



POINT DEFIANCE ZOO, NORTHWEST TREK WIN CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR ANTI-WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING DISPLAY

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TACOMA/EATONVILLE, Wash.— Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Northwest Trek Wildlife Park and other local partners recently won the 2023 Certificate of Excellence in Public Service from the Public Relations Society of America Puget Sound chapter for their anti-wildlife trafficking display at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

The Certificate of Excellence is awarded to an organization that advances the public understanding of a social issue, problem, or concern. Point Defiance Zoo and Northwest Trek, along with Woodland Park Zoo, Association of Zoos & Aquariums Wildlife Trafficking Alliance, Port of Seattle and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, unveiled a first-of-its-kind interactive installation in 2022 to empower international travelers to prevent wildlife trafficking in how they shop, eat and experience while abroad.

Many of the world's rarest species, such as elephants, tigers, sharks, and rhinos, are on the verge of extinction due to an unsustainable demand for their parts and derived products.

"The installation encourages travelers to be good stewards of global animal populations and to make savvy choices to help save endangered animals around the world," said Point Defiance Zoo's Conservation Engagement Curator Wendy Spaulding.

The exhibit calls on travelers to pledge the following actions:

- **Shop for good, not trafficked goods:** Avoid endangered species parts when looking for souvenirs, such as ivory or tortoise shells, and opt to shop from ethical artisans.
- **Eat well, not wild:** Mind the origins of the food you eat abroad, ask about ingredients, and avoid exploitative foods like shark fin soup or tinctures, including tiger or rhino parts.
- **Take memories, not selfies:** Keep a safe distance from wildlife on your travels, avoid exploitative attractions, and research any company offering animal experiences to ensure ethical standards.

Wildlife trafficking is a global problem, happening at home and abroad. Trafficking in illegal animal products like elephant ivory, shark fins, tiger skins, and rhino horn is widespread across the United States. The contents of the airport display share examples of confiscated illegally trafficked materials and information about how animal species are in decline due to illegal wildlife trade. It also highlights the positive impacts of conservation and educational efforts.

"We are extremely proud of this display, which helps advance our mission of connecting people to wildlife and engaging them in the care and protection of nature," said Spaulding.

Seattle and Tacoma serve as the country's third-largest port complex. Millions of tons of cargo pass through each year, including illegal wildlife products. This illicit trade fuels a multi-billion-dollar business supporting global criminal organizations. In 2015, Washingtonians led the nation by passing the first voters' initiative banning statewide wildlife trafficking of endangered species. Passing by more than 70 percent, Initiative 1401 demonstrated Washington's commitment to prioritizing this often-overlooked issue.

"It's important to continue to bring awareness to wildlife trafficking and help folks understand the impact of our decisions," said Zachary Hawn, the zoo's Conservation Engagement Coordinator. "If we take action today, we can prevent the loss of many endangered species and protect the world's wildlife for future generations."

The award-winning display is located across from Gate S1 in the S Concourse, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's hub for departing international flights. A similar version of the "savvy traveler" display is posted near the elephant habitat at Point Defiance Zoo.

To learn more about what Point Defiance Zoo is doing to help end wildlife trafficking, visit pdza.org.

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