



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fort Wayne Zoo Welcomes Harbor Seal, Bubba

Fort Wayne, IN – Fort Wayne Zoo is excited to announce the arrival of a male harbor seal named Bubba. Arriving from Woods Hole Science Aquarium in Massachusetts back in September, Bubba made his first public appearance for guests on November 11, 2025, in the new Coastal Cove habitat. Bubba joins fellow harbor seal Ronan and two California sea lions, Cassandra and Valkyrie.

"We are thrilled to welcome another harbor seal to the Fort Wayne Zoo," said Rick Schuiteman, Zoo Executive Director & CEO. "Ambassador animals like Bubba play a vital role in helping guests appreciate the challenges these species face in the wild and the importance of marine conservation."

The Zoo plays an active role in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Harbor Seal Species Survival Plan, a program that seeks to maintain genetic diversity and long-term sustainability of species with significant conservation value.

"Bubba is already loved by guests, his animal care team, and staff members," states Michelle Smurl, Vice President of Conservation Education & Animal Care. "With everything from coordinating a successful animal transfer with Woods Hole to introducing Bubba to his new home, tremendous effort goes into this process, and I am proud of our Animal Care & Health Teams for all of their work."

To create a better future for this species, the Fort Wayne Zoo partners with the Pacific Mammal Marine Center, a conservation organization that focuses on the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of Pacific marine mammals like seals and sea lions.

Bubba can be seen this Saturday and Sunday for the final Fall Weekend of the Zoo season. Hours are 10 a.m.-3 p.m. each day.

Please [use this link](#) for photos and videos of Bubba.

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About the Fort Wayne Zoo: The Fort Wayne Zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 650,000 guests annually. The Zoo is home to Red Panda Ridge named #6 in USA Today 10Best Zoo Exhibits for 2024. In 2021, the Zoo was voted Visit Indiana's "Summer Bucket List Top 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, investing nearly \$275,000 annually in local, regional, and international efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats. The Zoo cares for more than 1,500 animals and participates in 41 cooperative species survival plan programs and 42 taxon advisory groups, which are critical to supporting threatened species.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Zoo receives no tax dollars for daily operations, unlike most accredited zoos where those dollars fund approximately 40% of their annual operating budgets. The Zoo's mission is made possible thanks to support derived from admissions, memberships, donations, group picnics, special ticketed events, and other visitation-related activities.