



AAZK Resources: Why Should I Become a Member of the American Association of Zoo Keepers?



Produced by the AAZK Resource Committee

This document was produced as a reference outlining the benefits of being an AAZK member. What does AAZK have to offer to animal care professionals and other like-minded parties? Find out some reasons why, as an animal care professional, you would benefit from being an AAZK member. How can you share your knowledge and skills with others in the field?

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AAZK Mission Statement

The mission of The American Association of Zoo Keepers is to advance excellence in the animal keeping profession, foster effective communication beneficial to animal care, support deserving conservation projects, and promote the preservation of our natural resources and animal life.¹

AAZK Vision Statement

AAZK will be the leader in the zoo and aquarium industry fostering professional development and personal connections that advance animal care, animal welfare and conservation.¹

AAZK Purpose

AAZK's purpose is to foster a professional attitude in animal keepers and aquarists by encouraging them to become active members of professional teams at today's zoos and aquariums. AAZK supports the promotion and implementation of zookeeper education and strives to make the general public aware of our concern for all deserving conservation projects and the need for the preservation of our natural resources and the species that depend on those resources.

Serving as a professional organization for zookeepers, AAZK is a valuable resource for dedicated animal care workers. AAZK is dedicated to advancing animal care, promoting public awareness, enhancing professional development and contributing to local and global conservation through fundraising and stewardship. Our goal is to inspire and motivate through our roles as animal caregivers, educators and conservationists. Through workshops, conferences, newsletters, and internet forums, AAZK helps animal care staff stay current in husbandry, training, nutrition, and conservation. Well educated keepers using modern techniques means the animals in their care benefit tremendously.¹

¹ American Association of Zookeepers website www.aazk.org

The American Association of Zoo Keepers & The AAZK Resource Committee 2022

For questions, clarifications, or suggestions, contact arc@aazk.org

Direct Benefits of AAZK

In addition to fostering professional relationships and supporting conservation efforts as listed above, being an AAZK member has many direct benefits.

Benefits	Professional	Affiliate	Student
Animal Keepers Forum (AKF) subscription	x	x	x
Vote in AAZK Board of Directors Elections	x		
Vote for AAZK Conference Host	x	x	x
AAZK Committee Opportunities	x	x	x
Hold Office at the Board of Directors level	x		
Hold Office at the Chapter level*	x	x	
Membership Rates for Conference	x	x	x
Membership Rates for Publications & Products	x	x	x
Gratis Membership to AAZK C.O.R.E.	x	x	x
Discounted Rate (through AAZK C.O.R.E.) to the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Academy	x	x	x
Ability to Form Student Chapter			x
Hold Office at Student Chapter Level			x

*dependent on Chapter Bylaws/Constitution

AAZK Membership Levels¹

There are multiple individual levels of membership within AAZK depending on your position level/title. Pricing of memberships is subject to change. For updated pricing and to join AAZK, please visit <https://aazk.org/membership-account/membership-levels/>

Professional

Permanent, salaried, full-time or part-time* zoo or aquariums keepers, veterinary technicians, research technicians and other personnel directly connected with the care, feeding, and educational display of captive wildlife in recognized zoological parks, aquariums, animal reserves and other animal care facilities. This also includes retired animal keepers with at least ten (10) years service prior to retirement, and who were professional members of the Association during the year previous to retirement.

As defined in section 3.01-1 of the AAZK Operations Manual, a part time professional animal keeper is defined as a permanent, part-time professional member as a monetarily-compensated position in a recognized zoo, aquarium or related animal care facility as an individual who works a minimum of twenty (20) hours per week and less than forty (40) hours per week in the animal care professional field as a zoo (animal) keeper, aquarist, veterinary or research technician and other personnel directly connected with the display, care and feeding of captive exotic animals and who is recognized by their USDA licensed, aviary or reptile facility as a "part-time" zoo keeper, or animal care staff member. Part-time, for the purpose of this Directive shall **not refer to seasonal employees.*

Affiliate

Zoo and aquarium staff** docents, volunteers and supporters of the animal care profession not listed in the Professional category above.

***As defined in section 8.01-5 of the AAZK Operations Manual, this includes managerial, curatorial, veterinary, and non-keeper positions. Also includes; docents, provisional non-student interns, and volunteers. Affiliate members may vote and hold office on a local level at the discretion of the Chapter Constitution and Bylaws and appointed office on a national level. (AAZK Operations Manual 8.02-5)*

Student

Student*** (may be requested to provide student identification)

****As defined in section 8.01-5 of the AAZK Operations Manual, a student member is interested in the animal care profession who is currently registered as a student in the college, high school or middle school level. Proof of current student identification (copy) is required when submitting the application for membership in the Association. Student members shall not be entitled to vote or hold elective or appointed office on any level within the Association, unless a Student Chapter is formed and duly chartered at the local level, consisting primarily of Student members. An AAZK Student Chapter may only be formed at the College level.*

Resources/Publications

AAZK is a resource which can help keepers stay up to date with new techniques, trends, and other resources regarding animal care and welfare.

The Animal Keepers' Forum (AKF)

The Animal Keepers' Forum is a monthly publication that has been produced by AAZK since 1975. The AKF has included articles on behavioral husbandry, enrichment, diets, exhibit designs, animal introductions, reproduction, and so much more. There are also advertisements from companies that specifically work with zoos and aquariums for food, enclosures, equipment, etc. As of June 2018, articles published in the AKF can now be referenced digitally through an open access partnership with the Smithsonian Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL).

Conference Proceedings

Proceedings from past conferences are available on the AAZK website. Proceedings include subject material covered and contact information for sources.

Animal Data Transfer Form (ADT)

The Animal Data Transfer form (ADT) was created by AAZK in 1979 as a tool for keeper to keeper communication when it came to transferring animals between facilities. The form is not meant to replace the animals' detailed health and management records, but instead create a quick reference with the information that keepers have a tendency to find the most beneficial. The ADT has been highly encouraged by a majority of facilities to be included with all animal transfers since its creation.

Professional Development

- Growth in leadership & gaining valuable practical experience
- Experience with different skills such as fundraising and financial management
- Sharing knowledge, success and challenges by authoring papers for presentation at conferences, workshops or publishing in the Animal Keepers' Forum
- AAZK works in collaboration with San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Academy, providing AAZK C.O.R.E. and other educational content through San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Academy.
 - Subscription to AAZK C.O.R.E. is included with all individual memberships
 - Subscription to AAZK C.O.R.E. for other membership levels is currently subject to an additional annual fee
 - AAZK C.O.R.E. offers DIY courses covering topics ranging in neonatal care, husbandry for different taxa, training, behavioral enrichment, animal welfare, strategic planning, exhibit design, and much more
 - To access AAZK C.O.R.E., log into www.aazk.org with your membership information. Select the "Members Resources" tab. Select "AAZK C.O.R.E." and click the link

National AAZK Conferences

Each year AAZK hosts a national conference in a different city. This conference brings hundreds of members, conservation groups, vendors, etc. together to showcase the many happenings of the previous year. As an AAZK member, you are eligible for reduced rates, special programs, and much more.

Professional Networking & Personal Connections

AAZK creates a medium for like-minded animal care professionals who are seeking to improve themselves, their facilities, and the natural world by coming together and sharing their ideas.

- Being part of a community of more than 2,000 likeminded animal care professionals
- Participate in any of the national AAZK committees.²
 - Awards committee
 - Elections committee
 - Ethics committee
 - Grants committee
 - Animal Welfare committee
 - International Outreach committee (IOC)
 - Communication committee (Comm2)
 - Conservation committee
 - Professional Development committee (PDC)
 - Safety committee
 - AAZK Resource committee (ARC)
- Participate in any of the national AAZK programs²
 - Bylaws
 - Bowling for Rhinos (BFR)
 - National Zoo Keeper Week (NZKW)
 - Trees For You and Me (TFYM)
- Participate in local and national conservation efforts
- Attend national conferences and regional workshops at a membership rate

Conservation

Sometimes member's passions for conservation can get lost in the grander conservation messages of their respective institutions. AAZK provides an outlet to help support non-profit causes of your choice and for areas you are passionate about.

A few examples of such events are:

- AAZK's flagship fundraiser "Bowling for Rhinos"
- Rocky Mountain AAZK "Comedy Night for Conservation"³
- Brookfield AAZK Chapters "Pints for Pangolins fundraiser"⁴
- Greater Houston Chapter AAZK's "Leaping for Lemurs"⁵

AAZK also has longstanding conservation partnerships. Over AAZK's lifetime, over \$8 million dollars has been raised through Bowling for Rhinos events. These funds have gone to animal and habitat conservation in Africa and Indonesia (A BFR Milestone).

²AAZK Operations Manual

³Rocky Mountain AAZK

⁴Brookfield AAZK

⁵Greater Houston AAZK

Financial Assistance/Discounts/Grants

Like memberships of other organizations, an AAZK membership may provide pricing discounts.

- Some zoos and aquariums offer free or discounted admission for AAZK members. Check with the individual facility directly for details.
- Discounted rates for conferences, workshops, courses, etc.
- AAZK Grant eligibility
 - Professional Travel Grant
 - Professional Development Grant
 - Conservation, Preservation and Restoration Grant
 - Research Grant
 - BFR Conservation resource grant
 - TFYM Reforestation Grant

How Do I Become an AAZK member?

Becoming an AAZK member is simple. Go to www.aazk.org and select the Membership tab.

National vs Local AAZK Chapter Membership

If you are still not sure about joining AAZK, remember that you do not have to be both a national and a local chapter member. Depending on each chapter's bylaws, some chapters accept members that are not national AAZK members. If you are not sure about how much time and energy you want to contribute on a local level, you can still be a national member. Being a member of either national or your local chapter is a great opportunity for networking and conservation opportunities. Not sure if there is a local chapter in your area? Visit the chapter list <https://aazk.org/find-chapters/>