



## Greater Vancouver Zoo – PRESS RELEASE

Date: August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### UNEXPECTED LOSS OF RED PANDA

Aldergrove – It has been an extremely sad and difficult week at the Greater Vancouver Zoo, as Rakesh, one of our male red pandas died unexpectedly on Monday.

A full necropsy was performed on Rakesh by an independent veterinary pathologist with the BC Animal Health Centre. The results have confirmed that this is a case of pulmonary Blastomycosis. Blastomycosis is a disease caused by a fungus found in decaying organic matter such as wood and leaves. Most cases are caused by inhalation of these fungal spores from a soil source.

As the animals were immediately quarantined – as required by AZA and CAZA protocols – and this disease does not typically occur in British Columbia it is most likely that Rakesh was infected before leaving Manitoba. Further confirmatory tests are being conducted by the BC Center for Disease Control.

Rakesh and his sibling Arun arrived from the Assiniboine Zoo in Winnipeg just over two months ago as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival program (SSP). The SSP program helps the survival of species that are threatened or endangered in the wild by maintaining genetic diversity through managed breeding programs.

As required under AZA and CAZA protocols, Rakesh and Arun were immediately quarantined upon their arrival. GVZ's new quarantine facility provides a safe environment for animals awaiting introduction into the zoo population and did not have any exposure to any soil source since arrival.

Red Pandas are listed as Endangered as the population is estimated at less than 10,000 individuals, with a continuing decline of greater than 10 percent over the next 3 generations (estimated at 30 years) due to poaching and habitat loss.

It had taken over two years for the Greater Vancouver Zoo to qualify for participation in the SSP for Red Pandas. Through population management and conservation efforts such as public education, research, reintroduction and field conservation programs that are supported by the SSP program we can assure a sustainable future for animals that are currently being threatened in the wild.

The care of Arun is our top priority right now and as a precaution, he is being treated by our veterinarian with medication while further tests are conducted.

The Greater Vancouver Zoo has been working with the Assiniboine Zoo, SSP Veterinary Advisor, and all other zoos in Canada and US that currently have red pandas to communicate all findings, understand the circumstances of Rakesh's infection and ensure we all have a healthy population of pandas.

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To learn more about the good things we do at the Zoo  
visit us at: [www.gvzoo.com](http://www.gvzoo.com) or better yet come visit us in person!

Since 1970....dedicated to conservation, preservation & protection of endangered species! The Greater Vancouver Zoo is an accredited zoo within the Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA), which is a non-profit organization established to promote the welfare of animals and encourage the advancement of education, conservation and science.

