

## **AZA Grants Accreditation to The Maryland Zoo**

**Silver Spring, Maryland (September 21, 2012)** – The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) today announced that The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore was granted accreditation by AZA's independent Accreditation Commission.

"Only zoos and aquariums that meet the highest standards are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums," said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. "The community should take great pride in knowing that The Maryland Zoo is ranked among the best zoos and aquariums in the world."

To be accredited, The Maryland Zoo underwent a thorough review 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 Maryland Zoo is a leader in the care and conservation of wildlife, and in educating people about the natural world," Maddy added.

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

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](http://www.aza.org).

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*Please contact Jane Ballentine, Director of Public Relations at The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, at 443-552-5275 for additional information about the facility, including special events and activities for visitors and its ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation and science education.*