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*Note: Photograph of Zoo representatives with award available. Please contact the Comm. department.*

## **Toledo Zoo & Aquarium Honored for Conservation Work**

TOLEDO, Ohio — The Toledo Zoo & Aquarium was recently honored by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife with the 2017 Wildlife Diversity Conservation Award. The award was presented to Zoo representatives, director of conservation and research, Kent Bekker, Wild Toledo coordinator, Ryan Walsh and conservation biologist, Matt Cross, at the Wildlife Diversity Conference in Columbus.

The Wildlife Diversity Conservation Award was first presented in 2002 and its purpose is to honor an individual or organization that has made a significant beneficial impact to Ohio's native wildlife and conservation.

The award is inscribed with the following: with sincere gratitude for your dedication and efforts to enhance Ohio's native wildlife populations including hellbenders, Blanding's turtles, Karner blue butterflies and lake sturgeon. We applaud your dedicated staff and skill in animal husbandry to assist in reintroducing native wildlife species. Your contributions to native wildlife restoration and educational efforts are of great benefit to Ohio's wildlife and citizens.

"We have been working with the Toledo Zoo & Aquarium for many years in wildlife restoration efforts. The Toledo Zoo, along with all the Ohio zoos, brings a wealth of information and expertise in animal husbandry to our native wildlife restoration efforts," said Kendra Wecker, wildlife diversity coordinator for the ODNR Division of Wildlife.

"To be recognized by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife for our conservation efforts is a tremendous honor. Division of Wildlife has been a great partner over the years with many of our initiatives and to see that they appreciate the work we do means a lot to the Toledo Zoo," said Kent Bekker, Toledo Zoo's director of conservation and research.

The Zoo is open daily at 10 a.m. and is located on the Anthony Wayne Trail (US 25), four miles south of downtown Toledo. For more information, please visit [toledozoo.org](http://toledozoo.org) or call 419-385-4040. Lucas County residents are admitted free of charge on non-holiday Mondays from 10 a.m. - noon. Valid ID showing proof of residency is required.

*The Toledo Zoo is committed to inspiring others to join us in caring for animals and conserving the natural world. As part of that mission, the Toledo Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), a leader in global wildlife conservation. AZA member institutions are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors and a better future for all living things. Submitted by: Kim Haddix*

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