

news release

Assiniboine Park Zoo receives prestigious accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Silver Spring, Md. (September 18, 2025) – The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has announced that Assiniboine Park Zoo was granted accreditation by AZA’s independent Accreditation Commission. Of the 32 applications for accreditation reviewed by the Commission during AZA’s Annual Conference held in Tampa, Florida, 31 were granted accreditation.

"Congratulations to the leadership and staff at Assiniboine Park Zoo for attaining the global 'gold standard' in zoological and aquarium accreditation," said Dan Ashe, president and CEO of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. "AZA's standards continuously evolve to reflect best practices in the zoo and aquarium profession, with a strong emphasis on animal care and wellbeing at their core. Assiniboine Park Zoo has demonstrated a dedication to this exceptional level of care."

AZA accreditation includes a detailed application and a meticulous multiple-day on-site inspection by an independent team of zoological professionals. The inspecting team analyzes all aspects of the facility’s operation, including animal care and wellbeing; veterinary care; staff training; educational programs; conservation efforts; financial stability; governance; and guest services. Detailed reports from the inspection team and the facility alike are then thoroughly evaluated by the Accreditation Commission. Finally, the Commission interviews top officials from the facility at a formal hearing, after which accreditation is fully granted, provisionally granted for one year, or denied.

A thorough review ensures that each facility has met and will continue to meet ever-rising standards. As a condition of Association membership, AZA facilities must complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years.

The Assiniboine Park Zoo first received AZA accreditation in September 2014 following a major redevelopment of the Zoo that included the opening of the international award-winning Journey to Churchill exhibit. This was a major milestone for the Zoo, which is currently one of only seven Canadian organizations to hold AZA accreditation.

"AZA sets the bar for the world’s best zoos and aquariums," said Dr. Chris Enright, Senior Director of Zoological Operations at Assiniboine Park Zoo. "Accreditation isn't just about meeting high standards for animal care and welfare – it's also about delivering an exceptional visitor experience, ensuring safety, maintaining strong governance, and building sustainable operations. As expectations around animal welfare continue to grow, AZA accreditation will be key to keeping our Zoo among Canada’s top zoological institutions."

AZA accreditation assures the public that Assiniboine Park Zoo meets the highest standards in animal welfare, safety, education, and visitor experience. It signals a commitment to excellence across all areas of operation and places the Zoo among a global network of leading institutions advancing wildlife conservation, research, education, and animal rescue.

It also presents the Zoo with incredible opportunities for collaboration. On Wednesday, the Assiniboine Park Zoo, Minnesota Zoological Garden, and John Ball Zoo in Michigan were recognized at the AZA Annual Conference with the North American Conservation Award for their joint efforts to save the [Poweshiek skipperling](#) – a critically endangered grassland butterfly – from extinction.

In their report, AZA accreditation commissioners also identified other key strengths, including the Zoo's strong commitment to animal care and welfare, veterinary services, and enrichment programs along with comprehensive education and engagement programs, which connect thousands of visitors, students, and community members to information about wildlife and habitat conservation in a way that inspires meaningful action and lasting impact.

In addition, they noted the considerable progress made on plans for the Zoo's new Animal Health Centre. While the current veterinary hospital continues to provide high-quality care, it is nearing the end of its lifespan. The proposed new facility will support more efficient delivery of care, accommodate modern equipment and technology, and create an optimal environment for staff and the animals in their care. Located near the Zoo entrance, it will also feature a public viewing area where visitors can observe select procedures. The Assiniboine Park Conservancy has received an early funding commitment from the City of Winnipeg and is pursuing additional support from other levels of government and the private sector.

There are 240 AZA-accredited institutions and 14 AZA-accredited related facility members throughout the U.S. and 12 other countries. For a complete list of 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 setting the global gold standard, accrediting 254 of the top zoos, aquariums, and related facilities in 13 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.

About Assiniboine Park Zoo

With over 80 acres to explore, the Assiniboine Park Zoo has been a favourite destination for families, school groups, tourists, and animal lovers for over a century. The Zoo is open year-round with both indoor and outdoor exhibits, providing visitors with the opportunity to interact with animal species from around the world. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums and a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As an accredited zoological organization, the Zoo is committed to meeting and exceeding the ever-rising standards for animal welfare and care, veterinary services, and safety, and active participation in environmental education, conservation, and research.

###

Media contacts:

Laura Cabak, Assiniboine Park Conservancy
Phone: 204-795-0091 | Email: lcabak@assiniboinepark.ca

Sarah Fedele, Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Phone: 336-662-3304 | Email: SFedele@AZA.org