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# El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens Mourns Loss of Beloved Sun Bear

**EL PASO, Texas** - The El Paso Zoo and Botanical Gardens is heartbroken to announce the death of 30-year-old Sun Bear, Heliana, who had to be euthanized due to an ongoing battle with cancer.

Zoo staff had been keeping a close eye on her when they noticed she was not behaving normally; she was lethargic and had not been eating well. Medical exams revealed the cancer she was diagnosed with years ago and was being treated for had spread throughout her body.

Necessary medications were provided to keep her comfortable and the decision was made that the best course of action was to have her humanely euthanased.

“During the last few days, Heliana started exhibiting shortness of breath and stopped eating her favorite foods. A CT scan revealed that her cancer had spread,” said El Paso Zoo Asia section Collections Supervisor Griselda Martinez. “As much as we loved her and cared for her daily by providing her with the necessary medications to keep her comfortable, we knew it was time to let her go peacefully. It broke our hearts, but she is free from the cancer and the pain and discomfort that it brings. We will miss Heliana dearly and will hold all the beautiful moments and memories of her in our hearts.”

Heliana came to the El Paso Zoo in October 1995 from the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, Maryland. She was one of the few original animals left in the Asia section of the zoo when it first opened to the public in 1997.

Sun Bears are listed as “Vulnerable” in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species. The median life expectancy of Sun Bears is 23 years old for females. Heliana’s longevity, living to 30 years old with cancer, is a reflection of the great care she received at the zoo.

## **About El Paso Zoo**

The El Paso Zoo is a 35-acre facility that houses animals representing over 220 species, including critically endangered species. Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), the El Paso Zoo celebrates the value of animals and natural resources and creates opportunities for people to rediscover their connection to nature. To learn more, visit <http://www.elpasozoo.org/>

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Promoting **Transparent & Consistent Communication**  
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