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The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore Recognized for Top Honors in Exhibit Design for *Penguin Coast*

Silver Spring, Maryland (13 September 2016) – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) announced that The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore has received Top Honors in the AZA 2016 Award for Exhibit Design for annual operating budgets over \$5 million category for its *Penguin Coast* exhibit.

“As the highest honor for new exhibits, this award recognizes The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore’s innovation and commitment in designing a dynamic, immersive habitat that provides the best in animal care and public education to help connect people with nature,” said Keith Winsten, director of the Brevard Zoo and chair of AZA’s Honors and Awards Committee.

With its annual Exhibit Award, AZA recognizes excellence by an AZA-accredited Institution (US or International) or Related Facility member in the areas of exhibit design and providing visitors with the opportunity to engage in observing and learning about the animals.

“African penguins called Rock Island home for 45 years, so *Penguin Coast* marks quite a departure for us,” said Don Hutchinson, president/CEO of The Maryland Zoo. “The Maryland Zoo maintains one of the largest colonies and has the most successful breeding program of African penguins in North America and the new environment will enable us to continue with our efforts on behalf of these birds.”

“One of the most thrilling experiences at *Penguin Coast* is the opportunity to see the penguins swimming in front of the underwater viewing area. For as ungainly as they seem on land, they are amazingly graceful swimmers,” continued Hutchinson “The overall design allows visitors to see the penguins closer than ever from many distinct vantage points around the exhibit.”

Penguin Coast provides a richer and more diverse living environment for the Zoo’s current colony of over 70 African black-footed penguins, including a 185,000-gallon pool surrounding the indoor Conservation Center which houses the birds’ nest boxes, a hospital room, kitchen and keeper work space. This space, at more than 1,920 square feet, will allow the Zoo to eventually grow the African penguin colony up to 100 birds. *Penguin Coast* is also home to white-breasted cormorants and pink-backed pelicans.

Penguin Coast also includes an interpretive building, the Penguin Education Center, featuring a multi-purpose room for education programs and animal demonstrations, restrooms, indoor space for special events, the BGE Underwater Viewing Window and view to a tidal pool where the dump tank will periodically unload 1,000 gallons of water creating a wave-like effect for the birds and a great backdrop for guest photos!

Across from the Conservation Center is Penguin Encounters, built specifically for the housing and care of the six penguin Animal Ambassadors that travel as part of the Zoo's Outreach Program. Penguin Encounters includes a separate yard and outdoor pool for up to eight birds, and is home to our twice daily public Penguin Encounter tours.

Construction and consultation companies for the exhibit included: CLR Design, Whiting-Turner (general contractors for the exhibit), HDC, Inc. (project manager), Gecko Group (interpretive and directional signage), and TJP Engineering.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo's varied natural habitat exhibits in areas including Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children's Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

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.

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