

## PRESS RELEASE

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Media contact: Gigi Allianic, Craig Newberry  
| [woodlandparkzoopr@zoo.org](mailto:woodlandparkzoopr@zoo.org)

### Media link for photos:

<https://zoo.resourcespace.com/?c=3780&k=f9e1cb095b>

Photo credit: Dennis Dow/Woodland Park Zoo

## Zoo loses geriatric snow leopard *Son remains at the zoo*



SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo has said goodbye to its male snow leopard, Dhirin (pronounced DIH-dihn). The 17-year-old cat was humanely euthanized on January 17, following serious respiratory issues in addition to severe worsening of symptoms caused by kidney failure.

The life expectancy for snow leopards in zoos is 17 to 19 years old. According to the [Snow Leopard Trust](#), life in the wild is much harder, so the life expectancy of snow leopards in their natural habitat is more likely to be 10 to 12 years.

According to Dr. Tim Storms, director of animal health at Woodland Park Zoo, the geriatric snow leopard had been diagnosed with renal disease more than a year ago, and the animal health team had been tracking the progression with trained blood collection and urinalyses. “In the last two weeks Dhirin had worsened quite dramatically, with changes in his respiratory pattern, especially over the last several days which precipitated a decision to humanely euthanize him,” said Storms.

In 2014, Dhirin moved to Woodland Park Zoo from Oklahoma City Zoo, where he sired two cubs. He moved here under a recommendation by the Snow Leopard [Species Survival Plan](#), a breeding program across accredited zoos. In 2017, Dhirin and mate Helen had a son, Aibek (EYE-beck), at Woodland Park Zoo. Helen and Aibek remain at Woodland Park Zoo in addition to another female, Marai (muh-RYE).

“It’s always difficult and sad saying goodbye to the animals in our care. Dhirin was known to be calm with a sweet, sometimes aloof, very cat-like personality,” said Pat Owen, an animal care manager at Woodland Park Zoo. “We’re going to miss this beautiful snow leopard—Dhirin was truly an ambassador for his cousins in their natural range.”

As a standard procedure, the zoo’s animal health team will perform a postmortem exam to further diagnose factors that may have contributed to the snow leopard’s decline.

To pay tribute to Dhirin, the public can adopt a snow leopard through the zoo’s [ZooParent](#) program, which supports the zoo’s animal care, education and wildlife conservation efforts in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Woodland Park Zoo has been caring for snow leopards since the zoo’s first snow leopards arrived in 1972 from the USSR. Under the Snow Leopard Species Survival Plan, 35 cubs have been born at the zoo and have helped diversify the genetic pool of the managed population.

The snow leopard is a moderately large cat native to the high mountain ranges of Central Asia and Russia, including in Afghanistan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal and Pakistan. According to the Seattle-based Snow Leopard Trust, the population of these endangered big cats in the wild is estimated to be between 3,920 and 6,390.

To help ensure the future of snow leopards, the zoo asks the community to support the zoo and the [Snow Leopard Trust](#), and pledge to never buy or sell illegal animal products on the black market. The Snow Leopard Trust (SLT) was created in 1981 by the late Woodland Park Zoo staff member Helen Freeman, the namesake of Helen, who remains at the zoo. Through innovative programs, effective partnerships, and the latest science, the SLT is saving these vulnerable cats and improving the lives of people who live in the snow leopard countries of Central Asia.

Visit the zoo's snow leopards Helen, Aibek and Marai in the Australasia habitat—funds from admission tickets support snow leopards and other wildlife conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

For more information about Woodland Park Zoo, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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