



News Release

Samantha Haville
Marketing Manager
Parks and Recreation
City of Lafayette
(765) 807-1505
shaville@lafayette.in.gov

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Three remaining penguins at Columbian Park Zoo in stable condition

LAFAYETTE, IN – December 30, 2021– The Columbian Park Zoo has announced that their three remaining penguins are now in stable condition after a two month battle with what appears to be avian malaria. The Zoo shared that the other six penguins died earlier this fall after exhibiting symptoms of illness. Blood tests have returned with positive results for exposure to *Plasmodium*, the parasite that causes avian malaria.

“We are happy to say that our three remaining penguins, Shazam, Sagely, and Donner are all stable at this time,” said Assistant Zoo Director Caitlin Laffery. “We’ve seen an increase in appetite, improved energy levels, and blood values starting to return to more normal values. We are cautiously optimistic that their condition will continue to improve and we are hoping for the best.”

Avian malaria is a parasitic disease caused by the protozoan *Plasmodium* and transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitos. Affecting only birds, this form of malaria is not transmissible to humans or other zoo animals. It is also not transmissible from bird-to-bird. Penguins are considered particularly susceptible to the disease, and instances of the disease in captive populations often lead to high mortality. The Zoo shared that their first bird to die of the suspected disease did so on October 28. Five additional deaths followed, with the most recent death occurring on November 28.

“We were prepared for avian malaria prior to the penguin colony’s arrival this summer,” said Laffery. “We had exposure risk reduction strategies in place, including a mosquito-abatement program and the use of prophylactic anti-malarial medications prescribed by our veterinarian. Unfortunately, these measures were not enough to protect all of our birds. Although the three remaining birds are stable, we continue to monitor them extremely closely.”

Zoo Director Neil Dale shared that the community’s support has been tremendous. They’ve received flowers, letters, drawings, and sympathy cards. Amidst a very challenging time for staff, Dale says the words of encouragement have been much-appreciated. “This has been devastating for the entire zoo



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staff. We have felt the loss of each bird deeply. We can't thank the community enough for their support and kind words through a very difficult time," said Dale.

As for the future of the Penguin Cove exhibit, Dale says the Columbian Park Zoo is working with the Penguin Cove exhibit's original design team to come up with additional protective measures for the exhibit. Moreover, the zoo staff is continuing to consult experts in the field regarding other preventative measures that may be taken to ward off future exposures. Dale says that the Columbian Park Zoo will continue to provide updates as soon as they become available.

For more information about the Columbian Park Zoo, please call 765-807-1540 or visit columbianparkzoo.org. Stay up to date on Zoo happenings at www.facebook.com/cpzoo and www.twitter.com/ColumbianPrkZoo

About Columbian Park Zoo

Founded in 1908, Columbian Park Zoo is the second oldest zoo in Indiana. It is approximately 6 acres in size and is located in historic Columbian Park. The Zoo features several "immersion" exhibits and the animal collection consists of nearly 200 animals representing approximately 90 species.

About Lafayette Parks and Recreation

The Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department operates and maintains 700 acres of land within the City of Lafayette. This includes the maintenance of more than 27 miles of paved trails. The city's trails are open to the public and can be used for a variety of activities including walking, running, biking, rollerblading, and more.

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