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ZOO HELPS TEST BEAR-RESISTANT TRASH CAN TO ADDRESS HUMAN/BEAR CONFLICT IN FLORIDA

January 26, 2016 – *Jacksonville, FL* – In early January, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) helped address the human/bear conflict in Florida by testing a 'bear-resistant' waste bin latch on their North American Black Bear, Billy.

Recently, with the human population rapidly expanding in central Florida, encounters with black bears have become all too frequent.

One of the most common reasons bears are coming so close to humans is the easy access to food from garbage bins left overnight. Bears are extremely intelligent and are opportunistic feeders, especially with their ability to smell food from over a mile away. The more conditioned bears become with easy meals like garbage, the more frequently they will visit neighborhoods looking for a snack.

Toter, a leading supplier of trash containers out of North Carolina, already supplies a range of bear-resistant containers and has been finalizing development of a bear-resistant can that will work also operate with automated collection trucks and help lessen the temptation for bears. They visited JZG with their new trash can to test the strength of the lock.

When placed in the exhibit, the snack-filled waste bin was scratched, tossed and turned upside-down by Billy for over 25 minutes, but the trash can held strong. Afterward, Billy was given extra love and snacks for a job well done.

Preventing access to food is the most important thing a person can do to maintain safety for themselves and for bears. Though the bear resistant trash can will help lessen the bear encounters, humans need to be more mindful on when and where they place their garbage.

For many people, seeing a black bear is a rewarding experience. Just because you see one, doesn't mean you are in danger. Bears are wild animals that

deserve respect, and this bear-resistant trash can is one way to work toward a safer relationship between humans and bears.

Billy's exhibit at JZG will undergo an expansion this year, and will be complete by the end of summer.

Photo Credits: Yaira Osborne

About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.