

Johnny Morris'  
**WONDERS OF WILDLIFE**  
NATIONAL MUSEUM &  
**AQUARIUM**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 4, 2018

## It's official, America's Best Aquarium is in Springfield, Missouri!

*New must-see conservation attraction earns second major national recognition*



**Springfield, Mo.** – Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium has been voted America's Best Aquarium through a national public poll conducted by *USA TODAY* ranking the top 20 prominent institutions across North America. The nationwide recognition is the second significant award the public has bestowed upon the conservation-based aquarium and museum since its grand opening last fall. Earlier this year Wonders of Wildlife was voted America's Best New Attraction.

Wonders of Wildlife is a gift to the sportsmen and women of America from noted conservationist, angler and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris. Johnny endeavored to create a world-class not-for-profit conservation attraction located in his hometown, Springfield, Missouri, next to Bass Pro Shops' flagship headquarters store – where half the nation's population lives within a day's drive.

Featuring an immersive design with surprises around every corner and more than 35,000 live fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds, the \$300 million not-for-profit Wonders of Wildlife is unlike any other aquarium on earth. Fans cite the aquarium's over-the-top multisensory habitats, engaging interactive exhibits and strong conservation ethic as defining features that set Wonders of Wildlife apart. Larger than the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, the not-for-profit attraction is the world's grandest tribute to the conservation movement and the adventurers, explorers, outdoorsmen and conservationists who helped discover, develop and preserve the nation we love.

"We are truly humbled by this distinction and very grateful to every guest, member and fan for their votes and support," said Morris. "Wonders of Wildlife represents the collective efforts of countless individuals and organizations who share a strong passion for conservation. Together we hope the awareness generated by this award inspires even more people to visit and get inspired to enjoy and protect the great outdoors."



The Aquarium was nominated for the contest by a panel of nationally respected travel experts as part of *USA TODAY's* Reader's Choice Awards. Members of the public across the United States and Canada were invited to cast their vote every day during the month of April to determine a winner.

The most compelling natural history museum and aquarium to open in America in more than a century, Wonders of Wildlife is home to 1.5 million gallons of freshwater and saltwater aquariums. Signature exhibits include a massive "open ocean" ring-shaped aquarium and the two-story Shipwreck Room where guests can touch stingrays on the ocean floor. Immersive wildlife galleries feature 4D dioramas that transport guests through sights, sounds, smells and climates to some of the wildest places on earth, including a trek across the African savannah, the Amazon rainforest, the Arctic, America's National Parks and more in a multisensory celebration of conservation and craftsmanship.

Visitors set sail on voyages panning the world's oceans, lakes and streams bringing them face-to-face with sharks, rays, jellyfish, eels, eagles, otters and black bears plus giant game fish from around the world that belong on every angler's bucket list. Guests can connect with wildlife like never before looking inside a river full of piranhas, discover what it's like to touch a stingray, traverse an underwater tunnel surrounded by river monsters and plunge to the depths of the ocean amongst spectacular sharks.

Weaved throughout the dazzling displays are messages about the history and importance of wildlife conservation, with contributions from more than 40 leading national conservation organizations to celebrate those who hunt, fish, and act as stewards of the land and water. The Aquarium also honors legendary anglers with boats from Ernest Hemingway, Zane Grey, personal fishing artifacts and mementos from U.S. Presidents, and some of fishing's most accomplished sportsmen and women at The International Game Fish Association's (IGFA) Fishing Hall of Fame and the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame.

### **America's Conservation Capital**

Wonders of Wildlife is located next to Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri. Located in Missouri's Ozark Mountains, the region is emerging as "America's Conservation Capital" thanks to unparalleled natural beauty and a world-class collection of nature-based attractions and experiences including:

- **Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World**, the "granddaddy of all outdoor stores" with more than four million annual visitors enjoying 500,000-square feet of immersive shopping fun and the largest assortment of outdoor gear, apparel and gifts under one roof;
- **Big Cedar Lodge**, America's premier wilderness resort, a 4,600-acre lakeside retreat with a variety of nature-based experiences and amenities named by *Travel + Leisure* as the "Number One Resort in the Midwest" for the past two years;
- **Big Cedar Golf**, America's next great golf destination, with world-class golf inspired by the beauty of nature and designs from Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Tom Fazio, Tom Watson, Gary Player, and soon-to-open courses from Tiger Woods and Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw.
- **Top of the Rock Ozarks Heritage Preserve**, an unforgettable experience home to jaw-dropping views and nature-based attractions including the Lost Canyon Cave Trail, a self-guided electric cart tour through a breathtaking Ozarks landscape and cave, the Ancient Ozarks Natural History Museum, featuring the foremost collection of Native American art and artifacts ever assembled; plus restaurants and world-class golf;
- **Dogwood Canyon Nature Park**, a pristine 10,000-acre oasis offering wildlife tours, hiking, biking, guided fishing, horseback riding and more, and;
- **Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Academy**, a stunning outdoor playground for sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts that offers sporting events, outdoor amphitheater concerts, trap and skeet and more in front of the stunning backdrop of Table Rock Lake.

### **About Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium**

Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium consists of an all-new 1.5-million-gallon Aquarium Adventure showcasing 35,000 live fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds, and immersive Wildlife Galleries that bring visitors eye-to-eye with the greatest collection of record-setting game animals ever assembled. Created by noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder/CEO Johnny Morris, the 350,000-square-foot experience celebrates those who hunt, fish, and act as stewards of the land and water. Located next to Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri the campus is a centerpiece of America's Conservation Capital in Missouri's Ozark Mountains. Wonders of Wildlife has been voted "Best New Attraction in America" and "America's Best Aquarium" by the readers of *USA TODAY*. For more information, visit [www.wondersofwildlife.org](http://www.wondersofwildlife.org).

### **About USA TODAY**

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