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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Quarters for Conservation lets guests choose animal programs**

ABILENE, TEXAS – The Abilene Zoo has a new initiative to teach guests about supporting animal conservation.

This weekend the Abilene Zoo will launch Quarters for Conservation, donating 25 cents from every zoo admission to species conservation projects. In turn, each guest at the gate will receive a metal washer that symbolizes this donation, and they can vote for one of three animal projects by dropping the washer in a vortex wishing well at a conservation kiosk.

“By supporting the zoo, our guests have always provided financial support for animal conservation,” points out Zoo Educator Paige Rudaisics, who chairs the zoo’s Conservation Committee. “But with this new program, children and adults actually will see where that donation is going and have a hand in choosing where they want their support to go.”



At the end of the year, the Abilene Zoo will donate to each of three conservation projects as they rank by guest votes. First place will receive \$10,000; second will get \$5,000; and the third place organization will receive \$2,500.

Guests will choose from these three Texas- based programs:

- **Ocelots.** The United States only has 50 of this speckled species of small cat left – living in extreme south Texas and northeastern Mexico. Conservation funds will go to the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge in south Texas. The Abilene Zoo participates in a national Species Survival Plan for these animals and breeds ocelots.



- **Attwater Prairie Chickens.** These colorful grouse are unique to Texas and the Louisiana gulf coast, but the population has dropped from millions of birds a century ago to only 400

today – eking out survival on less than 1 percent of its original habitat. Funds will go to the Friends of the Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge and help recover Texas’ most endangered bird. The Abilene Zoo also breeds Attwater Prairie Chickens and releases them back into the wild.



- **Turtles.** Funds will go toward the Turtle Survival Alliance, a global partnership of people, zoos, aquariums, biologists and researchers who work to conserve threatened and endangered tortoises and turtles. Among the TSA’s projects in Texas is collecting Musk turtle data and conducting turtle surveys in New Braunfels.

**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+. 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.*