

2222 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14621

[senecaparkzoo.org](http://senecaparkzoo.org)

Contact: Mina Johnson, Communications Coordinator

(585) 336-7202 or [mjohnson@senecazoo.org](mailto:mjohnson@senecazoo.org)



## Seneca Park Zoo celebrates life of female polar bear

**March 7, 2018** — Seneca Park Zoo is celebrating the life of 28-year-old female polar bear, Aurora, who died earlier this week. Aurora was born at Utah’s Hogle Zoo in 1989 and arrived at Seneca Park Zoo in 1991. For nearly three decades, Aurora has inspired people to care about polar bears and take action on behalf of her counterparts in natural range.

“The loss of such a beloved animal is difficult for the entire Zoo family,” said **Zoo Director Larry Sorel**. “Aurora captured the hearts of staff and guests alike. She will be deeply missed.”

**Dr. Louis DiVincenti**, the Zoo’s Director of Animal Health and Conservation, performed a necropsy, which revealed Aurora had a deteriorating liver and a compromised gall bladder. A definitive result will not be available until further tests are completed.

“Aurora’s blood work indicated she had severe liver disease, and her condition deteriorated rapidly necessitating humane euthanasia. We were able to confirm the liver disease on necropsy, but additional diagnostic tests are pending to determine a definitive cause,” said Dr. DiVincenti. “This is not uncommon, and the Species Survival Plan is actively working to identify causative factors for liver and gall bladder disease in polar bears.”

Female polar bears have a median life expectancy of about 24 years in human care. Aurora, at 28, had exceeded that figure.

During her time at the Zoo, Aurora gave birth to four offspring: three females, Anoki, Sila, and Haley, and one male, Qilak. Anoki currently resides at the Maryland Zoo, Sila is at North Carolina Zoo, Haley is at Memphis Zoo, and Qilak is at Denver Zoo.

In addition to her contributions to the (AZA) Polar Bear Species Survival Plan (SSP), Aurora was also crucial in advancing assisted reproduction strategies that have been adopted by AZA-accredited organizations across the country.

**Pamela Reed Sanchez, President and CEO of the Seneca Park Zoo Society,** says it will continue to serve as an Arctic Ambassador Center for conservation partner, Polar Bears International. “We are committed to helping protect this vulnerable species,” she said. “Over the course of her life, Aurora connected millions of our guests to polar bears and the challenges they face in natural range. She was an extraordinary ambassador for her species, and inspired people to want to make a difference for polar bears.”

The Zoo has a longstanding, successful commitment to polar bears and will work with the AZA Polar Bear SSP to bring more here in the future.

You can honor Aurora’s memory by donating to Polar Bears International at [polarbearsinternational.org](http://polarbearsinternational.org).

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Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.