



News Release

For Immediate Release
Monday, December 19, 2016

SENECA PARK ZOO ANNOUNCES DEATH OF SEA LION

Seneca Park Zoo officials announced today the death of Sunny, a female California sea lion born at the Zoo in June. Sunny died unexpectedly last week.

“The death of Sunny comes as a shock to us all,” said Seneca Park Zoo Director of Animal Health and Conservation Dr. Jeffrey Wyatt. *“She was playful and interacting normally with staff immediately prior to her sudden death.”* A necropsy performed on the sea lion showed no obvious cause of death. Further histology analysis is being performed.

Wyatt noted that *“while Sunny’s death is incredibly tragic, it doesn’t appear to be related to the deaths of Marina and Boomerang earlier this year.”*

Two sea lions have died at the Zoo earlier this year, in separate instances. Marina, the seven-year-old mother of Sunny, died in September after an epileptic seizure of unknown origin, potentially related to a gunshot wound to her head causing loss of one eye, which she sustained in her natural range before coming to the Seneca Park Zoo. Boomerang, a ten-year-old male sea lion, died in October from heart disease which was only identified after microscopic examination of tissue by an independent wildlife pathology laboratory.

Zoo officials have asked both the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to review the Zoo’s sea lion program and exhibit. *“Our preliminary analysis indicates that these deaths were not related,”* Zoo Director Larry Sorel stated. *“We look forward to working with the AZA and USDA to validate this assessment.”* AZA and USDA teams are planning on conducting their assessment in January.

Pamela Reed Sanchez, Executive Director of the Seneca Park Zoo Society, echoed Sorel’s comments: *“The Zoo Society and our Board of Trustees are supportive of efforts that the County is taking with the AZA and USDA to exclude any other causes for these deaths.”*

Sorel added that Zoo leadership is *“fully committed to being direct and transparent with the public about any findings that we learn.”*

Currently, the Zoo is home to one sea lion, Lily, who came to the Zoo in 2009 after sustaining an injury to her right front flipper while in her natural range.

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