



### **National Aviary Hatches First Endangered Hooded Vulture Chick!**

This important hatching represents a significant advancement for the rapidly declining species; labor of love for the Aviary's expert care team.

Hooded Vultures are an unfortunate example of how quickly bird populations can dwindle in the wild. A species that more than 20 years ago was of **Least Concern** (according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature) is now considered **Critically Endangered**. Numbers continue to deplete due to habitat loss, collisions with electrical infrastructure, and intentional and unintentional lead poisoning.

That's why it is SO important for the National Aviary to announce that on April 20, 2024, our very FIRST endangered Hooded Vulture chick hatched! This announcement made headlines, including a feature in AZA Connect—the Association of Zoos and Aquariums digital newsletter—and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette!

The chick was not only the Aviary's first Hooded Vulture hatchling; it also was the first for parents Ralf and Opal. Very few AZA-accredited zoos have been able to hatch Hooded Vulture chicks for a variety of reasons, making this hatching even more critical to its species' survival. And according to Cathy Schlott, Director of Animal Programs and Experiences, this moment has been a long time coming for her team, and the Aviary.

"Ever since the Hooded Vulture species went into population decline, the National Aviary has been working toward a successful pairing and laying of a fertile egg," said Schlott. "Vultures are known for being 'nature's clean-up crew' and are so vital to our shared environment. To finally have had a chick hatch here just means so much to us."

Ralf and Opal have excelled in setting a heartwarming example for the chick to observe and learn from, and the family continues to live together behind-the-scenes. Stay tuned to our social media channels and subscribe to our e-mail list for updates!

### **Letter From the Director**



2024 to date has been an unparalleled year for the National Aviary, including the outstanding success of our Peregrine FalconCam season, the debut of our exciting summer seasonal theme Colors in Flight, and record-breaking, sold-out attendance at Night in the Tropics: Island Oasis!

Looking toward the future, we are

thrilled to continue opening our doors to families and people of all ages this fall as they enjoy themed programming during spellbinding, *Forests* Presented by Peoples. Visitors will "fly" to new interactive play spaces and exciting daily activities, all while going on a magical journey through our immersive habitats.

Our programming is not all that's new: our flock has welcomed a plethora of hatchings and arrivals within the last year! This includes Vera, a Eurasian Eagle-Owl who visitors fell in love with this past Spring when they peeked into the window of the Avian Care Center and watched her grow so quickly (and now she's making her debut in education programs this season!). We also introduced a new adorable Northern White-faced Owl, who we expect to be a huge hit with visitors and celebrated the imperative hatchings of a **Critically Endangered** Hooded Vulture and a Vietnam Pheasant – a species that may be **Extinct in the Wild**.

African Penguins Dave and Rita Mae also successfully joined the colony at *Penguin Point* in late May and were named by generous Aviary supporters. Guests can visit the young, grey-feathered juveniles along with their tuxedoed adult friends this October on *International African Penguin Awareness Day*. Another special seasonal event this fall includes the return of the fan-favorite celebration *Owl-O-Ween*, as little ones fill our hallways in their best Halloween costumes and learn about creatures that soar through the night. Animal lovers ages 21 and up can keep the owl fun going at a special evening edition of *Brushes & Birds* with

our dear friend Maria DeSimone Prascak of *Maria's Ideas* (mariasideas.com). The *Forests* season is chock-full of thrilling, educational classes, workshops, daily expert talks, and experiences that friends of the Aviary have come to know and love.

Outdoor enthusiasts can attend birdwatching expeditions, kayaking, and bus tours, and prowl for various owl species on land at local parks. Or they can take to the water in an *Owl Prowl and Kayaking Tour* combined! From a *Teen Job Shadow* series to a bird photography workshop, there's truly something for everyone at the National Aviary this fall. And, we can't forget about our delicious brunches in The Garden Room or our upcoming *Holiday Happenings*.

With endless fun also comes an unwavering dedication to our international conservation efforts. Through the hard work of our fantastic veterinarian and animal care teams and strong partnerships with other leading conservation organizations, we have helped facilitate not but one but two re-introductions of species whose populations are increasingly declining in their natural habitats.

As the end of the year vastly approaches our focus remains on providing the utmost care to the 500 birds and mammals that reside here. From adding a new roof to our *Grasslands* and *Treetops habitats* this September, thanks to the generous support of the *Allegheny Regional Asset District*, to attending to the daily needs of every resident, whether they are in a neonatal or geriatric stage of life or anywhere in between.

I hope that you will join us this fall as we have so much more to look forward to in this momentous year!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Tracy
Executive Director

**Stay Connected** 

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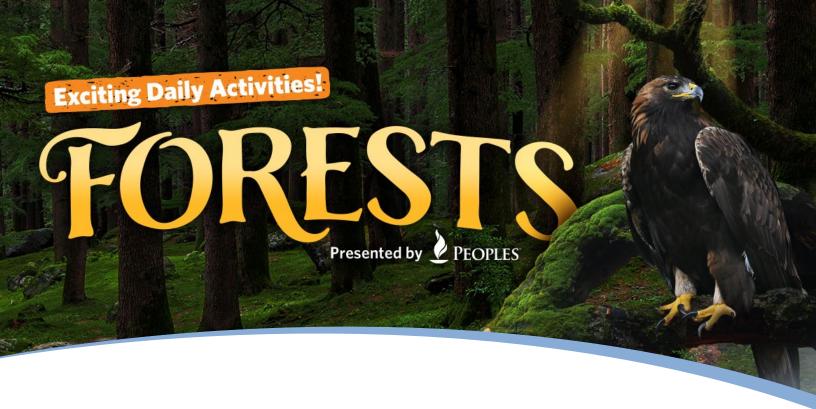
**BirdCalls** is published for friends of the National Aviary.

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Your donations support the National Aviary's work to save birds and protect their habitats.



## **Embrace that Fall Feeling during Forests Presented by Peoples!**

Step into mythical-like woodlands and go on an enchanted trip through *Forests*, the National Aviary's fall seasonal theme, Presented by Peoples.

Immersive habitats and engaging programs offer unforgettable experiences for guests of all ages. From dense North American forests to lush rainforests in tropical climates, these alluring habitats make up complex ecosystems home to a wide array of wildlife! Through exciting, new daily activities, a plethora of play spaces, cozy décor, and enticing educational offerings for everyone, guests will learn about the essential resources forests provide and how to help protect the birds who call these habitats home.

New interactive play spaces, perfect for kids, allow caregivers to relax and snap photos while the Aviary's natural surroundings encourage independent engagement. Little ones will immerse themselves in a *Storybook Forest*, try 'building' their very own log cabin, explore the different colors and textures of forests on a sensory table, and put on the ultimate bird-themed production at a puppet theater.

As the seasons change, so do the experiences you'll have when visiting the National Aviary. Autumn at the Aviary brings brand-new programming included with admission. This fall, you'll have not one but TWO opportunities to learn more about the fascinating creatures that inhabit these fantastical-like woodlands. First, "fly" to the Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone $^{\text{TM}}$  Theater and become immersed in the magical world of one of the world's most mysterious birds, the Owl, PLUS explore biofacts and learn all about some of Pennsylvania's most common Nocturnal Neighbors.



Then, "hang" around to learn about a misunderstood creature known for soaring through the night during a new *Creature Feature: Bats Talk* at *Canary's Call Presented by Dollar Bank*. Meet our colony of female Malayan Flying Foxes and watch as they enjoy nutritious treats (fun fact: they are BIG fruit eaters!) as a National Aviary expert shares interesting facts for you to sink your "fangs" into!

Get closer to feathered friends by purchasing add-on experiences such as feeding a Rainbow Lorikeet from a nectar cup; witnessing a Eurasian Eagle-Owl as it demonstrates its incredible "superpowers" in the fan-favorite live immersive bird show, *Habitat Heroes* presented by AAA Travel; and get EVEN closer during an Animal Encounter with a forest favorite such as an owl, sloth, or bird of prey or two. Owl Encounters in October also will feature a Hooded Vulture! Stay tuned for details and don't miss your chance to participate in these life-changing experiences.

Plan your trip through Forests

## **Daily Activities Schedule**

10:30 am	Penguin Feeding Penguin Point
10:30 am	Rainbow Lorikeet Feeding Canary's Call   Presented by Dollar Bank
11:00 am	Habitat Heroes Show Presented by Fravel Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone™ Theater  GUEST FAVORITE
11:30 am	Wetlands Feeding Wetlands
12:00 pm	Rainbow Lorikeet Feeding Canary's Call   Presented by Dollar Bank
12:30 pm	Tropical Rainforest Feeding Tropical Rainforest
1:00 pm	<b>Nocturnal Neighbors: Owl Expert Talk</b> Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone™ Theater
1:30 pm	Wetlands Feeding Wetlands
2:00 pm	Habitat Heroes Show Presented by Fravel Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone™ Theater  GUEST FAVORITE
2:30 pm	Rainbow Lorikeet Feeding Canary's Call   Presented by Dollar Bank
3:00 pm	Tropical Rainforest Feeding Tropical Rainforest
3:30 pm	Creature Feature: Bats Talk Canary's Call   Presented by Dollar Bank
4:00 pm	Penguin Feeding Penguin Point
4:30 pm	Rainbow Lorikeet Feeding Canary's Call   Presented by Dollar Bank

<sup>=</sup> Requires Additional Ticket. Please Purchase at our Visitor Services Desk.

National Aviary admission is included with interactive Animal Encounters! Schedule your encounter today, starting at just \$16 more than General Admission. Ask our Visitor Services Desk!



# **Record-Breaking Fundraiser Takes Guests to an Island Oasis**

## Night in the Tropics Presented by UPMC Health Plan hosted a sold-out crowd on July 26!

2024's annual 21+ fundraiser featured TWO firsts: typically on a Saturday, *Night in the Tropics: Island Oasis* brought in a packed house on a Friday evening! PLUS, for the first time in the signature fundraiser's history, VIP access began at 5 pm, giving those ticket holders TWO EXTRA hours of party time. Nearly 1,300 guests enjoyed special interactions with Aviary Animal Ambassadors, flight-themed signature cocktails courtesy of the *Pittsburgh International Airport*, and fantastic performances from headliner *No Bad Juju*. Eventgoers also danced the night away to the Cuban-inspired tunes of *Guaracha* and took part in a group dance lesson from renowned dancer Marlon Silva and his team. Incredible food was provided by more than 20 of Pittsburgh's best

restaurants, including Atria's Specialty Catering, Eat'n Park, Industry Public House, Piada Italian Street Food, and Vallozi Pittsburgh. Chaired by Maris Dauer, AVP, Marketing Administration, Community Charitable Giving & Employee Communications UPMC Health Plan, the event raised an unprecedented \$376,000 to support the National Aviary's work to save birds and protect habitats.





## **Dave and Rita Mae are Thriving in Penguin Point!**

# This past May, African Penguins Dave and Rita Mae joined the Penguin Point colony. They continue to thrive alongside older sibling Pierogi.

The juveniles who hatched in 2023 also received their official names thanks to dear friends of the Aviary. Dave (formerly known as Hatchling 1) was named by Aviary supporters Jacklyn and Josh Banyas and Megan and Kevin Wolfe in honor of Jacklyn and Megan's dad, Dave McCluskey. Rita Mae (aka Hatchling 2) was named by Aviary supporters Michael and Lisa Hart in loving memory of their aunt, Rita Mae Caste. The National Aviary is incredibly grateful for this amazing support.

In October 2023, parents Patrick and Owen began incubating two eggs in their nesting cave. By early November, both chicks had hatched, signifying another moment of progress for their species population, whose numbers are critically endangered in the wild. The chicks moved to a behind-the-scenes habitat with their parents, who were making their first attempt at rearing their own offspring. Patrick and Owen proved to be a dedicated parent pair, and the chicks developed into healthy juveniles in their care.

Before being fully ready to join their future colony mates, these young, feathered friends still had some growing to do and learned behaviors to acquire!

"The first indicator of the two being ready to join the colony was their waterproof feathers starting to come in and being fully developed, which ensures they can comfortably swim and waddle over the habitat's rocky cliffs," says Chris Gaus, Assistant Manager of Animal Care. Within the next year to 18 months, their sleek grayish-black juvenile feathers will start to transform into the classic black and white plumage we have come to know and love, as the two go through their first catastrophic molt! In addition, the duo received regularly scheduled social visits from their older sibling Pierogi and also learned how to feed on sustainably sourced fish provided by our expert care staff."

Visitors can come to see the juvenile duo and other members of the colony while learning more about the National Aviary's efforts to help save them from extinction during special event activities on **African Penguin Awareness Day** (Saturday, October 12; 10:30 am to 4 pm).

**Get Tickets** 



## **A Successful Peregrine FalconCam Season**

National Aviary Peregrine FalconCam viewers enjoyed an exciting 2024! The season marked the first year new Peregrine pair Carla and Ecco successfully hatched chicks in the University of Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Learning nest box!

As FalconCam fans recall, new female Peregrine, Carla, arrived at the nest box in early May 2023 and began acclimating with Ecco shortly thereafter. The mates laid their first clutch of eggs this past March: both hatched on Earth Day! The hatchling duo carefully grew under the watchful eyes of Mom and Dad until they were ready to make their first fledge attempts in early spring. As part of an ongoing statewide effort to monitor Peregrine Falcon population—once on the Endangered Species list —Pennsylvania Game Commission biologists banded both chicks in late May. National Aviary Ornithologist, Bob Mulvihill, and Aviary Educator and Photographer Mike Faix were able to climb to the top of the Cathedral and witness this exciting development! A few weeks later, both chicks fledged their Cathedral of Learning nest and went onto their next chapter in life.

The National Aviary is incredibly grateful to our friends Kate St. John, the *University of Pittsburgh*, and *Lighthouse Electric* for their shared support in acquiring new technology that helped make this season's viewing experience even clearer! The updated equipment allowed for sharper focus, better reach, improved audio, and included infrared night light. We would also like to thank *The Birdwatchers Store* for sponsoring the National Aviary's FalconCam.

We look forward to the <u>2025 Peregrine FalconCam</u> season and are hopeful Carla and Ecco will return for another thrilling chapter.





## **The Journey to Saving Guam Kingfishers**

In late August, three National Aviary Guam Kingfisher hatchlings were safely transported to Palmyra Atoll. This is where they soon will be released, the first wild population in nearly 40 years.

Guam Kingfishers have been Extinct in the Wild for almost four decades, decimated to the brink of total extinction on the island of Guam by the arrival of an invasive species, the Brown Tree Snake. Since then, their populations have been maintained under the expert care zoological organizations that are part of an Association of Zoos and Aquarium's (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP). The National Aviary has been part of this trial program, actively working within the SSP® and the Sihek Recovery Program, with one goal in mind: to eventually introduce the species to Palmyra Atoll, a Brown Tree Snake-free island located about 6,000 km (3,729 miles) from Guam.

This project, comprised of several Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited zoos including the National Aviary, aimed to successfully breed Guam Kingfisher chicks and safely transfer them to a Biosecurity Translocation Facility at the Sedgwick County Zoo where they remained in quarantine until being transferred to Palmyra Atoll.

National Aviary Senior Aviculturist Brianna Crane played a crucial role in this process. In June of this year, Brianna incubated two fertile eggs in our Breeding Center, which she helped to hatch and hand raise.

(Continued on next page)



## The Journey to Saving Guam Kingfishers cont.

The eggs were produced by our Adult Guam Kingfisher pair who reside in the public-facing habitat in Canary's Call Presented by Dollar Bank. Brianna personally transported the chicks (a female chick affectionately named Långet, which means "heaven" or "sky" in CHamoru—the language of the Marianas Islands indigenous people—and a male named Mames, which means "sweet") to the Sedgwick County Zoo on a Delta Airlines flight. However, this wasn't the first time Brianna had made this incredible journey. In late May, she also helped to hatch, hand raise, and then transport a Cincinnati Zoo's sihek, given the name Sindålu, meaning warrior, to Sedgwick County.



"During this process, every hatching was critical, as these birds held the potential to be among the first Guam Kingfishers introduced into the wild on Palmyra Atoll. The process of introducing a species back into the wild is extremely intricate and complex, including ensuring the chicks made it to Sedgwick County safely while remaining healthy," says Brianna. "The National Aviary is incredibly grateful for the support and accommodations provided by Delta Airlines and the Pittsburgh International Airport, from TSA agents to the flight attendants and pilots, everyone played a huge part in successfully getting the chicks to their destination."

Transporting the chicks to Sedgwick was only half of the journey. The trio still had to go through rigorous health exams and screenings before being cleared to move to Palmyra Atoll.



During the last week of August, the nine sihek including Långet, Mames, and Sindålu safely made the historic flight to their NEW island home in the Pacific Ocean from Kansas. They have spent the last several weeks in temporary aviaries built near their new forest home, while their care team continues to monitor their staggering release on the predator-free and fully protected island of Palmyra Atoll - home to a nature preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy, located inside a US Fish & Wildlife Service refuge. The atoll will provide the species a safe, wild home to thrive in and establish a breeding population, with the ultimate goal of one day returning the species to Guam, once the threat from snakes is controlled.

Stay tuned to our social media channels and subscribe to our e-mail list for updates on how the chicks are acclimating to their new home! Or become a Member and join us for a Members-only Expert Talk in November.

**Not a Member?** Become one today!



### **Chick this Out!**

Meet the line-up of adorable chicks that we have recently welcomed to our flock!

### **Meet "Vera" the Eurasian Eagle-Owl**



**HATCH DATE:** March 21

**HABITAT RANGE: Europe, Northern Africa, Asia** 

**FUN FACT:** Eurasian Eagle-Owls can turn their heads 270 degrees! Which gives a new meaning to the phrase "eyes in the back of their head!"

**PARENTS:** X and Dumbledore

Vera is one of our Animal Ambassadors; you can see her daily in *Habitat Heroes*, presented by AAA Travel!

### **Meet the New Spotted Whistling-Ducks**



**HATCH DATE:** August 3

**HABITAT RANGE: Southeast Asia** 

**FUN FACT:** This species is also known as the tree duck due to its comparatively longer legs and neck and its comfort perching high up in trees!

**PARENTS:** Ann and her male partner

You can see the new family in our *Tropical Rainforest* habitat during your next visit!

#### **Meet the Vietnam Pheasant Chick**



**HATCH DATE: May 24** 

HABITAT RANGE: Central Vietnam (This species is listed as Critically Endangered, but it has not been seen in its natural habitat since 2000!)

FUN FACT: Adult Vietnam Pheasants are dimorphic, which means you can tell the male and females based on their appearance; no need for a DNA test! While both have a red face and legs, males have bright metallic blue feathers and a white crest. Females are chocolate brown, with no crest.

**PARENTS: Magda and Erik** 

Visit the newbie in our *Canary's Call Presented by Dollar Bank* habitat, alongside the Crested Partridge family (see the chick in the photo above with one of the partridge parents!).





# In Memory of Stanley the African Penguin

African Penguin Stanley was one of our longesttenured flock members. Arriving at the Aviary at two months old in 2001, he was our very FIRST penguin, named after the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup.

All African Penguins at the National Aviary are part of an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP), to help with the Critically Endangered species population recovery. Stanley's great-grandparents came from South Africa in the 1960s to help AZA found this important program.

Stanley was nationally known for the bond he shared with mate, Dottie. Visitors could often see them sunning beak-to-beak on a shared rock inside of Penguin Point. Stanley turned 20 in 2021, considered a "geriatric" age for African Penguins. As we age, the potential for age-related spine and joint changes increases. In late 2022, Stanley was suddenly unable to stand or walk well.

After a CT scan revealed his age-related spine and joint condition, Stanley began receiving progressive levels of



care, including swimming with assistance from a life vest, and even acupuncture. Dottie was right by his side through the treatments. Sadly, despite exhausting all of our efforts, Stan was not able to progress to recovery. With deep sorrow, our veterinary team faced the difficult, humane decision in Stan's best interest this past April. Stan passed peacefully after many last visits from tearful staff members.

Stan was beloved by visitors and staff alike. We will miss him very much, and will continue to celebrate his full life and legacy.

## **Upcoming Events with the National Aviary**



## International African Penguin Awareness Day

**Saturday, October 12** | **10:30 am - 4 pm**Included with General Admission; Members visit for FREE!

Waddle to the National Aviary on International African Penguin Awareness Day to celebrate all things Penguin! Bring out that snappy black and white ensemble and join the tuxedoed colony for fun activities including making a fun penguin-themed craft, watching penguin feedings, engaging talks, and more!

Learn More

### Brushes & Birds Evening Edition: Eurasian Eagle-Owl

Thursday, October 17 | 5:30 - 8:30 pm Ages 21+

Kick off the National Aviary's Owl-O-Ween festivities a few days early by joining Maria DeSimone Prascak of Maria's Ideas (mariasideas.com) for a special 21+ evening edition of Brushes & Birds: Eurasian Eagle-Owl! During this cheerful and Boo-tiful portrait class, painters of all abilities will follow Maria's step-by-step instructions to paint their very own Eurasian Eagle-Owl portrait. Before class, relax with friends and meet a National Aviary Animal Ambassador while enjoying a glass of wine, beer, or delicious non-alcoholic beverage and scrumptious bites available for purchase from Atria's. Access to National Aviary habitats will be closed during the event.

**Register Here** 



## Owl-O-Ween

Saturday & Sunday, October 19 - 20 & 26 - 27

### **Member Morning**

Saturday, October 19 | 9 - 10 am

National Aviary Members are welcomed to light refreshments and early access to *Owl-O-Ween*—before the Aviary is open to the general public! Plus, stick around for a fun day full of owl celebrations!

## General Admission | 11 am - 3 pm Members visit for FREE!

Meet some of the most mysterious members of the bird world at *Owl-O-Ween*, our annual celebration of creatures that soar through the night! Kids will delight in making a fun owl-themed craft and enjoy other engaging activities. PLUS anyone can wear their most charming or spellbinding costume and join the Halloween festivities: getting the chance to meet an Animal Ambassador Owl while learning about what makes them unique from a National Aviary Expert in a Sp-OO-ky Meet and Greet!

Learn More

#### **Teen Job Shadow Series**

**Saturdays, November 2, 9, 16, & 23 | 1 - 3 pm** 

Teens ages 14 – 18 with a passion for working with animals can spend four Saturdays with National Aviary experts learning about the dynamic world of animal care and conservation. This program offers a unique opportunity to experience what it takes to care for more than 500 animals who call the National Aviary home.

**Register Here** 

## **Upcoming Events with the National Aviary**

### **Birding Expedition Bus Tour: Waterfowl**

Sunday, November 3 | 7 am - 2:30 pm

Pick-up and drop-off from and to the National Aviary is included PLUS a packed lunch from Atria's Specialty Catering will be provided.

Meet up with National Aviary Ornithologist Bob Mulvihill for a morning of birdwatching during the height of the waterfowl migration season. Tour stops include Lake Arthur, Lake Wilhelm, Conneaut Marsh, and Pymatuning Reservoir. Hone bird identification skills, learn birding basics, and witness this unique migration pattern up close. Meet at the National Aviary and ride over as Bob shares his knowledge and stories from decades of birding. Only a few spots remain!

### Reserve Your Spot Today!



Friendsgiving Brunch in The Garden Room
National Aviary Admission Included

Sunday, November 17 | Seating at 12:30 pm

Enjoy the fall foliage and kick off the season of giving with your closest friends during a brand-new *Friendsgiving Brunch* at the National Aviary! Gather cozily in The Garden Room, celebrating over a specially prepared feast with loved ones. Warm up with coffee and tea beside one of two large stone fireplaces as you enjoy fresh-cut fruits and pastries. Then savor a hearty meal made from scratch of the finest foods the fall harvest has to offer before you take part in a scavenger hunt around the Aviary (brunch includes admission!) to find our paired feathered friends!

**Reserve Your Seat at the Table** 

### **NEW Member Exclusive Expert Talks!**

National Aviary Members receive access to our new talk series featuring insights from some of our favorite experts!

Expert Talk with Senior Director of Animal Care & Conservation, Kurt Hundgen: Guam Kingfishers

**November 7 | 11 am - 12 pm** 

Register for Free

**Not a Member?** Become one today!



Save the Date for Holiday Happenings at the National Aviary

Winter Camp December 27, 28, or 30 Register Here

Season's Greetings Saturdays
(Featuring Photos with Santa and a Penguin!)
Saturdays, November 30 - December 21

Buy Tickets

**Holiday Late Nights** *December 26 - 30* 

**Buy Tickets** 





## **Donor Society**

Thank you to the following individual supporters who made donations of \$500+ so far in 2024. Your generosity helps fund the care of our animals. To be a part of our Donor Society, contact Ted.Bartlett@aviary.org or 412-258-9433.

### 2024 Donor Society

#### Martial Eagle | \$2,500+

Anonymous (4) Josh and Jacklyn Banyas Jennifer and Keith Bertetto David and Elizabeth Brown Nancy Brown Matthew and Lydia Burg Richard Caruso Verna Corev Thomas and Maryanne Debies Jane and Michael Dixon Kim and Robert Fanelli Michael and Eileen Flinn John and Suzanne Graf Michael and Lisa Hart Edward and Bonnie Hovanik Thomas and Christine Kobus John Levine Estate of Joseph Makar James Martin Kathleen McCharen Gino Nacey **David Paulson** Estate of Richard K. Petrovich Sandra Preuhs and Larry Sachs James and Cristy Schrott Luanne Shock Eric and Julie Spaulding

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**FALL 2024** As of 9/1/2024