



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 2, 2012**

[www.sfzoo.org](http://www.sfzoo.org)

### **San Francisco Zoo Mourns the Death of “Orkney” the Beloved Grey Seal**

SAN FRANCISCO – Today, San Francisco Zoo is sad to announce the loss of Orkney, an Atlantic grey seal that arrived at the Zoo in 1970. He was 42 years old and considered the oldest grey seal living in any North American Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA) captive populations. He was born in the wild at Prince Edward Island in Eastern Canada and was a favorite among staff and visitors. He shared his exhibit with other grey seals over the years and sired multiple offspring between 1979 and 1983.

For the past several months, Orkney had been undergoing medical treatments as well as regular training sessions that allowed staff to monitor his weight and conduct visual exams. Yesterday, his keepers noticed that he was extremely lethargic and weak. They kept a close eye on him in hopes his condition would improve. On Friday morning, his breathing was deep and labored, and he showed no signs of engagement or interaction. After careful consultation with the Zoo’s Animal Care staff and the Chief of Veterinary Services, the decision to euthanize him was made.

“Unfortunately, we had to make the decision to say goodbye to Orkney,” Tanya M. Peterson, San Francisco Zoological Society Executive Director and President said. “He had been our own Lance Armstrong by beating the odds for so long. He’ll be greatly missed by staff and visitors alike.”

Grey seal populations are found on both sides of the North Atlantic Ocean. Their scientific name *Halichoerus grypus* derives from the Greek words meaning "hook-nosed sea pig." Before Congress passed the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972, grey seals were hunted commercially and their populations declined rapidly. Thanks to conservation efforts such as this, these beautiful animals are thriving in the wild.



Photo Credit: Marianne Hale

### **About San Francisco Zoo**

*Encompassing 100 acres, the historic San Francisco Zoo is Northern California's largest zoological park. The Zoo is home to exotic and rescued animals from all over the world and is located across from the Pacific Ocean. The African Savanna offers a multi-species landscape with giraffes, zebras, kudu, ostriches and more. Go nose to nose with famed grizzly sisters Kachina and Kiona at Grizzly Gulch; watch lemurs leap through the largest outdoor lemur habitat in the country; visit Penguin Island; marvel at our troop of gorillas; and feed farm animals in the popular Children's Zoo. Take rides on one of the world's only old-fashioned miniature steam trains and the historic Dentzel Carousel. The Zoo is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is located at 1 Zoo Road, San Francisco (415) 753-7080. Visit [www.sfzoo.org](http://www.sfzoo.org) for more information.*

