



*For Immediate Release*

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**BOWLING FOR RHINOS**

*Zoo Atlanta's Keepers Get Together for a Worthy Cause*

**ATLANTA – June 23, 2008** – On July 18, champions of wildlife will attack extinction with a different kind of strike at Bowling for Rhinos. A national annual fundraiser managed by the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK), Bowling for Rhinos generates critical support for some of the world's rarest animals and their ecosystems.

Some 40 members of Zoo Atlanta's animal care staff are affiliated with AAZK, a national non-profit volunteer organization composed of professional zookeepers and other individuals dedicated to animal care and conservation. Bowling for Rhinos is the largest event hosted by the Georgia Chapter, which also hosts smaller special events and fundraising opportunities throughout the year.

The national symbol of AAZK and an icon for conservation in Africa, the rhino is one of the planet's largest and most charismatic mammals. Prehistoric in their perseverance in Earth history, rhinos have existed for more than 50 million years. Unfortunately, these enduring animals face an abrupt end to an amazing evolutionary track record. Of more than 100 rhino species once known to exist, only five – the black rhino, white rhino, Indian, Javan and Sumatran rhino – remain today. All are critically endangered: white rhinos currently number fewer than 11,300; black rhinos, around 3,700; Indian rhinos, 2,600; Sumatran rhinos, fewer than 275; and Javan rhinos, fewer than 60. Rhinos face catastrophic declines due to poaching and habitat fragmentation. They are hunted for their horns, which are harvested primarily for use in traditional eastern medicine.

Bowling for Rhinos funds support sanctuaries in Kenya's Lewa Wildlife Conservancy; Java's Ujung Kulon National Park; and Sumatra's Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park and Way Kambas by purchasing fencing for protected areas and providing vehicles and salaries for anti-poaching security patrols.

More than 60 AAZK chapters in the U.S. and Canada host Bowling for Rhinos events, generating an average of \$300,000 a year for *in situ* rhino conservation. The first \$160,000 raised benefits Lewa Conservancy; remaining funds are split among Ujung Kulon National Park and Bukit Barisan Selatan

National Park via the International Rhino Fund. The Indonesian Rhino Conservation Program allows Bowling for Rhinos funds to expand support in Indonesian sanctuaries.

Zoo Atlanta is home to two black rhinos, Boma, 22, and Rosie, 18. Both animals are part of the Rhinoceros Species Survival Plan (SSP).

On Friday, July 18 at 7 p.m. at Suburban Lanes at 2619 North Decatur Road, Bowling for Rhinos is open to anyone interested in conservation of rhinos and the hundreds of other endangered animal and plant species that share their habitats. Highlights of Georgia AAZK's annual evening of bowling, fellowship and fun include an extensive silent auction and the popular 50/50 raffle, by which the winner wins half of all proceeds from raffle ticket sales. Blue Rhino returns as the event's corporate sponsor.

#### **About Zoo Atlanta**

An accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Zoo Atlanta inspires value and preservation of wildlife through a unique mix of education and an outdoor family experience. From well-known native wildlife to critically endangered species on the brink of extinction, the Zoo offers memorable close encounters with more than 800 animals from around the world. One of only four zoos in the U.S. exhibiting giant pandas, Zoo Atlanta is also home to one of the nation's most recognized collections of great apes and is a global center of excellence in the care and reproduction of vanishing amphibians and reptiles. Zoo Atlanta is open daily with the exceptions of Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Keeper talks, interactive wildlife shows, education programs and special events run year-round. For more information, call 404.624.WILD or visit [zooatlanta.org](http://zooatlanta.org).

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