



# news release

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## **AZA Expands SAFE Conservation Initiative with Addition of Four New Species**

**Silver Spring, Maryland (January 10, 2018)** – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has announced the addition of four species to the AZA SAFE: Saving Animals from Extinction® (SAFE) initiative, furthering collaborative conservation efforts to save the world's most vulnerable animals from extinction.

In 2017, giraffes, African vultures, black-footed ferrets, and radiated tortoises were selected, bringing the total number of SAFE Species to 14. Species eligible for the SAFE program are threatened with extinction, have a history of two or more AZA-accredited facilities engaged in their conservation, and have active recovery or conservation plans.

AZA also recently published its [2017 SAFE Annual Report](#), providing insight into the progress member zoos and aquariums have made over the past year in supporting projects benefiting the 14 SAFE Species.

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums have long been centers of conservation, and in 2016, collectively contributed over \$216 million to field conservation on behalf of nearly 800 species. SAFE builds on AZA's commitment to conservation by prioritizing collaboration, incorporating both conservation and public engagement activities to advance species recovery, and measuring the effects of these activities. Each species program is created, led, and driven by a skilled and professional program leader and supported by a project team from AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums.

"AZA is a community of conservation leaders; people with the passion and the professional experience to make measurable, meaningful differences in saving species from extinction," said Dan Ashe, President and CEO of AZA. "With the addition of these new species, SAFE is expanding the diversity of opportunities for member engagement and extending their impact in conserving wildlife and wild places."

SAFE began in 2015 when the leadership of the AZA-accredited zoo and aquarium community identified ten species on which to focus planning and conservation action. AZA members are now leading priority projects for African penguin, cheetah, western pond turtle, sharks and rays, and vaquita, with more critically important conservation initiatives to come. Projects include working with partners to develop, test, and deploy artificial nests for African penguins whose nesting habitats have been destroyed; funding and providing animal care experts to rescue efforts spearheaded by the Mexican government to save the critically endangered vaquita; and deploying acoustic

tags and developing a citizen science program for divers to improve understanding of shark habitat use and migration patterns.

SAFE has evolved to empower zoo and aquarium professionals to champion species of concern to grow the initiative's ability to respond to conservation crises and engage 100% of AZA facility members in strategic field conservation. These four new SAFE Species are the first of what is expected to become an effort protecting at least 30 species by 2023. AZA applauds the leadership of the following zoos for forwarding the SAFE initiative with these species programs:

- African vultures: North Carolina Zoological Park
- Black-footed ferrets: Louisville Zoo
- Giraffes: Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo
- Radiated tortoises: Utah's Hogle Zoo, Zoo Knoxville

In addition to being supported by AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums, SAFE has also received significant support from the likes of Stonyfield Organics, Frito-Lay North America, ALEX AND ANI, Unite for Literacy, and Zebra Pen. These companies and organizations have come on board to help save species from extinction by helping raise awareness of SAFE through national campaigns reaching millions of consumers.

To learn more about SAFE and the conservation work undertaken by AZA members, visit <https://www.aza.org/aza-safe>.

### **About AZA**

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and eight other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org).

### **About SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction®**

SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction® combines the power of zoo and aquarium visitors with the resources and collective expertise of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and partners to save animals from extinction. Together we are working on saving the most vulnerable wildlife species from extinction and protecting them for future generations. To learn more, visit [www.aza.org/aza-safe](http://www.aza.org/aza-safe).

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