

AZA Grants Accreditation To Santa Barbara Zoo

Silver Spring, Maryland (April 15, 2010) – The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) announced that the Santa Barbara Zoo was granted accreditation by AZA's independent Accreditation Commission.

"Santa Barbara Zoo is one of the best in the world because it has met the highest standards in the world," said AZA Executive Director Kris Vehrs. "It takes hard work and dedication to meet Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation Standards."

To be accredited, Santa Barbara Zoo underwent a thorough investigation to ensure it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards, which include animal care, 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.

"The Santa Barbara Zoo is a great place for people to connect with the nature," Vehrs added. "Members of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums support their schools and communities with science-based wildlife education programs that not only inform but also inspire people to take action."

"We are honored to be counted among the accredited zoos in the AZA," said Rich Block, CEO of the Santa Barbara Zoo. "This achievement is a testament to the dedicated work of our professional staff, the impassioned commitment of our volunteers, and the steadfast support of our members and donors. We are committed to building great experiences around animals that touch and enrich the lives of over 450,000 guests every year."

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 in areas such as animal care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff, and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and other areas. The inspection team prepares an extensive written report for the Accreditation Commission. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal Commission hearing, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied. Any institution that is denied may reapply one year after the Commission's decision is made.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting an institution dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, please visit www.aza.org.

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Please contact Julia McHugh at the Santa Barbara Zoo at 805-569-3303 for additional information about the institution, including special events and activities for visitors and its ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation and science education.