

Lv Zoo Announces Renovations To Birds Of Prey Exhibit

By Matt Provence

(Schrnecksville, Pa.) – With the abnormally high spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in 2022 and its continued presence in North American Atlantic flyway, Lehigh Valley Zoo has begun construction on permanent roofing over its Birds of Prey exhibit. The construction is part of the zoo's commitment to keeping its birds safe from the highly transmissible and often fatal disease.

Additionally, LV Zoo will replace the current screens on the sides of the exhibit with improved mesh netting that will help prevent smaller, wild birds from entering the exhibits.

These upgrades are expected to be complete within 4-6 weeks and in plenty of time prior to the spring migration.

"Typically, outbreaks of HPAI are associated with wild bird migrations and resolve once the migratory season is over; unfortunately, this particular outbreak has never fully resolved, and we continue to see cases each month across the country in wild and domestic birds," LV Zoo Chief Veterinarian Dr. Hilary Householder said. "The improvements to the Bird of Prey exhibit will lower our birds' risk of exposure to the virus while reducing the impact that our increased biosecurity measures have on their daily lives – which allows them to remain in their normal enclosures in the face of this prolonged outbreak."



The project, which will be done in sections, will keep some birds off-exhibit for a short period of time. Upon completion, these measures will benefit guests through the ability to keep birds of prey on-exhibit during such outbreaks. After reported cases of HPAI in close proximity this past November, LV Zoo moved the majority of its birds off-exhibit and to indoor spaces for several weeks in order to eliminate contact with wild birds on the property.

Earlier in 2022, LV Zoo's collection of African penguins and lorikeets were kept off-exhibit for a three-month stretch, while barnyard birds and waterfowl remained off-exhibit the remainder of the year.

The Birds of Prey exhibit features the following species: American Eagle, Barn Owl, Barred Owl, Black Vulture, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Red-Tailed Hawk, Snowy Owl and Turkey Vulture. Once the renovations are complete, LV Zoo will be adding both an additional Barn Owl and Barred Owl to the exhibit.

In January 2022, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of HPAI in the U.S., along the North American Atlantic flyway. Since then, the spread of this HPAI outbreak has grown and cases have been confirmed in 49 of 50 states, both in commercial flocks and wild birds. HPAI is highly contagious among wild and domestic birds, causing extreme illness and death. As a result of the highly transmissible nature of HPAI, zoos throughout the country have implemented enhanced safety precautions to protect the birds in their care.

The roofing is being built by D&S Elite Construction of Douglassville, Pa.



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