



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **First of its Kind Kickstarter Campaign Launched to Help Save Endangered African Penguins**

*The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is proud to back "Invest In The Nest."*

**Baltimore, MD** – African penguin populations have been declining for the past few decades. The Maryland Zoo, an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), is joining with the AZA and other accredited aquariums and zoos to take action and help reverse this trend. Today, they are launching the *"Invest In The Nest"* campaign on Kickstarter, the innovative crowdfunding platform. The campaign seeks to raise \$150,000 to help build and place 1,500 artificial nests for African penguins in South Africa and Namibia.

"The Maryland Zoo has been involved in with African penguin conservation efforts since for 50 years. We've supported a variety of projects including a 30-year leadership role in avian malaria research, developing expertise in pair bonding and chick rearing, with almost 1,000 successful hatchings since 1967, as well as playing a role in several Penguin SAFE project such as PIT tagging penguins in South Africa," said Don Hutchinson, president and CEO of The Maryland Zoo. "Our African penguin team provides expert care to our birds every day, and we're applying that expertise directly to help these wild colonies. The *"Invest in the Nest"* Kickstarter campaign is a great way for the public to join us in helping save African penguins in the wild."

Also, The Maryland Zoo supports SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction®, a program that brings together the expertise and resources of AZA, its members, and partners to help save species from extinction. Establishing new artificial nests is a priority identified in the AZA SAFE African penguin conservation action plan, and necessary to help save African penguins.

"We're always excited about campaigns that expand our worldview and actively contribute to innovation around the globe. *Invest In The Nest* is pushing boundaries in the practice of conservation and bringing optimism and direct action to the Kickstarter backer community," says Clarissa Redwine, Kickstarter's Design and Technology Outreach Lead for the West Coast. "This conservation effort takes backers through the process of designing, building, and installing habitat structures that will help save endangered African penguins, helping Kickstarter backers play a vital part in protecting wildlife."

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Supporters of the campaign won't go away empty-handed. A variety of rewards are available for backing the Kickstarter campaign, including exclusive behind-the-scenes opportunities at some of the best aquariums and zoos in the country, as well as original penguin art, symbolic penguin adoption kits, t-shirts, totes, posters and more.

If you haven't been to The Maryland Zoo lately, you have not seen the extraordinary colony of 87 African penguins making their home at Penguin Coast, which opened in September 2014. This colony includes 12 chicks that recently hatched during the 2016-2017 breeding season (September 2016 to March 2017). This is the largest colony of African penguins in North America, and likewise, Penguin Coast is the largest exhibit for African penguins in North America. Since 1967, we have successfully hatched 987 penguin chicks and, should the penguins cooperate, we could reach 1000 chicks hatched during the next breeding season.

"AZA-accredited aquariums and zoos believe we should do more to help save species, which is why we started SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction," said Dan Ashe, President and CEO of AZA. "We brought together scientists and engineers to help us design the best nest for African penguins. Now we need the public's help to build and place the nests in South Africa. *Invest In The Nest* is an opportunity for anyone to help save a species!"

If fully funded, the nests will be constructed by hand in South Africa, helping to create jobs for residents.

To back or follow the campaign, visit the "*Invest In The Nest*" campaign page on Kickstarter: [https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/aza/invest-in-the-nest-save-penguins-from-extinction?ref=nav\\_search](https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/aza/invest-in-the-nest-save-penguins-from-extinction?ref=nav_search)

### **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 such as the award-winning Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the 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](http://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](http://www.aza.org).

### **About SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction®**

SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction combines the power of zoo and aquarium visitors with the resources and collective expertise of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and partners to save animals from extinction.

Together we are working on saving the most vulnerable wildlife species from extinction and protecting them for future generations. To learn more, visit <http://www.aza.org/aza-safe>.