

NEWS

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FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO WINS TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS

FRESNO, CA — Fresno Chaffee Zoo is pleased to announce that it has been honored with two of the greatest achievements in the zoological and conservation fields from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).

Kingdoms of Asia was awarded the **Top Honors Exhibit Award** while the Zoo's *Coexist with Wildlife, California* campaign was recognized with the **Top Honors AZA Advocacy Impact Award**. These awards were presented at AZA's annual conference in September, where over 2,800 zoo and aquarium professionals connect to share missions, ideas, and updates while emphasizing the vision to protect and save species.

"To receive even one of these awards is an honor that many institutions strive for but never achieve," said Jon Forrest Dohlin, Fresno Chaffee Zoo CEO and Zoo Director. "To receive two in the same cycle — for such different and meaningful efforts in the name of conservation — is a rare achievement that reflects the breadth and depth of our mission to inspire people to care for animals, create connections, build community, and save wildlife."

Kingdoms of Asia



The Top Honors Exhibit Award praised *Kingdoms of Asia* for its excellence in design, animal care, and community-building. This new exhibit transports guests to the lush landscapes of Southeast Asia, featuring expansive habitats for endangered species, including Malayan tigers, orangutans, and Komodo dragons. With over three acres of beautifully themed environments, the exhibit emphasizes conservation, cultural connection, and the importance of protecting biodiversity in one of the world's most threatened ecological regions.

Kingdoms of Asia is not just a reflection of natural habitats—it reflects human ones, too. Working closely with cultural advisors, the Zoo created immersive scenes that blend natural and architectural storytelling and layers in oral histories from local community members.

"This award is a reflection of the incredible passion and talent of our entire team," said Dohlin. "*Kingdoms of Asia* is more than a wildlife exhibit — it's an immersive journey that highlights the rich culture of the people from Southeast Asia. We are deeply honored to be recognized by the AZA for this transformative project."

Coexist with Wildlife, California



Also honored by AZA is the Zoo's *Coexist with Wildlife, California* program that received the Top Honors Advocacy Impact Award. In 2024, Fresno Chaffee Zoo worked with institutions across California to spread awareness about the important and endangered wildlife in our home state. This public awareness campaign is a powerful, statewide initiative aimed at protecting California's native wildlife and preserving the natural spaces they call home.

2024 marked the 100th anniversary of the last sighting of the California grizzly bear, the symbol on our state flag, seen for the final time just miles from Fresno, in Sequoia National Forest in 1924. To commemorate this loss — and to prevent other species from facing the same fate — conservation institutions from across California united in launching *Coexist with Wildlife, California* and successfully advanced a bipartisan State resolution with lasting impact.

"I'm incredibly proud of our team and partners who brought this campaign to life," said Dohlin. "*Coexist with Wildlife, California* is a shining example of how advocacy, education, and collaboration can drive our vision for a just future where people and wildlife not only coexist, but thrive together."

Two Remarkable Achievements

Fresno Chaffee Zoo is extremely honored to be presented with these two awards. This recognition follows the Zoo's 2024 AZA Innovation in North American Conservation Award for the Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard Conservation Program. These honors are a direct result of the dedicated, enthusiastic, and hardworking staff whose continued commitment to excellence makes these moments possible.

"Congratulations to the team at Fresno Chaffee Zoo for their hard work and dedication in achieving this remarkable recognition," said Dan Ashe, president and CEO at the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. "These awards recognize the best of the best in the global aquarium and zoo community. The work being done at Fresno Chaffee Zoo further strengthens the impact of our entire community and is something Fresno can be proud of."

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a non-profit organization that represents 254 facilities internationally. These accredited facilities meet the highest standards of animal care and welfare while providing a fun, safe, and educational experience. AZA is dedicated to the advancement of aquariums and zoos in areas of conservation, science, education, and recreation. Fresno Chaffee Zoo is proud to be honored by this impactful organization.

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