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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****May 17, 2017****MEDIA CONTACT:**

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E-mail: [kelly.thompson@abilenetx.com](mailto:kelly.thompson@abilenetx.com)**Zoo Launches Investigation Into Jaguar Escape**

ABILENE, TEXAS – The Abilene Zoo has assembled a team to investigate the jaguar enclosure and create a timeline for the incident that occurred in the early morning hours Monday, May 8.

Staff from the veterinary, animal care, and maintenance departments have joined forces to research the details. The two jaguars, Luna and Estrella, remain in their behind-the-scenes holding area, where they will stay until the zoo staff is confident the animals' enclosure is secure.

The zoo does not have a timeline for the investigation, but it will file with the appropriate governing agencies and keep the citizens informed.

Two-year-old Estrella managed to leave the enclosure early Monday while the zoo was closed to the public. All doors were locked. Staff found the animal perched above the neighboring spider monkey exhibit. Staff called a "Code Red," for the escape at approximately 8:10 a.m. Following procedure, the cat was sedated, relocated and examined by veterinary staff. She was back in her off-exhibit quarters before 9 a.m.

"Again, the zoo staff is to be commended on their response to this emergency," said Abilene Zoo Director Bill Gersonde. "We will continue to work together as we conduct a thorough investigation, make the necessary changes and can assure the safety for our guests, animals and the staff."

The Abilene Zoo staff conducts monthly drills to prepare for many emergency and non-emergency situations, including lost children, venomous snake bites, active shooter situations, and escaped animals of different threat levels.

**About the Abilene Zoo:**

Since its founding in 1966, the Abilene Zoo has stood as a place of learning and adventure, where visitors make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife. Situated on 16 acres in the award-winning Grover Nelson Park, the zoo provides a special encounter in a lushly landscaped walkable setting with more than 1000 animals of 270 species from around the globe. The 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 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$4.50 for children ages 3-12, \$6 for seniors aged 60 and older. Members are admitted free. [www.abilenezoo.org](http://www.abilenezoo.org). 325-676-6085.