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Buffalo Zoo and Jacksonville Zoo Team Up to Support Conservation

Buffalo N.Y. (January 5, 2018) – In the spirit of friendly competition and to celebrate the Buffalo Bills and Jacksonville Jaguars NFL playoff berths for the first time in many years, the Buffalo Zoo has teamed up with the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens for a friendly wager.

With all the excitement surrounding the NFL this past week, the Buffalo Zoo and the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens thought it would be a great time to bring attention to conservation projects the zoos are passionate about.

The wager is simple. If the Buffalo Bills win this Sunday against the Jaguars, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens will contribute to the North American Bison Coalition in addition to supplying the Buffalo Zoo with one of its local delicacies, chocolate-covered popcorn. The American Bison Coalition brings together an assortment of conservationists including Native America tribes, educators, and zoos in an effort to raise awareness of this iconic species in North America. If Jacksonville wins, the Buffalo Zoo will contribute to the Rupununi Wildlife Research Unit, as well as send one of Buffalo's delicacies, sponge candy to the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. The Rupununi Wildlife Research Unit is located in the Rupununi region of Guyana, which is home to a large population of diverse species, including jaguars.

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens' **Executive Director Tony Vecchio** is feeling confident, "as a trained zoologist, it is clear to me that a jaguar would have no trouble taking down a bison."

However, Buffalo Zoo **President/CEO, Norah Fletchall** would like to remind Mr. Vecchio that "a jaguar may be fast and cunning, but stands little chance against a herd of well-built and winter-hardy Buffalo."

The North American bison was named America's National Mammal in 2016. The population has rebounded over the years within protected areas following a significant decline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The jaguar's native range is throughout the Southwest United States and Central and South America. There are very small numbers remaining in North America.

Conservation is a priority for the Buffalo Zoo and Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens as well as all institutions that belong to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Collectively, AZA institutions supported approx. \$216,000,000 worth of field conservation efforts in 2016. The Buffalo Zoo and Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens directly contribute to the long-term survival of species in natural ecosystems and habitats through both species-specific and habitat-focused conservation projects.

The North American Bison exhibit at the Buffalo Zoo is sponsored by **Cellino Plumbing**.

The Buffalo Zoo is also a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and is the third oldest zoo in the country. It is committed to promoting wildlife conservation through up-close animal encounters, engaging educational experiences, and participation in regional and international programs for endangered species. The Buffalo Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For any additional information about the Buffalo Zoo please visit www.buffalozoo.org. You can also follow us and like us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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 a portion of every ticket sold goes to the over 45 conservation initiatives Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports around the world, and here in NE Florida. JZG is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.

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