



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 Exceptional Zoos and Aquariums Achieve AZA Accreditation

Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation Commission Grants Accreditation to 19 World-Class Facilities During Spring 2018 Review Cycle

Silver Spring, Maryland – Twice a year, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) independent Accreditation Commission (the Commission) evaluates accreditation applications from the world's best aquariums, nature centers, science centers and zoos. Most recently, the Commission reviewed 21 accreditation applications and 2 applications for certification. As a result of these rigorous assessments, AZA proudly announces that the following facilities are accredited:

- Alexandria Zoological Park, La.
- Audubon Zoo, La.
- Brevard Zoo, Fla.
- Dolphin Discovery Cozumel, Mexico
- Dolphin Discovery Isla Mujeres, Mexico
- El Paso Zoo, Texas
- Fort Worth Zoo, Texas
- Georgia Aquarium, Ga.
- Houston Zoo, Inc., Texas
- Jenkinson's Aquarium, N.J.
- Louisville Zoological Garden, Ky.
- Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, Conn.
- Mote Marine Laboratory and Aquarium, Fla.
- Ocean Park Corporation, Hong Kong
- OdySea Aquarium, Ariz.
- Rainforest & Aquarium at Moody Gardens, Texas
- Sacramento Zoo, Calif.
- San Antonio Zoological Society, Texas
- Seattle Aquarium, Wash.

"AZA's accreditation standards are widely acknowledged as the 'gold-standard' in the zoological profession, and our independent Commission grants accreditation only to those who have reached this level of achievement," said AZA President and CEO Dan Ashe. "AZA-accredited facilities are proven leaders in animal care, welfare, and

conservation, contributing \$216 million to conservation fieldwork and welcoming more than 200million guests each year. We are proud to count these accredited facilities and their dedicated staff among our prestigious members.”

AZA also granted certification to 2 applicants - the White Oak Conservation Center in Florida and the Pinola Aviary & Conservancy in Louisiana. The certification process is equivalent to the accreditation process, but is designed for non-commercial, wildlife-holding facilities that are not open to the public on a regular basis.

Each facility underwent a thorough review to make certain it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards, which emphasize animal welfare and care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires facilities to complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years to be members of the Association.

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site multiple-day inspection by an independent team of trained zoological professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the facility’s operation, including animal welfare and well-being; veterinary care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff, and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; financial stability; risk management; guest services. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal hearing in front of the Accreditation Commission, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied. Any facility that is denied may reapply after one year if it has thoroughly redressed the reasons for denial.

Demonstrating the stringency and independence of this process, AZA’s Accreditation Commission took the difficult decision to deny accreditation to BREC’s Baton Rouge Zoo, in Louisiana.

“Baton Rouge Zoo has been a longstanding AZA member, and its leadership and staff are valued and respected members of our professional community. However, due to chronic issues with facility maintenance, the Commission could not support accreditation. We look forward to the day, hopefully in the not distant future, when we will see these issues addressed and Baton Rouge Zoo will again stand proudly among the AZA community,” said Ashe.

Over the past ten years, the Commission has accredited 249 facilities, with many being successfully accredited twice during that time span. The Commission has denied accreditation to 21 facilities.

There are currently 232 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and 13 AZA-certified related facility members throughout the U.S. and in eight other countries.

“Fewer than 10 percent of all animal exhibitors registered with USDA have achieved the rigorous standards for accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums,” said Jim Breheny, Chair of the AZA Board of Directors. “By achieving AZA-accreditation, this elite group of zoos and aquariums demonstrate commitment to exemplary animal care

and welfare, educational and inspiring visitor experiences, and AZA's mission to conserve wildlife around the world. We congratulate all who have exceeded the expectations required for AZA accreditation."

The Commission will meet to assess the next group of accreditation applicants this Fall in Seattle, Washington. For a full list of facilities applying for AZA accreditation, please visit <https://www.aza.org/upcoming-reviews>. For a full list of currently accredited AZA-facilities, please visit <https://www.aza.org/current-accreditation-list>.

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.

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