

Accreditation: Celebrating Successes and Embracing Challenges

Dear Colleagues,

The following brief history of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' accreditation program appears on the AZA website:

In 1971, in response to the nation's growing concern for animal care in the United States, AZA appointed a committee to establish a set of best practices to collectively improve professional operations among the zoological park and aquarium community. The first institution was accredited by AZA in 1974—at that time a voluntary process. In 1985 AZA made the bold decision to place the importance of quality ahead of quantity and made accreditation a mandatory requirement for AZA membership. Despite the resulting 75 percent drop in membership, AZA held firm in its decision, leading to a rise in animal husbandry and care among zoological parks and aquariums across the country as they began striving to reach the standards required for AZA membership and accreditation.



AZA Website (<https://www.aza.org/what-is-accreditation>)

Today, this process is overseen by the Accreditation Commission, a group of sixteen industry experts sworn to impartiality. A zoo or aquarium earning AZA accreditation is a milestone moment in that organization's history. It is a recognition that indicates an institution's commitment to top-tier standards across the board.

In this edition of *Connect*, we shine a light on that process and have the pleasure of recognizing the Oregon Zoo in Portland, Ore., and the Philadelphia Zoo in Philadelphia, Pa., recipients of AZA's distinguished Half a Century of Excellence Award. These institutions have demonstrated 50 years of upholding the highest standards and serving as benchmarks for the community. I congratulate and thank them for their hard work and dedication.

While it's important to recognize successes, disappointments can also be valuable opportunities. In an article by Mary Ellen Collins, she sheds light on how challenges along the road to earning and maintaining accreditation are occasions for institutions to use feedback as a roadmap to success and to turn these challenges into opportunities.



Join me in learning more about AZA's accreditation process, learning from setbacks, celebrating achievements, and recognizing the unwavering commitment to a world where wildlife and wild places thrive.

LISA NEW
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Connect

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