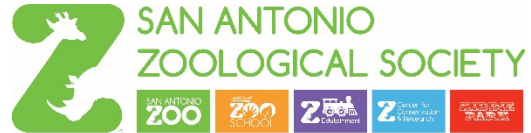




National Speleological Society Press Release *For Immediate Release*

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The National Speleological Society
6001 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, AL 35810
Amanda Willis, NSS PR Division Chief
PR@Caves.org



Our vision is securing a future for wildlife.
A non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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National Speleological Partners with San Antonio Zoological Society

NSS Headquarters, Huntsville, Ala. - The National Speleological Society (NSS) has partnered with the San Antonio Zoological Society to sponsor the care and husbandry of karst organisms maintained by the Center Conservation and Research at San Antonio Zoo for 2021. In celebration of the International Year of Caves and Karst, the NSS has donated funds to secure food and supplies for the cave species in their care.

Troglobites are organisms adapted to live underground, including insects, amphibians, crustaceans, and fish. They offer scientists insight into biological processes. Remarkably, biologists have discovered cave-dwelling extremophiles whose food web is based on chemosynthetic, or mineral-eating, bacteria. They provide clues about the earliest forms of life on Earth. Because troglobites cannot live outside a cave, their survival is imperiled if the cave environment is damaged or altered. Water pollution, visitor traffic, trash, flooding, and a change in air patterns or temperature can disturb a cave's fragile food web and ecosystem.

“Through this partnership with San Antonio Zoo, we hope to educate the public of these fragile karst landscapes and the animals that call them home,” stated PR Chief Amanda Willis.

“Education is the first step in conservation, and what better way to help educate the masses than to partner with a conservation and research center that is making impactful strides in biospeleology research.”

“We are grateful for this generous sponsorship from NSS,” said Center of Conservation & Research Director Dr. Andy Gluesenkamp. “Throughout the International Year of Caves and Karst, the NSS will be highlighting San Antonio Zoo’s cave-dwelling animals and research as well as participating in education programs and virtual events. The Center for Conservation and Research at San Antonio Zoo maintains a diverse collection of cave organisms with colonies of karst.”

San Antonio Zoo's collection of species includes the Texas blind salamander (*Eurycea rathbuni*), Salado salamander (*E. chisholmensis*), Fern Bank Spring salamander (*E. pterophila*), Georgia blind salamander (*E. wallacei*), cave salamander (*E. lucifuga*), grotto salamander (*E. spelaea*), Peck's cave amphipod (*Stygobromus pecki*), Mexican blindcat (*Prietella phreatophila*), surface and cave-adapted forms of the Mexican tetra (*Astyanax mexicanus*), and Ozark cavefish (*Troglichthys rosae*).

"Our work extends beyond the gates of the zoo and includes cave and karst surveys, faunal inventories, monitoring of groundwater organisms, and status assessments in Texas, the Ozarks, Mexico, and China," continued Gluesenkamp. "We frequently collaborate with academic researchers and resource managers and provide outreach in the form of project reports, peer-reviewed publications, and articles and presentations for the public. Cave organisms and their habitats are often poorly understood by both researchers and the public alike. We seek to increase understanding and awareness of cave and karst habitats and the species that depend on them. Raising public awareness is a critical component of our mission: to secure a future for wildlife by inspiring both local and global communities to L.E.A.P.: Love, Engage with, Act for and Protect animals and the places they live."

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For over 80 years, the National Speleological Society has promoted safe and responsible caving practices, effective cave and karst management, speleology, and conservation. Our members are bound together by their love of caves, their desire to learn about the underground wilderness, and their commitment to protect it for future generations.

NSS membership offers worldwide caver camaraderie, networking opportunities, and access to information about discoveries and developments in caving, speleology, equipment, and techniques through our publications, annual conventions, grottos, internal organizations, and NSS-sponsored projects, expeditions, and surveys.

With 7,000+ members and more than 200 grottos (chapters), the National Speleological Society is the largest organization in the world working every day to further the exploration, study, and protection of caves and their environments, and foster fellowship among cavers.

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About San Antonio Zoological Society

San Antonio Zoological Society was established in 1929 and is a nonprofit organization committed to securing a future for wildlife. The society operates San Antonio Zoo, Will Smith Zoo School, Edutainment, Center for Conservation and Research at San Antonio Zoo, and Kiddie Park.

Website www.sazoo.org

About San Antonio Zoo

San Antonio Zoo®, operating since 1914, is a nonprofit zoological facility 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.

Website www.sazoo.org
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