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Phoenix Zoo to Host “Toss the Tusk” Event as Part of Nationwide Effort to Combat Illegal Ivory Trade

PHOENIX (August 27, 2024) – The Phoenix Zoo is proud to be selected as one of the three leading zoos to host the 2024 “Toss the Tusk” event, organized by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ Wildlife Trafficking Alliance (WTA) in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This crucial event is part of a nationwide series aimed at raising awareness and reducing the demand for illegal ivory products.

On Friday, September 27 from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. the Phoenix Zoo invites the public to join in the fight against elephant poaching by surrendering unwanted ivory items. These items will be properly disposed of to ensure they do not contribute to the global demand for ivory which is causing the catastrophic decline of this beautiful species.

“Worldwide demand for ivory is decimating elephant populations, and we must act quickly to save them from extinction,” said Dan Ashe, President and CEO of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. “By surrendering these items, the public can help ensure that they will no longer fuel demand and help us send the message that ivory belongs to elephants – living elephants.”

“The Phoenix Zoo is honored to play a pivotal role in the Toss the Tusk event,” says Bert Castro, President and CEO of the Phoenix Zoo. “This event is more than just an opportunity to surrender ivory – it’s a powerful statement against wildlife trafficking and a chance for our community to actively participate in the protection of elephants. Together, we can make a real difference in the fight to save these magnificent animals from extinction.”

The illegal ivory trade is a major factor in the decline of elephant populations, with thousands of elephants killed each year. African elephant populations have plummeted from an estimated 12 million a century ago to around 415,000 as of 2016. Despite a near-total ban on the commercial trade of African elephant ivory in the United States, poaching continues to outpace the species’ ability to recover.

International commercial trade in the ivory of elephants is prohibited under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). In the United States, elephants are protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The ivory trade is further restricted by the African Elephant Conservation Act and other laws. In 2016, a near-total ban on the commercial trade of African elephant ivory went into effect in the United States. However, these regulations do not restrict personal possession of ivory. If you already own ivory – an heirloom carving that’s been passed down in your family or a vintage musical instrument with ivory components—you

can still legally own those pieces. If you prefer to surrender any ivory items, you can do so at the Phoenix Zoo's event.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Friday, September 27
- **Location:** Outside of the Phoenix Zoo, 455 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, AZ 85008. Zoo entrance is not required to take part in the ivory surrender event.
- **Time:** 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- **Activities:** Public ivory surrender, educational exhibits on wildlife conservation, and opportunities to learn more about how you can help save endangered species.

The 2023 "Toss the Tusk" series successfully gathered over 300 pounds of wildlife products across four major U.S. cities. Since 2019, WTA's Toss the Tusk events have received over 1,000 relinquished wildlife products.

More information about Toss the Tusk: <https://bit.ly/phxtusk>

About the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation operates the Phoenix Zoo. The ACNC advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

The Phoenix Zoo is the only zoo in the Valley accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a non-profit zoological park, serving 1.4 million guests annually. The Zoo is home to more than 3,000 animals, many of which are endangered and threatened species. For information on upcoming events, exhibits and activities at the Phoenix Zoo, visit www.phoenixzoo.org.