

**Press Release
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TORONTO ZOO GREAT LAKES PROGRAM RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS PROVINCIAL AWARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE

Tuesday, July, 30, 2013, Toronto Ontario: Today, Cynthia Lee, Curator - Fishes & Marine Invertebrates at the Toronto Zoo, accepted the 2012 Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence for the Great Lakes Program from the Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of the Environment.

This award honours home-grown environmental achievement in Ontario. Commitments to environmental excellence benefit all of us today and for future generations. This award showcases the commitment and innovation that make Ontario an environmental leader internationally.

"On behalf of everyone at the Toronto Zoo, we are extremely pleased to receive the 2012 Minister's Award for Environmental Excellence for outstanding local efforts to protect the Great Lakes", said John Tracogna, Toronto Zoo Chief Executive Officer.

Since its inception over 15 years ago, the Great Lakes Program has grown from focusing on habitat rehabilitation and a single locally endangered species, the redbreasted dace, to include multiple fish species at risk, invasive species awareness, bilingual outreach presentations, trilingual educational materials and reaches 18,000 participants annually. Additionally, the program contributes to Great Lakes conservation through cryopreservation research for endangered fishes and field studies. As well, Toronto Zoo reaches internationally for freshwater conservation with its Aqua Links Program connecting students in Canada and East Africa to exchange ideas for stewardship for their "great lakes".

"To highlight fishes conservation at Toronto Zoo, the Great Lakes Program is hosting a Mad About Fishes event over the August long weekend. This event will put the spotlight on our local and international fish conservation projects through special displays and activities - visitors will have the opportunity to interact with Zoo staff, fish experts and program partners as they learn what they can do to help conserve water and protect fish species," said Cynthia Lee, Curator of Fishes & Marine Invertebrates at the Toronto Zoo.

For more information on the Great Lakes Program and the Toronto Zoo's contribution to aquatic conservation, please contact Cynthia Shipley, Public Relations and Events Manager, (416) 392-5938 or cshipley@torontozoo.ca.

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About Toronto Zoo

The Toronto Zoo is Canada's premier zoo and a leader in animal preservation and environmental protection. More than a tourist attraction, the Toronto Zoo boasts a number of leading programs for helping wildlife and their natural habitats – from species reintroduction to reproductive research. A world-class educational centre for people of all ages, the Toronto Zoo is open every day except December 25 and attracts approximately 1.3 million visitors each year.

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