

## Woodland Park Zoo- PRESS RELEASE

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### Woodland Park Zoo elephant to head to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium

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SEATTLE - Woodland Park Zoo and Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium each has a long-term commitment to proactive elephant management and periodically assesses the elephant management programs at their respective facilities. Over the past year, the two institutions have discussed the potential transfer of Woodland Park's female Asian elephant, 38-year-old Bamboo, to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Bamboo will join the Tacoma zoo's existing herd of two Asian females: 39-year-old Suki (soo-key) and 41-year-old Hanako (HAH-nuh-koe). The goal of the move is to optimize the social environment for both herds. The transfer is planned for this spring.



Woodland Park's herd will be reduced to three: Asian elephant 26-year-old Chai (rhymes with eye), 4-year-old Hansa (HUN-suh), the calf of Chai, and African elephant 36-year-old Watoto (wah-TOE-toe).

According to Woodland Park Zoo Curator of Mammals Bruce Upchurch, who has worked directly with elephants at both Woodland Park and Point Defiance, the relationship between Bamboo and Watoto has rarely been one of support and companionship. "It has been a relationship of tolerance and avoidance," explained Upchurch.

"Additionally, Bamboo occasionally has displayed aggressive behavior toward Hansa and does not appear to have the skills necessary to safely play a constructive role within a herd with young calves." Bamboo's unpredictable behavior poses a significant challenge to managing the four elephants as one integrated herd.

"We believe this move will bring out the best in Bamboo and that she will form a deep and lasting bond with Suki and Hanako," said Wilcox. "And it will be good for Suki and Hanako to have a new companion."

To prepare for the move, Point Defiance Zoo's elephant care staff visited Bamboo at Woodland Park Zoo so she would see familiar faces when she arrived in Tacoma and so that PDZA staff members could become familiar with Bamboo and how the WPZ staff has cared for her.

The zoos also exchanged elephant fecal and urine samples so the pachyderms would recognize each other's scents when Bamboo arrived in Tacoma. Smell is the most important of the senses for elephants.

"We're pleased to move Bamboo to an expert elephant facility like Point Defiance Zoo," said Dr. Nancy Hawkes, Woodland Park Zoo general curator. "She will continue to be in the excellent hands of passionate caretakers."

The Seattle zoo will have a herd of three elephants for now. Woodland Park is designated as a breeding center under the AZA Species Survival Plan for Asian elephants, an endangered species. The Woodland Park staff hopes to impregnate Chai, the mother of 4-year-old Asian elephant Hansa, sometime in the next year. The Seattle zoo's long-term goal is to establish an integrated Asian elephant herd.

While Point Defiance Zoo is not a designated elephant breeding center, it has one of the most well-respected elephant programs in North America.

The 'protected contact' elephant management system, which has been widely recognized and adopted by more than half of AZA-accredited zoos, started here at Point Defiance Zoo in 1992," said John Houck, deputy director of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. The pioneering elephant program, which protects staff members from injury and gives elephants incentives to cooperate with keepers, was developed simultaneously with the Oakland and San Diego Zoos.

Both Point Defiance Zoo and Woodland Park Zoo are accredited by AZA.

Accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting a standard for zoos all over the world. With conservation, education and excellent animal care at the core of the zoo's mission, the zoo is helping to save endangered species in Washington state and around the world including tree kangaroos, snow leopards, red-crowned cranes, African wild dogs, western pond turtles and Oregon silverspot butterflies. By inspiring visitors and others to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo is accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, a leader in global wildlife conservation.

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