

State of New Mexico  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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State Parks Division



## News Release

April 3, 2012

Contact: Jodi McGinnis Porter 505-476-3226; E-mail: Jodi.Porter@state.nm.us

### **Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park Receives Accreditation by *The Association of Zoos and Aquariums***

CARLSBAD, NM – Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park announces that the zoo received accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) through their independent Accreditation Commission.

“The staff and volunteers at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park are very proud to carry the Association of Zoos and Aquariums accreditation flag,” said Ken Britt, Park Superintendent. “Our park supports the Carlsbad community by providing affordable family recreation and science-based education programs.”

To be accredited, Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park went through an extensive review to ensure it has and will continue to meet ever-rising standards, including animal care, veterinary programs, conservation, education, and safety. AZA requires zoos and aquariums to successfully complete this rigorous accreditation process every five years to be members of the Association.

“Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park has demonstrated its leadership within the zoo and aquarium community by meeting high Association of Zoos and Aquariums Accreditation Standards,” said AZA President and CEO, Jim Maddy. “Only the finest institutions in the world rise to this level, and we congratulate the professionals at Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park for their hard work.”

The accreditation process includes a detailed application and a meticulous on-site inspection by a team of trained zoo and aquarium professionals. The inspecting team observes all aspects of the institution’s operation in areas such as 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. Any institution that is denied may reapply one year after the Commission’s decision is made.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting an institution dedicated to providing excellent care for animals and a better future for all living things. AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, please visit [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org).

Living Desert became a State Park in June 1971, and has evolved into a premier indoor/outdoor living museum, offering outdoor recreation and natural history education for visitors. Since 2002, Living Desert has been accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. A 1.3 mile paved trail offers a glimpse of native wildlife in natural exhibits with a zoo and botanical gardens designed to recreate the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem.

For additional information contact Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park at (505) 887-5516 for *additional information about the institution, including special events and activities for visitors and its ongoing commitment to wildlife conservation and science education* or visit [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com).



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*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

1220 South St. Francis Drive ▪ Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505  
Phone (505) 476-3355 ▪ Fax (505) 476-3361 ▪ [www.nmparks.com](http://www.nmparks.com)