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Tasmanian Devils Returning to Zoo

After an 11-year absence, Tasmanian devils will soon return to the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo as part of an Australian program to save these unique animals from extinction.

"We are very eager to share Tasmanian devils with our fans and to participate in an important conservation effort," said Zoo Director Jim Anderson.

The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo was selected to receive Tasmanian devils from Australia through the *Save The Tasmanian Devil Program*, which is administered by the Australian government. It is not yet known how many Tasmanian devils will come to Fort Wayne or when they will arrive.

A parasitic transmissible cancer known as Devil Facial Tumor Disease has wiped out nearly 70% of the wild Tasmanian devil population in the past decade. The devils slated to arrive in Fort Wayne will be disease-free and will be part of an "insurance population" for this endangered species. This insurance population could serve as a back-up in the event that Tasmanian devils became extinct in the wild.

From 1987-2004, the zoo housed 12 Tasmanian devils, more than any other North American zoo. One of these devils was Coolah, who was the last Tasmanian devil living anywhere in the world outside of Australia when he died in 2004.

"Our expertise with Tasmanian devils and commitment to caring for this species most likely played a role in our selection by the Australian government," said Anderson.

The Tasmanian devils will be exhibited in the Australian Adventure, which is currently undergoing a \$7 million renovation.

Native only to the Australian island of Tasmania, Tasmanian devils have long fascinated Americans, especially as the wildly spinning cartoon version “Taz” grew in popularity. These furry black marsupials (pouched mammals) are about the size of a small raccoon. Tasmanian devils are listed as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

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About the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo: The Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo is northeast Indiana’s largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 500,000 guests annually. The zoo received the 2014 **TripAdvisor Travelers’ Choice Award**, was voted **Indiana’s #1 “Gotta-Do Summer Attraction,”** and is consistently named one of the nation’s **Top Ten Zoos for Kids** by national media outlets.

The zoo is a conservation leader, contributing more than \$80,000 annually to local, regional, and international efforts to protect wild animals and habitats, and participating in cooperative management programs for 91 endangered species and taxa. The zoo was named Northeast Indiana’s **Sustainable Business of the Year** in 2014.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo receives no tax dollars for operations. The zoo’s operations are funded entirely by earned revenue and donations.

The zoo opens for the 2015 season on April 25, 2015. Hours are 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM with the last ticket sold at 5:00 PM daily through October 11, 2015. Admission is \$14.00 for adults; \$10.50 for seniors age 60+; and \$9.00 for children ages 2-18. Babies age 1 and under and Zoo Society Members are admitted free.