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NEWS RELEASE

Minnesota Zoo earns prestigious AZA accreditation

The Zoo has been an accredited member since 1990

Columbus, OH – September 15, 2023 – The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) announced this week, during its annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, that the Minnesota Zoo was granted accreditation by AZA's independent Accreditation Commission.

"Every year, AZA sends over 200 accreditation inspectors around the world to review 60 to 70 applications for AZA accreditation. We also have nearly 40 facilities participating in our Pathway Toward Membership program, which is indicative of the growing importance of independent accreditation," said Dan Ashe, president and CEO of AZA. "AZA's standards are continuously revised to reflect cutting-edge zoological practices based on the latest animal wellbeing science and research. Clearly, the best-of-the-best zoos and aquariums want to be part of our association."

To be accredited, the Minnesota Zoo underwent a thorough review to make certain it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards in categories which include animal care and welfare, 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. Due to pandemic-related delays, the Minnesota Zoo last underwent the accreditation process in 2017.

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 and welfare; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and more. 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.

The Minnesota Zoo has been an accredited AZA member since 1990.

"We are proud to be a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums community," says John Frawley, Director of the Minnesota Zoo and President of the Minnesota Zoo Foundation. "We are always striving to maintain and improve our world-class facility in order to continue to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife. This week's announcement reaffirms our dedication to the highest of standards within our community and industry."

The AZA inspection team mentioned a long list of strengths at the Minnesota Zoo. A sample of this list includes the overall presentation of the Zoo; the formulation and structure of our Animal Care, Health, Conservation, and Behavior Team; the Zoo's educational programming opportunities, interactive kid zones throughout the Zoo, the newly opened Treetop Trail, and our local conservation efforts focused on prairie butterflies, turtles, freshwater mussels, and bison.

About AZA

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, animal welfare, education, science, and recreation. AZA is the accrediting body for the top zoos and aquariums in the United States and eight other countries. Look for the AZA accreditation logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in saving species and your link to helping animals all over the world. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

About the Minnesota Zoo

The Minnesota Zoo is a year-round destination providing a window into the natural world. With hundreds of species of animals, worldwide conservation efforts, and acres of scenic beauty, the Zoo is a resource to connect people, animals and the natural world to save wildlife. For more information visit mnzoo.org. The Minnesota Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and an institutional member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).

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