



birdcalls

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The latest news from the National Aviary

COMING SOON



Beginning this spring, there will be a new place in town to catch penguin action year round.

Construction has already begun on Penguin Point, a \$1.7 million African penguin exhibit that will immerse visitors in the sights and sounds of a real penguin colony. Visitors will access the 2,300 square-foot exhibit from the Aviary's main hallway and find themselves in the open air, with a 360-degree view of African penguins doing what penguins do – waddling, squabbling, scaling rocks and torpedoing their way through the water.

The birds' aquatic antics will be on view through an acrylic-fronted pool and through the wheelchair accessible Kids ViewTube under the exhibit. There, guests will find themselves in the swim, with underwater views of the penguins as they "fly" through the pool. Domed bubbles will allow children to pop up for a penguin's perspective of the exhibit's noisy residents (African penguins are also known as "jackass penguins" because of their honking, braying call) as well as all the penguin antics taking place. Heated nest cubbies – also visible to visitors – will provide a cozy place for the birds to congregate during cold winter days.

"Our penguins are decidedly our most popular residents, but the Aviary has never had a public exhibit space to accommodate them," says National Aviary CEO Linda Dickerson. "With this new exhibit, visitors will find themselves in the midst of an actual penguin colony, with all the arguing, jostling and interaction that you would see in the wild."

The National Aviary is currently home to five penguins – Stanley, Simon, Patrick, Elvis and Sidney – but up to 10 additional penguins will be recruited for the new exhibit. In time, the National Aviary plans to breed select members of the group as part of the Aviary's participation in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) African Penguin Species

Survival Plan, a carefully monitored breeding program that seeks to preserve healthy, genetically diverse populations of African penguins. If breeding is successful, guests will have the opportunity to peek inside the nesting cubbies to watch the eggs hatch and the chicks develop.

"Penguin Point will offer a remarkable setting in which to see and learn about African penguins and the challenges they face in the wild," says Steve Sarro, Director of Animal Programs at the National Aviary. "In the 1920s there were over one million African penguins in existence. Today there are only about 150,000 left in the wild, and their numbers continue to decline rapidly due to the effects of human population growth: overfishing, chronic oil spills, pollution and loss of nesting sites.

"The National Aviary is partnering with international organizations that are working to protect wild populations of African penguins, and educational programming associated with the new exhibit will include opportunities for guests to support those efforts," adds Sarro. "We will also provide guests with simple strategies for taking conservation action at home and in their community."

Designed by Peckham Guyton Albers & Viets, Inc. of St. Louis (PGAV), Penguin Point is the first of 10 new exhibits being planned as part of a \$23 million expansion and renovation of the National Aviary. The expansion will include a FliteZone™ Theater for year-round, indoor bird shows, a green roof for raptor flight demonstrations, a café, new classrooms, and a Conservation and Field Research Center (See page 2).



The grand opening celebration for Penguin Point will take place in late spring 2009. Watch www.aviary.org and the next issue of *Bird Calls* for more details!

Extreme Makeover - National Aviary Edition

In what could be billed as Extreme Makeover – National Aviary Edition, the Aviary will break ground this spring on a long-awaited \$23 million expansion and renovation project that will revitalize the 56-year old facility, enable new and exciting interactive programming, and greatly improve visitor amenities.

The project will include the creation of a new façade sheathing the facility, 10 new exhibits (see details on plans for a new penguin exhibit, page 1), a café, classrooms, expanded parking and a welcoming new entrance along Arch Street. But the highlight of the expansion will be the construction of a FliteZone™ Theater for indoor bird shows and educational presentations.



Outfitted with high-definition video screens and moveable stages, the theater's reverse, in-the-round seating will place audience members in the center of the (bird) action. Lighting, music and sound will be interwoven with video footage of wild birds, creating a powerful sensory backdrop to the sight of vultures, eagles, macaws and other species flying freely over the audience.

On the ground, flamingos, a team of attention-loving penguins and other birds more comfortable strolling than flying will make their own appearances, walking (or waddling) the aisles past seated guests.

"FliteZone™ will be the first indoor theater in the nation to incorporate free-flight bird demonstrations designed to help educate visitors about the importance of wildlife, biodiversity and the preservation of natural habitats," says National Aviary CEO Linda Dickerson.

"In a wired world dominated by electronic screens and packed schedules, children's personal encounters with wildlife and the natural world are waning. It is our hope that the new FliteZone™ experience will inspire a lasting love for nature and perhaps even a commitment to protect these magnificent creatures for future generations."

The many visitors who have requested additional opportunities to see birds of prey will be delighted with plans for the theater's roof, where Rooftop Raptor Encounters will place guests in the airy realm of kestrels, black kites, falcons and hawks.

"The lure-flying demonstrations we are planning from the rooftop will be an incredible way to experience the amazing power, speed and agility of birds of prey in action," says Steve Sarro, National Aviary Director of Animal Programs. "Guests will be able to watch as the birds swoop and dive for food, circle to the trees in the park, and return to the gloves of trainers standing alongside audience members. To see these hunters flying at speeds of up to 60 miles per hour in pursuit of prey is a truly remarkable experience that visitors won't soon forget."

The Rooftop Raptor Encounter space will allow for bench and event seating for 50 and will be available for special events and rentals. The space will also feature a living, planted green roof that will reduce storm run-off and heat island effect.

One of the most visible changes to the facility will be to its exterior appearance. The National Aviary's current piece-meal collection of buildings and add-on structures will gain a cohesive design through the construction of expanded building wings and new façades on the east and west. A café and outdoor patio facing Allegheny Commons West Park will not only provide food service but will also facilitate



enjoyment of the park and Lake Elizabeth. And for the first time, the Aviary will have an appropriately located, recognizable main entrance along Arch Street, ending confusion over access to the building.

“The new building creates an iconic front and welcoming front door that reflects its function as a building that celebrates birds and the nature of birds,” says Paul Rosenblatt, principal of SPRINGBOARD Architecture, Communication and Design of Pittsburgh, the firm leading the Aviary’s reconstruction. “The wings of the building will be skinned in a diaphanous metal scrim that will subtly glow with a changing palette of lighting. Overall, our goal is to create a more experiential environment, one that stimulates visitors’ imaginations about birds, nature and the world around us.”

Once inside, visitors will enjoy a spacious new lobby populated with open-air exhibits and plenty of opportunities to see the Aviary’s birds from a fresh perspective. The Aviary’s free-flight rooms and Lories & Friends exhibits will remain in place and will continue to offer visitors a variety of ways to feed and interact with hundreds of rare and beautiful birds.

“The addition of the FliteZone™ Theater and the overall reconstruction of the National Aviary is long overdue, but well worth the wait,” says Aviary Board Chairman Mike Flinn. “Our staff and leadership have worked diligently with the architects and designers to create a one-of-a-kind experience that is fitting with our official designation as this country’s National Aviary and confirming of our place as a valued cultural and educational asset in the Pittsburgh community. We invite all our supporters and friends to watch us grow and take wing over the next 18 months, and to join in the celebration when we open our new doors in 2010.”

The public is invited to join in two events to mark milestones in the construction process. On Monday, January 19 (Martin Luther King Day) the National Aviary will offer FREE admission as part of “Party with the Penguins” – an event highlighting the construction of

Penguin Point, the Aviary’s new African penguin exhibit. Guests will have the chance to meet the Aviary’s penguin team and become part of the exhibit by purchasing a personally engraved penguin commemorative.

Make plans now to visit the National Aviary during the week of April 20 - 26, when we’ll celebrate Earth Day 2009. The highlight will be the official groundbreaking of the FliteZone™ Theater. A full week of special activities is also planned.

