and so many other zoo and park improvements possible,” he added.

When combined with the 210,975 guests who visited Northwest Trek Wildlife Park in 2019, Metro Parks’ two sister zoos drew more than 1 million visitors for the second consecutive year.

“We are, once again, simply thrilled,” said Alan Varsik, director of Zoological and Environmental Education for Metro Parks Tacoma. “Welcoming over 1 million people to our two zoos underscores our relevance and importance to our community. It also means over 1 million conservation connections – more than a million children and adults connecting with our amazing animals and then leaving inspired to protect wildlife in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.”

There were many other highlights of the year at each of the sister zoos.

### **At Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium:**

- Eight red wolf pups were born to parents Charlotte and Hyde, symbols of hope for a critically endangered species and the decades of staff work to bring them back from the brink of extinction.
- Kazu, an endangered Malayan tapir calf, was born and is thriving.
- A tamandua kit and beaver kit were born and two rare penguin chicks hatched.
- Three African giant pouched rats came to make their home in Tacoma – one of the first zoos in the U.S. to care for this species, which saves lives around the world by detecting landmines.
- Zoolights hit its 32<sup>nd</sup> year in stride with new baby animal displays and a new 90-foot-long tunnel of lights.
- The new Pacific Seas Aquarium was celebrated in a month-long festival of arts, sciences and animal experiences.



- Mitik and Pakak, two walruses rescued as calves, arrived as part of a collaboration among zoos and aquariums to give the best breeding care to Pacific walruses.
- Two orphaned sea lions, Boomer and Eloise, and a rescued sea otter, Moea, made their debuts.
- The zoo's endangered species were celebrated in a new sand sculpture throughout summer, with sand sculpting for guests.
- Hanako the Asian elephant reached the astonishing age of 56 and Boris the polar bear turned 34, likely the oldest male polar bear on the planet, a testament to the high quality of care that the veterinary and zoological teams provide to every animal every day.

**At Northwest Trek Wildlife Park:**

- Eagle Passage opened, a new immersive habitat for rescued bald eagles and a conservation inspiration to all.
- Rare wolverines Rainier and Ahma made their public debut in their newly renovated habitat.



- Ten mountain goat kids made a temporary home off-exhibit as part of a collaboration to relocate non-native goats out of the Olympic Mountains. One (Ellinor) remained; the rest found homes in other zoos.
- Bison calves, lambs and other animals were born.
- Keeper Adventure Tours took hundreds of guests off-road in the Free-Roaming Area, continuing through winter.
- Staff helped release Canadian fishers into the wild through a decade-long conservation partnership to reintroduce this endangered species to the Olympic and Cascade Mountains.
- Hundreds of bats at the wildlife park were counted by staff and volunteers at the annual Summer Bat Counts. Wildlife

experts examined others to determine that there is no white-nose syndrome in the Northwest Trek bat colony, one of the region's largest.

And at both zoos:

- Staff from both zoos continued to inspire a new generation of scientists and conservationists with empathy for nature in the Wildlife Champions program at Arlington Elementary School in South Tacoma.
- Both zoos were certified as sensory inclusive by KultureCity, supporting guests with sensory needs.

For more information about each zoo, go to [www.pdza.org](http://www.pdza.org) or [www.nwtrek.org](http://www.nwtrek.org).

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