



# news release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **24 World-Class Aquariums and Zoos Achieve AZA Accreditation**

*Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Accreditation Commission Grants Accreditation to 24 Facilities During Fall 2018 Review Cycle*

**Silver Spring, MD (October 8, 2018)** – Twice a year, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' (AZA) independent Accreditation Commission reviews accreditation applications from the best aquariums, nature centers, science centers, and zoos in the world. Most recently, the Commission examined 27 accreditation applications and two certification applications during the AZA Annual Conference in Seattle, Wash. As a result of these rigorous assessments, AZA proudly announces the accreditation of the following, including two new facilities:

- Aquarium of Niagara; N.Y. **[New]**
- Blank Park Zoo; Iowa
- Brookgreen Gardens; S.C.
- The Butterfly House; Mo.
- Buttonwood Park Zoo; Mass.
- Calgary Zoo; Canada
- Chattanooga Zoo; Tenn.
- Clyde Peeling's Reptiland; Pa.
- Fort Wayne Children's Zoo; Ind.
- Greensboro Science Center; N.C.
- Hutchinson Zoo; Kan.
- International Crane Foundation; Wis.
- Maryland Zoo in Baltimore; Md.
- Miller Park Zoo; Ill.
- Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens; Wis.
- Oglebay's Good Zoo; W.Va
- Oklahoma City Zoological Park; Okla.
- Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park; N.Y.
- SEA LIFE Kansas City Aquarium; Mo.
- Seneca Park Zoo; N.Y.
- Smithsonian National Zoological Park; D.C.
- Utica Zoo; N.Y. **[New]**
- Vancouver Aquarium and Marine Science Centre; Canada

- Virginia Zoological Park; Va.

“AZA's rigorous standards for veterinary care and animal welfare prove animal well-being is their top priority,” said Azzedine Downes, President and CEO of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). “For the millions of people who visit AZA-accredited facilities each year, they can be sure they are visiting and engaging with the best of the best. IFAW is proud to work with these facilities to educate the public on the importance of providing expert animal care and to inspire the next generation of conservationists.”

AZA also granted certification to two new related facilities: the Ape Cognition and Conservation Initiative in Iowa and the Turtle Survival Center in South Carolina. The certification process is equivalent to the accreditation process but is designed for wildlife-holding facilities that are non-commercial entities and are not open to the public on a regular basis.

Each facility underwent a thorough review to make sure it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards, which emphasize animal welfare and care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires facilities to complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years to be members of the Association.

“AZA's independent commission grants accreditation only to exceptional zoos and aquariums that have met or exceeded our rigorous, ever-improving standards,” said Dan Ashe, President and CEO of AZA. “AZA-accredited facilities fulfill our mission of protecting wildlife and wild places by providing expert care to hundreds of thousands of animals and contributing over \$200 million conservation each year. I am pleased to welcome these facilities and their staff to our community of animal heroes.”

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site multiple-day inspection by an independent team of trained zoological professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the facility's operation, including animal welfare and well-being; veterinary care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff, and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; financial stability; risk management; guest services. Detailed reports from the inspection team and the facility alike are then thoroughly evaluated by the Accreditation Commission. Finally, top officials are interviewed in person by the Commission at a formal hearing, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied.

Demonstrating the stringency and independence of this process, and after a rigorous six-month examination and on-site inspection, AZA's Accreditation Commission decided to deny accreditation to the Zoo at Chehaw, located in Albany, Ga. The Zoo at Chehaw had been an accredited member of AZA for 21 years. The Commission cited deferred maintenance on essential zoo structures combined with declining financial backing from the city as among the primary reasons for denying Chehaw's accreditation application. The Commission is hopeful the Zoo can work on all issues cited and reapply for accreditation in the future. Any facility that is denied may reapply after one year if it has

thoroughly redressed the reasons for denial. The Zoo at Chehaw has a limited period in which to appeal the Commission's decision.

Over the past ten years, the Commission has accredited 273 facilities, with many being successfully accredited twice during that time span. The Commission has denied accreditation to 22 facilities.

There are currently 233 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and 15 AZA-certified related facility members throughout the U.S. and in eight other countries.

The Commission will next meet to review accreditation applications in Spring 2019 in Phoenix, Arizona. For a full list of facilities applying for AZA accreditation, please visit <https://www.aza.org/upcoming-reviews>. For a complete list of currently accredited AZA-facilities, please visit <https://www.aza.org/current-accreditation-list>.

### **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).

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