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Center for Conservation and Research at San Antonio Zoo® Celebrates More Hatchings of Texas Horned Lizards

SAN ANTONIO - The Center for Conservation and Research at San Antonio Zoo is thrilled to announce another successful Texas horned lizard hatching. Although this is not the first clutch of eggs to hatch this season, it is an important milestone for the Texas Horned Lizard Reintroduction Project: they now have enough captive-born lizards to conduct their first release into the wild. About 100 young lizards are expected to be released this Fall. This is a tremendous step forward for the Texas Horned Lizard Reintroduction Project, which will bolster the survival of their species here in South Texas.

Since launching the project four years ago, the Center for Conservation and Research team has been diligently working on breeding and preserving the State Reptile of Texas by utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS) data, genetics, and current knowledge about horned lizard ecology and distribution in an effort to release large numbers of captive-born individuals in suitable habitats.

“I am proud of the work we are doing to bring back the beloved Texas horned lizard,” said Tim Morrow, President & CEO of San Antonio Zoo. “While we have a multitude of global conservation projects, it’s especially rewarding to be able to secure a future for wildlife right here in our backyard,” said Morrow.

To monitor the lizards after they’ve been released, San Antonio Zoo will utilize a horned lizard detection canine, a dog that is specially trained to cue on the scent of Texas horned lizards as well as their shed skin, eggs, and scat. In addition to post-release monitoring, the lizard detection canine will be used to survey potential release sites and to assist in the collection of founders for the captive breeding colony.

Many people have fond memories of growing up with the Texas horned lizard, more commonly known as the horny toad. Once abundant, populations have declined or disappeared altogether in many parts of Texas. Habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as invasive species, are believed to be contributing factors to its decline.

Staff at San Antonio Zoo have been executing both field and laboratory components as part of the Texas Horned Lizard Reintroduction Project—surveying and monitoring habitats while also breeding and caring for offspring. As the project grows, San Antonio Zoo hopes to release

thousands of horned lizards annually. Funding is needed for conservation operations and equipment necessary for maintaining a robust program that will bring this iconic species back where it belongs.

Donations can be made on the zoo's website, www.sazoo.org/texas-horned-lizard.

About San Antonio Zoo

San Antonio Zoo®, operated by San Antonio Zoological Society is a non-profit organization committed to securing a future for wildlife. Through its passion and expertise in animal care, conservation, and education, the zoo's mission is to inspire its community to love, engage with, act for and protect animals and the places they live. The zoo welcomes more than a million visitors each year and is open year-round. San Antonio Zoo operates the largest nature-based preschool in the country, Will Smith Zoo School, the Center for Conservation and Research, and Kiddie Park. San Antonio Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Zoological Association of America, and Humane Certified by American Humane.

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