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PHOENIX ZOO ANNOUNCES PASSING OF INDU, ASIAN ELEPHANT

PHOENIX (May 8, 2025) - The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation (ACNC)/Phoenix Zoo family is saddened to share the passing of 59-year-old female Asian elephant, Indu.

Indu was undergoing treatment for chronic osteoarthritis and age-related illness. Her care team had been managing her conditions with daily medication as well as treatments such as hydrotherapy, laser therapy and physical therapy. Recently it had become more challenging to manage her discomfort, and her mobility had been declining. With her increasing physical limitations, Zoo veterinarians and keeper staff recognized her regressing health and made the very difficult decision to humanely euthanize her this morning, Thursday, May 8. She passed peacefully in the comfort of familiar surroundings, encircled by those who loved her most, her dedicated care team.

“Indu was a truly remarkable elephant who touched the hearts of everyone who had the privilege to know her,” says Bert Castro, President and CEO of the Phoenix Zoo. “Her gentle spirit, intelligence and resilience inspired not only our staff but also the millions of guests who visited her over the years. Her legacy will live on through the stories we share, the connections she helped people form with wildlife and our continued commitment to the highest standards of animal care. She will be profoundly missed.”

“Indu has captivated the hearts of guests and staff alike with her gentle nature and immense presence,” says Heather Wright, Elephant Collection Manager. “Indu has made and continues to leave an indelible impression on all who have the privilege to care for her and the guests who have had the joy of seeing her. We thank you for your support and condolences during this difficult time.”

“There is much uncertainty in the world today, but one thing is certain. The elephant Indu lived and thrived under the compassionate care of dedicated and expert professional staff at the Phoenix Zoo. Her 59 years of life is a testament to the focus on animal care and wellbeing that is a hallmark of the Phoenix Zoo and all AZA-accredited members,” said Dan Ashe, president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. “The Phoenix Zoo has been AZA-accredited since 1981, reflecting its commitment to achieving and maintaining the global gold standard for modern zoos and aquariums. We offer our sincerest condolences to the staff who have cared for her, as well as our admiration and appreciation for how they supported her in growing old with grace and dignity.”

At 59 years old, Indu was an elderly elephant. The average life expectancy for an Asian elephant in an AZA accredited zoo is 48 and her age is evidence of the world class care she received from her keepers and medical staff.

Indu arrived at the Phoenix Zoo in 1998 and quickly became a beloved ambassador for Asian elephants, a species classified as endangered due to habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict. Her story brought awareness to the challenges elephants face in the wild and inspired countless guests to advocate for conservation efforts.

Throughout her years at the Zoo, Indu formed a deep connection with her caretakers, who dedicated themselves to providing her with the best care possible. She was known for her curious and independent spirit.

Her imposing stature was matched only by her gentle demeanor, and she brought smiles to the faces of countless guests, from wide-eyed children seeing an elephant for the first time to lifelong Zoo supporters who came back time and again to visit her. In honor of Indu, we hope fans will share their photos and memories of her on our social channels @phoenixzoo.

The Phoenix Zoo community mourns the loss of Indu but takes solace in the profound impact she had on everyone who had the privilege of knowing her. We will honor her memory by continuing to advocate for the protection of her wild counterparts and supporting conservation efforts including AZA's Asian Elephant SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) program to ensure a brighter future for elephants everywhere.

Indu – you will forever remain in our hearts, and your legacy will continue to inspire compassion and action for the natural world.

For memories of Indu from her keepers including photos and videos, please visit <https://www.phoenixzoo.org/indu>.

MEDIA MATERIAL:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/9oeofyha069x0vv1fbkp6/AMUoQyN5ZTu8HSmgZQj0Nsl?rlkey=33dwt7bsebsxyt9ps3jcjpmn&st=tq4cdbki&dl=0>

Credit: Phoenix Zoo

About the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation operates the Phoenix Zoo. The ACNC advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

The Phoenix Zoo is the only zoo in the Valley accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a non-profit zoological park, serving 1.4 million guests annually. The Zoo is home to more than 3,000 animals, many of which are endangered and threatened species.

www.phoenixzoo.org.