



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Birmingham Zoo Hosts Animal Wellness Workshop

Promoting excellent welfare for animals in zoos and aquariums

BIRMINGHAM, AL – Last week, the Birmingham Zoo hosted staff from other zoos and aquariums from across the nation for the Growing Your Animal Wellbeing Program Workshop.

Led by Hollie Colahan, Birmingham Zoo's Deputy Director, and long-time Zoo executive and consultant Sharon Joseph, this interactive workshop brought 26 participants from 15 different institutions together for three full days of instruction around scientific concepts and practical tools for providing animals in zoos and aquariums with optimal wellbeing.

With a focus on Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Accreditation Standards, building interdisciplinary animal wellbeing programs, developing assessment tools, and strengthening the interpersonal skills necessary for program success, the workshop included lectures, group discussions, and interactive activities out in the Zoo.

The workshop provided a focus on how important caretaker wellbeing is to the wellbeing of the animals we care for and how culture and values can contribute to animal wellbeing advocacy throughout an organization, beyond animal care staff. Hollie and Sharon have conducted similar workshops in Denver, Atlanta, and Albuquerque for professional colleagues.

"Being able to bring zoo and aquarium professionals together to share knowledge and resources is one of the most impactful things we can do to ensure that the animals in our care have the best life possible," said Colahan. "I'm thrilled that the Birmingham Zoo team can facilitate this work with our fellow zoo and aquarium professionals."

Hollie Colahan has 25 years of experience in AZA-accredited zoos with a focus on wellbeing, safety, population management, and leadership. She serves as an instructor for several AZA Professional Development Courses and is a current participant in the AZA Executive Leadership Development Program.

"I thoroughly enjoy spending time with like-minded colleagues in settings such as this workshop where we share a commitment to the wellbeing of all animals in human care

and have opportunities to learn from one another”, agrees Joseph. “I find these meetings to be informative and personally energizing.”

Sharon Joseph has had a long professional zoo career, holding management and senior leadership positions at the San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, Disney’s Animal Kingdom, the Houston Zoo, Denver Zoo, here at the Birmingham Zoo, and is currently the chair of AZA’s Animal Welfare Committee. She provides professional consulting services to a variety of zoos and nature centers around animal wellbeing, staff training, emergency response procedures, meeting safety and regulatory standards, project management, and other topics. She holds an Executive Master of Business Administration degree from Colorado Technical University.

Zoo Logo , AZA Logo



MEDIA CONTACT

Jennifer Ogilvie
Marketing and Public Relations Manager
jogilvie@birminghamzoo.com | 205.837-1566

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ABOUT THE BIRMINGHAM ZOO

The Birmingham Zoo is an independent, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

OUR MISSION *Inspiring Passion to Conserve the Natural World*

Approximately 650 animals of 180 species call the Birmingham Zoo home, including sea lions, zebras, elephants, bongos, and endangered species from six continents. The Birmingham Zoo is the only AZA-accredited zoo in the state of Alabama.

www.birminghamzoo.com | 2630 Cahaba Road | Birmingham, AL 35223

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