



NORTHWEST TREK MOURNS LOSS OF BELOVED MOOSE BIRCH

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EATONVILLE, Wash. – Birch, a beloved moose at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, died yesterday after a sudden and severe decline in his health.

Dr. Allison Case, the wildlife park’s veterinarian, said the 8-month-old moose was showing signs of lethargy and severe gastro-intestinal disease Monday. His veterinary and animal care teams intervened immediately with medical treatment. When his condition didn’t improve yesterday, Birch was moved to the on-site animal hospital for more intensive care and diagnostic testing. Birch died under anesthesia as his intensive medical treatments were concluding, said Dr. Case.

“Birch was adored by everyone who knew him and we are devastated to lose him so suddenly and unexpectedly,” said Dr. Case. “It’s always heartbreaking to lose an animal, but it’s even more difficult when the animal is so young.”

Results from a necropsy examination, or animal autopsy, conducted this morning were inconclusive. “Birch had enlarged lymph nodes and minor gastrointestinal lesions but we did not find a definitive cause of his sudden acute illness and death,” said Dr. Case. “We’ll know more when we receive the lab results of his bloodwork, tissue samples and fecal samples.”

Birch arrived from Alaska Zoo in November to be a companion to Aspen, the wildlife park’s 5-year-old orphaned female moose. Keepers often saw the two moose together, enjoying their favorite saplings and plants, splashing in the lake, and interacting with other animals in the 435-acre Free-Roaming Area, home to elk, bison, caribou, bighorn sheep and mountain goats.

Keepers had developed strong bonds with Birch, training him daily to voluntarily participate in his own medical care when necessary. Birch was trained to step on a scale so keepers could monitor his weight and growth. In January, he weighed 407 pounds, a “healthy weight for a growing calf his age,” according to Dr. Case.

The median life expectancy for male moose in human care is about 6 years. Moose are the tallest wild animals in North America and play a crucial role in helping people learn more about Northwest ecosystems.

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Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native

Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma and is located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma.

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