



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Audubon Zoo Mourns the Loss of Beloved Elephant

(New Orleans, La.) – It is with great sadness that Audubon Zoo announces the passing of Panya, a beloved 55-year-old female Asian elephant. Audubon veterinary and animal care staff made the difficult decision to humanely euthanize her following a steep decline in her health due to kidney disease.

In the final stages of her illness, Panya received hospice care at Audubon Zoo, during which her condition was monitored closely and every effort was made to maintain her comfort. Once it became clear that the condition was irreversible and her quality of life was being impacted, Audubon’s expert veterinary and animal care staff decided that the most humane course of action was to say goodbye to Panya.

Panya, who was one of the longest-standing members of the Audubon family, called Audubon Zoo home for 39 years. She was beloved by staff, volunteers, and the community and touched countless visitors during her time at the Zoo. “Panya was an amazing animal—brilliant and incredibly strong-spirited. We all loved her, and we will miss her deeply,” says Audubon Zoo Curator of Large Mammals Joe Forys, who worked with Panya for more than 19 years.

“Panya was such an iconic member of the New Orleans community—she inspired a lifelong passion for wildlife and conservation in generations of Zoo visitors,” says Audubon Nature Institute President and CEO Ron Forman, “She leaves behind an incredible legacy that will be felt far beyond her lifetime.”

Audubon thanks its members, donors, visitors, and followers for their sympathy and support during this difficult time.

Panya served as an ambassador for her species, educating millions of people about the plight of elephants in the wild. Over the last 75 years, the population of Asian elephants is estimated to have declined by 50 percent or more, maintaining their endangered status according to the [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#). Within three generations, Asian elephants could disappear from the wild if action is not taken.

Members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), including Audubon, are very involved in elephant conservation efforts, investing more than \$10.5 million towards elephant conservation between 2012 and 2016 alone. Asian elephants are one of the Signature Species of the [AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction](#) program, which combines the expertise and resources of AZA partners to save Asian elephants from extinction. AZA members are also strong supporters of 96 Elephants, which advocates for African elephants and educates the public about the dangers they face in the wild.

Audubon Zoo is home to Panya's longtime companion Jean (age 46) as well as Surapa (age 36), and Jothi (age 37), who [came to Audubon in November 2018](#).

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