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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jan 21, 2016**

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**Zoo's jaguar euthanized**

ABILENE, Texas – The Abilene Zoo's jaguar was euthanized yesterday in response to his mounting health problems related to old age.

"He let us know it was time," said Dr. Stephanie Carle, the zoo's veterinarian. "He stopped eating and became lethargic. We knew his kidney disease was already quite advanced, and we didn't want him to suffer."

Wailer was among the oldest known jaguars living in captivity. Jaguar lifespans in the wild are typically 12 to 15 years, while Wailer has been a favorite of zoo goers for more than two decades. He was born on Feb. 24, 1995, at the Ellen Trout Zoo in Lufkin, and moved to Abilene the following October.

"We can't replace Wailer, but we do have big plans for jaguars at the Abilene Zoo," said Executive Director Bill Gersonde. "These cats are threatened in the wild, and we will be upgrading our holding area to allow for a breeding pair of these animals."

The Abilene Zoo participates in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Jaguar Species Survival Plan, a program that maintains a self-sustaining population of these vulnerable animals to help prevent extinction. Among the bond projects approved by Abilene voters last year was the upgrading of the zoo's facilities to incorporate a jaguar breeding program.

The jaguar is the largest cat in the Western Hemisphere and is historically native to the southern United States. Due to habitat alteration, jaguars now can only be found from the U.S./Mexico border south into Central America.

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**About the Abilene Zoo:** The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 1000 animals of 250 different species. 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. Memberships start at \$35. [www.abilenezoo.org](http://www.abilenezoo.org). 325-676-6085.

**Mission Statement:** The Abilene Zoo is a place of learning and adventure, where families make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife.