



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Abilene Zoo earns AZA Accreditation

Silver Spring, Maryland (April 2, 2014) – The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) today announced that the Abilene Zoo was granted accreditation by AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission.

“Only zoos and aquariums that meet the highest standards are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums,” said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. “The community should take great pride in knowing that the Abilene Zoo is a proven leader in the care and conservation of wildlife, and in inspiring people to take action to protect the natural world.”

To be accredited, the Abilene Zoo underwent a thorough review to ensure it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards, which include animal care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years in order to be members of the Association.

Abilene Zoo Director Bill Gersonde said it took teamwork to prepare for the process, and he’s proud of the team’s success.

“We’re thrilled to join more than 220 other institutions as an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums,” Gersonde said. “We never could have reached this significant achievement without the support of the City of Abilene, the Abilene Zoological Society, a dedicated staff and our zoo members and guests.”

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the institution’s operation, including animal care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and other areas.

Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal hearing of AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied. Any institution that is denied may reapply one year after the Commission’s decision is made.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting an institution dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, please visit www.aza.org.

About the Abilene Zoo: The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 900 animals from 250 species. The Zoo offers many educational programs and kids' activities, including camps, birthday parties and Behind the Scenes Tours. The Abilene Zoo is open 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3.50 for children ages 3-12, \$5 for seniors aged 60+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$30. www.abilenezoo.org. 325-676-6085. During the summer months, the zoo is open every Thursday until 9 p.m., with admission ending at 8:30 p.m.