



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
9 August 2012

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## **MARYLAND ZOO MOURNING LOSS OF ANIMAL AMBASSADOR SAM THE TOUCAN**

**BALTIMORE** -- The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is saddened to announce the death of Sam, a keel-billed toucan, one of the Zoo's most well known Animal Ambassadors. Sam was humanely euthanized at the Zoo today after it was determined that his quality of life was becoming increasingly impaired by several medical issues. He was approximately 13-years-old, which is considered elderly for a toucan.

"Sam had been an Animal Ambassador for over twelve years and was one of the most recognizable faces and voices of the program," said Amy Eveleth, animal collection specialist. "We have over 55 Animal Ambassadors, and Sam was certainly one of the most visible – he even appeared on National Geographic News and The Martha Stewart show."

During his time at the Zoo, Sam visited thousands of school children and spent many hours on grounds greeting visitors, as well as making media appearances on local news and radio stations. "Sam was a very vocal bird and you could hear him call all over the Zoo. Without him the Animal Embassy is very quiet," continued Eveleth. "He was such a large part of this program and he will be missed by staff, volunteers and anyone who ever met him during a school program or on grounds."

The keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*), also known as the rainbow-billed toucan, is the national bird of Belize. They are found in Central America, from southern Mexico to northern Colombia and northeastern Venezuela, mainly in tropical lowland forests although they may also be seen in nearby woodlands and clearings. The keel-billed toucan is considered one of the larger toucan species. Its plumage is almost all black with a striking yellow throat bib topped off by its large and uniquely colored bill. Keel-billed toucans are listed as a species of least concern because they are widespread throughout a broad range. However, their overall population appears to be in decline and they are disappearing from parts of their range that are heavily deforested.

### [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 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](http://www.marylandzoo.org).

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