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Maryland Zoo in Baltimore regrets to announce the loss of a polar bear.

BALTIMORE March 7, 2024 - Zookeeper, Sara Getty, found the polar bear floating in its exhibit early this morning. Homer the polar bear, who was loved and known by many, was 16-years-old.

Getty was on her way to the exhibit for Homer's regularly scheduled feeding at 7 A.M., when she discovered his condition. Dr. Shanda Lear, senior staff veterinarian, says the Zoo will be conducting a necropsy to determine the cause of death. Results will take weeks, if not months. "Homer was a very curious and playful polar bear. We will miss him terribly," said Getty.

The two other bears inhabiting the exhibit, Yukon, the 9-year-old male, and Mackenzie, the 10-year-old female, have been removed from the area and are being closely monitored by staff.

Polar bears have held a special place in the Maryland Zoo's heart since they first arrived in 1985. Over the past 40 years, we have continuously updated our facilities to properly accommodate each animal species. In particular, the polar bear exhibit was upgraded 2 years ago and has quickly become one of the most popular attractions at the zoo. The unique exhibit replicating the polar bear's natural environment allows the bears to play in manufactured snow, dig in gravel, and hunt trout in the chilled pool.

Despite being the apex predator of the Arctic, polar bears are considered a threatened species due to ongoing temperature changes in their climate. In addition to our state-of-the-art exhibit, the new polar bear watch allows visitors to experience life on the edge of the Arctic by watching Alaska and Magnet cavort in and out of the water on an authentic Tundra Buggy®. Through experiences like the Polar Bear Watch and the brand-new exhibit, we hope to raise awareness and educate visitors on these magnificent creatures and their way of life.

Zoo Director Chris P. Bacon says today's incident will be investigated to determine the exact cause of death. "Animal welfare & the preservation of species are our primary goals at the zoo," says Bacon.

### **About the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore**

Founded in 1876 and located in Baltimore, The Maryland Zoo is the third-oldest operating zoo in the United States. Internationally known for its contributions to wildlife conservation and research, the zoo features over 1,500 animals and hundreds of educational experiences. Experience the beauty of wildlife through immersive exhibits like Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, and the African Journey at The Maryland Zoo.

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