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RE: THE YEAR OF THE FROG TO KICK OFF AT PALM BEACH ZOO

CONTACT: GAIL EATON – CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER (561) 533-0887 X 219

February 11, 2008 – West Palm Beach, FL – 2008 has been declared the "International Year of the Frog" by Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WANZA). The public awareness campaign will kick off on "Leap Day", February 29 with a 10 a.m. media event and all-day educational activities at the Palm Beach Zoo.

The goal of the Year of the Frog is to spark a major conservation effort to address the global amphibian extinction crisis. The February 29 event will offer opportunities for zoo guests to learn about the Zoo's amphibians and take part in amphibian-themed games and crafts. Activities will be located at the new Florida Reptile House, Amazon Marketplace, and Caracol Exhibit. Face painting, air brush tattoos, and more "froggie" activities will be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Dr. Terry L. Maple, President and CEO of the Palm Beach Zoo and former President of the AZA said, "We are proud to participate in this important new initiative to raise awareness of the crisis faced by frog and amphibian species. These small creatures may well be the proverbial 'canary in the coal mine,' foreshadowing the fate of larger species if we fail to take action now to protect our embattled environment."

Shelly Grow, Conservation Biologist, AZA, in her article entitled *Responding to Amphibian Declines during the Year of the Frog* writes, "Frogs are going extinct. So are toads, salamanders, newts, and the intriguingly unusual caecilians. The World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Global Amphibian Assessment on the conservation status and distribution of 5,918 amphibian species, has shown that almost one-third (32% or 1,896 species) of amphibians worldwide are threatened with extinction and that 165 amphibian species may have already been lost to extinction. North America is not immune to this decline; in fact, in addition to its threatened species, North American has the dubious claim of being the only region with a species currently listed as Extinct in the Wild. In 1994, the last of the Wyoming toads (*Bufo baxteri*) were collected and intensive captive breeding and reintroduction programs were initiated.

“Because of the Global Amphibian Assessment, we are now fully aware of the plight facing amphibians. Worldwide, the largest numbers of threatened amphibians are found in Columbia, Mexico, and Ecuador where 209, 198, and 163 species are threatened with extinction respectively. The intensity of threat is greatest in the Caribbean where more than 80% of amphibians in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica are threatened, along with 92% of all amphibians in Haiti (IUCN, 2006). Documenting these terrible statistics was the first step; now is time to take action.

“We need amphibians. Since the days of Aristotle, humans have studied the lives of amphibians and have utilized them for human purposes. Antibiotic and anti-tumor properties, analgesics, anti-inflammatory compounds, natural adhesives, and volatiles have all been isolated from amphibians. Approximately 10% of Nobel prizes in physiology and medicine have resulted from investigations that used frogs. Amphibians have been a staple in basic anatomy courses, pregnancy tests of the 1950’s and 1960’s, the pet trade, and in the human food supply. The AZA will highlight 2008 as the Year of the Frog to mark a major conservation effort to address the amphibian extinction crisis. The Year of the Frog will engage the public in amphibian conservation and raise funds for AZA amphibian conservation efforts into the future. AZA facilities will lay the groundwork for expanding existing and initiating new amphibian conservation efforts.”

The Palm Beach Zoo is one of over 200 zoos and aquariums accredited by the AZA that will be participating in the Year of the Frog by raising awareness of the amphibian crisis on a local level.

The Palm Beach Zoo is a non profit zoological organization located at Dreher Park in West Palm Beach. Its mission is to provide an open-air classroom of living creatures to foster awareness, appreciation and respect for the natural world. The zoo is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Support for the zoo is also provided by the Palm Beach County Tourist Development Council, the Board of County Commissioners and the Palm Beach County Cultural Council.

Palm Beach Zoo is located at 1301 Summit Boulevard, just east of I-95 between Southern and Forest Hill Boulevard. Admission: Regular \$12.95, Seniors 60+ \$9.95, Children 3-12 \$8.95, under 3 years and Zoo Members are free. The zoo is open every day from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.) For more information visit www.palmbeachzoo.org.

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**Palm Beach Zoo • 1301 Summit Boulevard, West Palm Beach FL, 33405-3098
(561) 547-WILD • www.palmbeachzoo.org**