North Carolina Zoo Begins Renovations

The North Carolina Zoo has begun numerous renovation projects with help from state bond funding. The zoo will build on its record-setting attendance set from July 2018 to June of this year, with more than 879,000 visitors. New exhibits are set to arrive in the coming year.

Projects currently under construction include a new education center, grizzly bear exhibit modifications, new service roads, and an aviary. Repairs and renovations have been completed on salt feeder systems, tree house exhibits, the Red River Hog habitat, and expanded parking for guests. Other additions are a new virtual reality theater and a butterfly garden.

The zoo also is preparing for its 50th anniversary in 2024 with zoo officials planning a fund-raising campaign to begin in the near future.

International Crane Foundation Celebrates Reintroduction Efforts

The International Crane Foundation (ICF) works to conserve whooping cranes and their habitats. The species reached its lowest population total in the 1940s, with only 21 birds in existence. Since then, the population has rebounded with more than 800 birds alive today.

The ICF emphasizes genetic diversity when raising cranes in its breeding program to promote better survival once released into the wild. Matched based on behavior patterns, if a pair of cranes is determined to not be genetically diverse enough, artificial insemination is used to ensure genetic diversity. Partner institutions also participate in the breeding process by offering samples and eggs as well as moving birds and eggs between facilities for genetic diversity.

Cranes are prepared for reintroduction to the wild through a rearing process that reinforces natural habitat standards to younger generations. Once in the wild, the ICF monitors migration with transmitters to ensure appropriate behavior is being displayed. In the last three years the ICF has identified ten new hatchlings born from released crane mates, a promising step toward achieving a self-sustaining population in the wild.

Elmwood Park Zoo Holds 95th Anniversary

In November Elmwood Park Zoo concluded its 95th anniversary yearlong celebration with a black tie gala. The event contributed to the zoo’s expansion plans including for a new animal hospital expected to accommodate internships for veterinary medical students.
Utah’s Loveland Living Planet Aquarium Expands Science Learning Campus

In 2009, the popular rock band U2 embarked on one of the all-time record-breaking tours in history. The band’s 360 Tour utilized a unique stage structure where the musicians were encompassed by what fans now call “The Claw.” Today, “The Claw” has been rebranded as the Ecosystem Exploration Craft Observatory (EECO) and is being used as one of the main components for Loveland Living Planet Aquarium’s planned $35 million expansion. The acquisition of the former concert set piece is in accordance with the aquarium’s focus on reusing materials for sustainability.

With the EECO now in place, work begins on refurbishing LED lights and ensuring the strength of the steel base to protect against snow loads. By the end of construction the EECO will include an 80,000 square foot Science Learning Center, an outdoor amphitheater, and new exhibits with expanded gathering spaces across the aquarium’s property.

Aquarium of the Pacific Releases White Abalone Along California Coast

Concluding an eleven year collaborative effort, divers from the Aquarium of the Pacific released hundreds of white abalone along the California coast in an attempt to repopulate the species in the wild. The aquarium was a founding member of the abalone recovery program in 2008 when its holdings of the endangered species stood at 78 mollusks. The population under the aquarium’s care now numbers into the thousands.

Cincinnati Zoo Hosts 37th Annual Festival of Lights

Open until January 4th, guests can visit Cincinnati Zoo’s Festival of Lights celebration to ring in the holidays and new year. The zoo will be incorporating crowd favorites from the past as well as some new attractions for this year’s edition.

This year’s festival includes a new “Northern Lights” experience. Hippo Cove, where Fiona the Hippo resides, will be lit up for the first time. Guests will be able to see animals in several indoor exhibits as well as having the opportunity to catch a 4D theater showing of the classic holiday movie “Polar Express.” Other attractions include a black light puppet show and a light show taking place on the park’s Swan Lake exhibit. The zoo’s new craft beer garden will also be open.