



NEWS RELEASE

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EVERETT, THE WORLD'S OLDEST SNOW LEOPARD, PASSES AWAY JUST SHORT OF HIS 22ND BIRTHDAY AT THE SANTA BARBARA ZOO

Photos and B-Roll: <https://bit.ly/2VYtxjp>

(Santa Barbara, CA, May 22, 2019) – A snow leopard named Everett was the oldest of his species in the world when he passed away just three weeks before his 22nd birthday on Tuesday, May 21 at the Santa Barbara Zoo. Everett had been receiving treatment for ailments common with elderly big cats, including osteoarthritis, renal failure, and hypertension.

“In the last few months, we have seen a loss in body condition, deterioration of his coat, and decreased mobility. This past week, he had trouble getting up and moving around, despite an increase in medication for his osteoarthritis. Because he was declining quickly, we felt humane euthanasia was the best welfare option for him,” said Dr. Julie Barnes, the Zoo’s Vice President of Animal Care & Health. “Everett had also recently developed urinary incontinence, and unfortunately his advanced age just caught up with him,” notes Barnes.

Born on June 22, 1997 at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago, Everett had lived at the Santa Barbara Zoo since December 2011, when he made his debut at the annual Snow Leopard Festival. Zoe, the Zoo’s female snow leopard, was also considered geriatric at age 15 when she passed away suddenly on February 14, 2019. It is suspected that she had a heart attack or stroke.



“Both Everett and Zoe lived very long and full lives and have been wonderful ambassadors for this endangered species, which faces so many challenges in the wild,” added Dr. Barnes. “Our guests now know about snow leopards, and hopefully care about what happens to them in the wild, as a result of Everett and of Zoe. That is their legacy.”

The snow leopard exhibit is located in an area of the Zoo that will be renovated in coming years. Planning is in the early stages now, and that space will be evaluated as part of the plan. The Zoo cannot yet confirm which species will be in the new complex.

Everett's body will be sent to Midwestern University in Arizona as part of a vascular anatomy study in snow leopards, which is supported by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) Species Survival plan for snow leopards. Zoe's body was also donated to this study. A team of experts in the Department of Anatomy at Midwestern University will study all areas of the micro- and macro-anatomy of the snow leopard, all of which is currently poorly documented.

According to the AZA's Survival Statistics, the median life expectancy of snow leopards in zoos is approximately 14.5 years, meaning that half the population lives to age 14.5 and half do not.

"The longevity information for the snow leopards under human care shows that he was the oldest," says Dr. Barnes. "It is extremely unlikely that wild snow leopards could live as long Everett or Zoe did, as they do not have the consistent food source or receive veterinary care in their senior years as do the snow leopards in zoos."

The Zoo's Animal Care staff monitored Everett and adapted his care as he aged. He had been trained to allow blood draws and his blood pressure to be taken using his tail, and to receive injections. This voluntary participation in his care enabled Zoo staff to more easily monitor and treat him.

It was unusual that the Zoo's two snow leopards got along so well year-round as adult snow leopards are usually solitary in the wild, outside of mating season or a female raising young. Everett had a genetic disorder that made him sterile, but he showed interest in Zoe when he first arrived. After keepers conducted careful introductions, the two became companions and continued to interact until she passed away.



Everett was sponsored by The Notley Foundation.

The Santa Barbara Zoo supports the work of the Snow Leopard Trust (www.snowleopard.org), which works to better understand the endangered snow leopard, and to protect the cat in partnership with the communities that share its habitat.

Snow leopards are designated as a vulnerable species and currently number between an estimated 3,900 and 6,400 in the mountains of Central Asia. They are poached for trophies, destroyed as predators of domestic flocks, and sought as a source of valuable fur. The bones, skin and organs of large cats are valuable in traditional Asian medicine; snow leopards are often substituted for tigers.

Climate change in their range is becoming a factor. The Tibetan plateau, home to more than half the remaining wild snow leopards, has grown three degrees warmer in the last 20 years. This impacts the entire ecosystem snow leopards depend upon to survive.

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*Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the **Santa Barbara Zoo** is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Asian elephant, California condor, island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*

It is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission \$18 for adults, \$13 for seniors 64+, \$11 for children 2-12, and free for children under 2. Parking is \$11.

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