

## Former Detroit Zoo elephant Wanda dies at 57

Ten years ago, two Detroit Zoo Asian elephants made headlines when they began a new life, retiring to greener pastures at a California wildlife sanctuary. The remaining half of this popular gigantic duo — 57-year-old Wanda — has died, according to a statement from the zoo.

The beloved creature had been experiencing chronic foot issues — as well as severe arthritis — and had taken a turn for the worse, prompting a decision by officials to end her life in a humane manner.

Detroit Zoological Society Executive Director Ron Kagan expressed his condolences on behalf of the Zoo, remarking they all knew the day was coming. He also thanked PAWS (Performing Animal Welfare Society) for their care of the elephants throughout their stay.

Winky died in 2008 at age 56. He too suffered severe arthritis.

It is not uncommon for captive elephants to develop this debilitating disorder, and is generally believed to be the result of being confined to a small space over a long period. Though elephants can endure Michigan's northern climate, they are much better suited for mild weather. The state's weather was among the key factors in moving the pair to California; the Detroit Zoo was the first such facility in the country to announce they would no longer hold elephants on ethical grounds, a move that has inspired similar decisions across the nation.

Winky and Wanda resided at the Detroit Zoo for about 10 years before their relocation to the sanctuary. Two African white rhinos now occupy their former residence.

When they moved to California, a major news event in the region, zoo staff worked for many weeks to prepare the pair for the trip in semi-trucks, conditioning them to stay in the truck.