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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Jaguar diagnosed with kidney disease**

ABILENE, Texas – The Abilene Zoo’s jaguar has been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease, and zoo staffers are working hard to ensure that the animal’s last days are comfortable.

Wailer the jaguar has been a favorite of zoo goers for more than 20 years. He was born on Feb. 24, 1995, at the Ellen Trout Zoo in Lufkin, and moved to Abilene that October.

Jaguar lifespans in the wild are typically 12 to 15 years, while cats living in zoos can live to be 20. Wailer is nearly 21 and among the oldest known jaguars living in captivity. With that in mind, zoo staff has been vigilant about the animal’s medical care.

“One of the most frustrating things about this disease is that there is no cure and it cannot be diagnosed until 75 percent of the kidney function is already gone,” said Dr. Stephanie Carle, the zoo’s veterinarian. “At this point he is doing OK, and we are trying our best to keep him comfortable for as long as possible -- whether that is a few weeks or a few months.”

Wailer has had a few episodes of nausea but is on a high quality diet for his sensitive stomach. He is behaving normally, albeit a bit slower because of his age.

Zoo guests can still visit Wailer in his exhibit while his health allows.

Jaguars are an endangered species, and as part of the zoo’s master plan and the bond approved by voters in 2015, the jaguar exhibit will be grown in the future to include a breeding pair of jaguars.

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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.