

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alligator River/Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 1969
Manteo, North Carolina 27954

Contact: Bonnie Strawser - 252-473-1131



[Back to News Home Page](#)

News Release

Oct 12, 2007



“On behalf of the Red Wolf Recovery Program, Will Waddell, Red Wolf Species Survival Plan Coordinator, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, accepts congratulations from former Secretary of Interior, Bruce Babbitt for receiving the 2007 Association of Zoos and Aquariums North American Conservation Award.

Credit: Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium

Red Wolf Recovery Program wins nation’s top conservation award

Thirty-five years ago, only 17 red wolves roamed the planet, with only 14 used to begin a captive breeding program. Since then, those numbers grew to more than 300, and on September 19, 2007, the Red Wolf Recovery Program received a national award for its contribution to that growth.

In 1987, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium (PDZA) and the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan®, made the first attempt in history to restore a

carnivore species that was extinct in the wild. Four adult red wolf pairs were released into a part of their natural habitat on the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, just 14 years after the red wolf captive breeding program began. The year 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of that release and the 30th anniversary of the first red wolf litter born at PDZA after the breeding program was formalized in 1973.

In honor of these anniversaries, and in recognition of great success in species recovery, the Red Wolf Recovery Program received the North America Conservation Award from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Will Waddell, the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan Coordinator at PDZA, accepted the award.

Keynote speaker Bruce Babbitt, former U.S. Secretary of the Interior and current President of the World Wildlife Fund, spoke about current conservation efforts. He stressed the importance of captive breeding programs. He also emphasized the unique position of zoos and aquariums to make a distinct difference.

Bud Fazio, Team Leader of the Red Wolf Recovery Program, had this to say about the award: "The Red Wolf Recovery Program gratefully acknowledges this prestigious national award from AZA and the recognition that it brings to all of the partnerships needed to save this endangered species. The award is a tribute to long-term conservation efforts in red wolf recovery. We thank all those who have dedicated many years of hard work through their involvement in the AZA Red Wolf Species Survival Plan, associated research and population management, propagation on island national wildlife refuges and parks, restoration of a wild population, scientific research, development of planning documents, museum assistance for specimen storage, and public education." Through committed partnerships, the red wolf has returned as a top predator in the diverse landscape of the southeastern United States.