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Fort Wayne Zoo to Welcome Bald Eagle in Patriotic Summer Debut

Fort Wayne, Ind. – The Fort Wayne Zoo is proud to announce the upcoming arrival of two North American bald eagles, offering guests a rare opportunity to see one of the nation's most iconic species up close.

In the coming weeks, the Zoo plans to unveil “a living example of one the nation's most majestic symbols” as part of a special summer introduction. The bald eagle, named Liberty, will be featured as a visiting species in the Zoo's popular Australian Adventure area, creating a unique and meaningful addition for guests exploring the exhibit. A second eagle, Spirit, is expected to join Liberty later this season.

Like other bald eagles in professional care, Liberty has sustained injuries that make him non-releasable in the wild. While he cannot be safely returned to his natural habitat, eagles like Liberty serve an important role as ambassadors for the species, helping to educate guests about bald eagles, their resilience, and the importance of wildlife conservation.

The timing of Liberty's debut holds special significance as the eagle is expected to make his public appearance just before America's 250th birthday on July 4. This patriotic milestone provides an ideal backdrop to highlight the bald eagle's enduring role as a symbol of freedom and resilience in the United States.

“These remarkable birds give us a powerful opportunity to connect our guests with conservation stories both past and present,” said Executive Director & CEO Rick Schuiteman. “Liberty and Spirit represent not only the strength of this species, but also the impact people can have when we work together to protect wildlife.”

Once on the brink of extinction, bald eagles declined to just a few hundred nesting pairs in the United States due to habitat loss, hunting, and the effects of the pesticide DDT. Thanks to protections like the Endangered Species Act and the banning of DDT, the species has made a dramatic comeback and is now considered one of America's greatest conservation success stories.

Fun Facts About Bald Eagles:

- Bald eagles can have an impressive wingspan of up to 7–8 feet, making them one of the largest birds of prey in North America.

- When hunting, they can dive at speeds approaching 100 miles per hour, using powerful talons to snatch fish from the water.
- Despite their name, bald eagles aren't actually bald – their name comes from an old word meaning “white-headed.”
- Their calls are softer than what some might expect from such a large bird of prey. In fact, many movies or television shows will use the more piercing call of another native raptor, the red-tailed hawk, instead of the bald eagle call.

One of the eagles has already arrived from another AZA-accredited facility; the other will be making its way to Fort Wayne soon. Before moving to their new habitat space, they will undergo a quarantine period where the veterinary team will closely monitor their health and ensure they didn't contract any illnesses during their journey or have a health condition that could be passed to other zoo animals.

“We are thrilled to welcome Liberty and Spirit to the Fort Wayne Zoo,” said Michelle Smurl, Vice President of Animal Care & Conservation Education. “Our animal care and veterinary teams are working closely together to support Liberty's needs now and prepare for Spirit's arrival, while also putting the final touches on a habitat designed to ensure their comfort and wellbeing.”

As we prepare to introduce these incredible ambassadors to our guests, we plan to host a special ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 1 to celebrate Liberty's arrival and the important conservation story he and Spirit represent. We encourage all guests to stay tuned to our social media and website for official updates on Liberty and his public debut.

While in quarantine, members of the media will not have access to the bald eagle. [Please click here](#) for access to a photo and video of Liberty taken shortly after his arrival.

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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. A conservation leader, the Zoo cares for over 1,500 animals and supports numerous local, regional, and international conservation efforts. The Fort Wayne Zoo is consistently ranked among the nation's top zoos and is supported entirely through admissions, memberships, donations, and other sources of community support. Learn more at fwzoo.com.