



Zoo & Aquarium news

MARCH 2014

Attendance at AZA-Accredited Zoos and Aquariums Soared in 2013

Did you know that zoos and aquariums accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) collectively draw more visitors each year than the annual game attendance for the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB combined? The 223 AZA-accredited institutions in the United States and overseas draw more than 182 million visitors annually. In 2013 the Detroit Zoo's annual attendance topped one million for the eighth year in a row and 1.3 million for the first time since 1997. Reid Park Zoo near Tucson welcomed 547,040 visitors, the second highest attendance mark in the history of the zoo. Salt Lake City's Hogle Zoo also had a strong year with one million visitors in attendance for the fourth time in five years.

AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums enhance local and regional economies, collectively generating more than \$21 billion in annual economic activity and supporting more than 204,000 jobs. These institutions are located in 47 states and more than 160 congressional districts. Please visit www.aza.org to find out if an accredited zoo or aquarium is located near you.

New Exhibits Providing Unique Experiences

On March 8th the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens held a ribbon cutting ceremony to announce the grand opening of its new *The Land of the Tiger* exhibit. The exhibit gives guests an interactive experience to learn about different Asian animals including Asian small-clawed otters, Visayan warty and Babirusa pigs, two species of hornbills, and the rare and endangered Sumatran and Malayan tigers. March also saw the opening of a new meerkat exhibit at the Brevard Zoo in Florida in honor of its 20th anniversary. The event included a birthday parade, free admission for children who brought homemade meerkat puppets, and cupcakes for the first 200 guests. At Adventure Aquarium in New Jersey visitors can enjoy the new exhibit called *Frogs - Nature's Messenger*, which features more than twenty species of frogs and toads. Finally, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is beginning construction of a brand new exhibit featuring African penguins which will allow guests to get closer than ever to these amazing creatures. The new exhibit is scheduled to open later in 2014.



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Photos: African Elephant. Copyright Johan Swanepoel

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AZA and Microsoft “Zoo Tycoon” Collaboration Results in Real World Conservation Initiatives

The AZA and Microsoft Studios are working together to provide fans of Microsoft Studios’ “Zoo Tycoon” game series the opportunity to build their own virtual zoo and support real-life wildlife conservation field projects at the same time. Available on Xbox 360 and Xbox One, the fully reimagined “Zoo Tycoon” enables players to create their own unique zoo layouts, adopt and interact with animals, and even manage their zoo with up to three friends online using Xbox Live. In addition to working with AZA to ensure that “Zoo Tycoon” teaches players more about the responsibilities of running a zoo that satisfies visitors and meets the physical, mental, and emotional needs of the animals, Microsoft Studios will also issue a conservation-based Community Challenge each month to the game’s online community. Players are invited to vote for real-world field conservation projects, run by non-profit organizations endorsed by AZA Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Programs that they wish to support. If the gaming community meets the challenges, Microsoft will donate \$10,000 to each project helping to protect endangered animals and their habitats. More information about the creation of “Zoo Tycoon,” as well as interviews with real-life zookeepers who care for endangered species, can be accessed [here](#).

Webcams Bring the Animals to You

If you can’t visit a zoo or aquarium in person, checking out a webcam is the next best thing. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums bring you closer to amazing animals with just the click of the mouse.

- You can see zookeepers feeding the penguins at the Saint Louis Zoo at www.stlzoo.org/visit/thingstoseeanddo/thewild/penguinpuffincoast/web-cam-at-penguin-puffin-coast/.
- The Giant Kelp Forest at Birch Aquarium features leopard sharks, garibaldi, eels, barracuda, giant sea bass, and more, all of which can be seen at http://aquarium.ucsd.edu/Education/Learning_Resources/Kelp_Cam/.
- You also can watch the sea otters play at the Monterey Bay Aquarium at www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals-and-experiences/live-web-cams/sea-otter-cam.

Visit the website of your favorite AZA-accredited zoo or aquarium to see what the animals are doing right now

Help Wanted at Accredited Zoos and Aquariums

Accredited zoos and aquariums across the nation are hiring for certain positions. Please visit the AZA website (www.aza.org) for additional job openings in your state.

Combat Wildlife Trafficking



More than 35,000 elephants are slaughtered every year just for their tusks. Many of those tusks end up in the United States, the world’s second-largest market for wildlife products. Loopholes in the law make it difficult to enforce regulations against importing ivory, particularly once ivory is smuggled past our borders.

The 96 Elephants campaign, www.96Elephants.org, launched by the Wildlife Conservation Society and supported by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA), asks people to sign a petition requesting a ban on ivory trade in the United States.

Please also visit www.animalsinc.net/get-involved for more information about this important issue.

