AZA Grants Accreditation to Assiniboine Park Zoo

Silver Spring, Maryland (September 22, 2014) – The Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) in partnership with the Assiniboine Park Conservancy announced today that the Assiniboine Park Zoo has been granted accreditation by AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission.

“Only zoos and aquariums that meet the highest standards are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums,” said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. “The community should take great pride in knowing that Assiniboine Park Zoo is a proven leader in the care and conservation of wildlife, and in inspiring people to take action to protect the natural world.”

This is a major milestone for the Assiniboine Park Zoo, which is now one of only five Canadian organizations to currently hold accreditation with AZA.

“This is a tremendous achievement considering that just five years ago Assiniboine Park Zoo was facing a very uncertain future,” said Margaret Redmond, President & CEO, Assiniboine Park Conservancy. “We worked very hard to get to where we are today and with the support of our community we have achieved the same quality and high standards as some of the most respected and high-profile zoological facilities in the world.”

To be accredited, the Assiniboine Park Zoo underwent a thorough review to ensure it has and will continue to meet rising standards, in areas that include animal care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years in order to be members of the Association.

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals, which took place this past summer. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the institution’s operation, including animal care; keeper training; safety for visitors, staff and animals; educational programs; conservation efforts; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; visitor services; and other areas. Finally, top officials are interviewed at a formal hearing of AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission, after which accreditation is granted, tabled, or denied.

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The Assiniboine Park Zoo’s application was led by Dr. Brian Joseph, Director of Zoological Operations. Dr. Joseph joined the Zoo last October, bringing with him over 40 years of professional experience in public and privately operated aquariums, museums, nature centres and zoos throughout the United States. He has also been heavily involved with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), having served on 17 accreditation teams, experience that served him well in guiding the Assiniboine Park Zoo through the process.

“Having achieved AZA accreditation sends a message to our visitors and the zoo community that we are fully committed to upholding the highest standards for animal care, conservation, and education now and in the future,” Dr. Brian Joseph, Director of Zoological Operations, Assiniboine Park Zoo. “This will help us to work more closely with other zoos to save animals from extinction, pursue new research opportunities, attract and retain the best staff, and continue to improve the visitor experience at Assiniboine Park Zoo.”

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 six 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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