



**BUILDING AN IMPACTFUL  
LEGACY**

**- 2025 ANNUAL REPORT -**

**NATIONAL AVIARY**

# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

## 2025 was a record-breaking year for the National Aviary in a number of ways.

The year began with the announcement of the upcoming *National Aviary S Kent Rockwell Conservation Center*.

The new, global, one-of-its-kind facility, located in Fox Chapel, will be transformative for the National Aviary in the conservation of at-risk bird species globally. We are incredibly grateful to renowned philanthropist S. Kent Rockwell for his generous support as we plan to officially break ground in 2026.

During 2025, a record number of guests visited the National Aviary! Your support of our mission to inspire respect for nature through an appreciation of birds helps us to continue important conservation work around the world, including our work with the **Extinct-in-the-Wild** Guam Kingfisher. Many may recall our role in reintroducing nine Guam Kingfishers (including three that hatched here) onto the predator-free island of Palmyra Atoll in 2024. Successful efforts for this program continued in 2025 with the anticipation of introducing additional offspring to join the wild counterparts onto Palmyra in 2026.

The National Aviary's global stewardship for protecting birds reached new heights in 2025, including:

- Through collaboration with our Ecuador-based partner, Bioparque Amaru, we helped rehabilitate and release a wild Andean Condor named Valentino; provided support for equipping wild Andean Condors with satellite transmitters for critical research; and provided key support to protect land in the Amazon Rainforest.
- Through our leadership in the **Association of Zoo's and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® Program (SSP Program)**, we hosted fellow accredited-zoo program leaders to carefully plan for a successful future in the **Critically Endangered** African Penguin program.

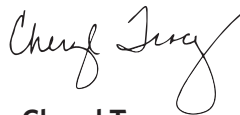
- Through our leadership in **AZA Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE)**, we led the deployment of artificial nest burrows in Namibia for African Penguins in the wild.

We also welcomed multiple new hatchlings including African Penguins, Oswald and Nora; majestic Black Kite Echo; and a male and female Hooded Vulture.

2025 also marked another consecutive year in achieving record funding from admissions and other Aviary programs. Your support allows us to continue to inspire others as we work together to protect birds and their habitats.

**Thank you to our Board of Directors, Friends of the Flock, leadership team, staff, volunteers, donors, members, guests and community of supporters as we highlight another incredible year!**

Sincerely,



**Cheryl Tracy**  
Executive Director





## Species Survival Plan® Program Highlights

A species that is of Least Concern today can become Critically Endangered tomorrow. That's why the National Aviary takes part in several **AZA SSP Programs**: those to keep populations healthy, and those who need help reversing declining trends.

### African Penguins

The Aviary was excited to welcome two African Penguin hatchlings: a male and a female chick, in 2025. Through the Name-A-Bird program and thanks to the family of Aviary manager Kevin Fonner, the male is now affectionately known as Oswald. Hatchling two was monikered Nora in honor of senior director Gina Grone's daughter, who shares a name with the adorable new addition. With the African Penguin population essentially in nose-dive, every hatchling in expert care or in the wild is critical.

### Hooded Vulture

A second Hooded Vulture chick hatched in 2025, this time from first-time father Kiume (kee-oo-mah). This hands-on pap always wanted to be a dad - even practicing incubating a few rocks beforehand to prepare!

### Guam Kingfisher/sihek

Långet and Mames's parents, whose 2024 hatchlings Mames and Langet now live in the wild, hatched two additional Guam Kingfishers chicks (a boy and a girl) in 2025. The adorable duo, hand-raised by Brianna Crane with the help of our esteemed veterinary team in the Aviary's breeding center behind-the-scenes, will eventually be integrated into the population of fellow accredited zoos within the **SSP Program** for the species.

### Black Kite

Meet Echo, the first-ever Black Kite to hatch at the National Aviary! Black Kites eat "on the wing," catching smaller prey out of the air with their talons and bringing the food directly to their mouths without slowing down. Echo will make his Animal Ambassador debut in 2026!

### Inca Tern

The National Aviary welcomed two new Inca Tern chicks in quick succession last year. They may remain mustache-and-tri-color-free for up to two years, but they already have the giggle of an adult tern!

*African Penguin juvenile, Nora, visiting Penguin Point for the first time.*



*The first-ever Black Kite chick to hatch at the National Aviary. This species is native to parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The National Aviary is the only U.S. zoo to house this species.*



*One of two Near Threatened Inca Tern chicks, both of which were the first of their species to hatch in the Wetlands habitat's specially designed nest cavities.*



*The hatchings of a female (left) and male (right) Guam Kingfisher mark a significant milestone for this Extinct-in-the-Wild species. The current ratio between males to females in human care is almost 2:1 so every chick - especially a female - is incredibly important.*



# VETERINARY HIGHLIGHTS

The National Aviary is a leader in avian conservation for Threatened and Endangered species such as Andean Condors, African Penguins, and Guam Kingfishers. High level healthcare contributes to birds thriving, chicks reaching adulthood, and population restoration. Reproductive and neonatal healthcare are also integral parts of the veterinary services we provide. The National Aviary also partners with wildlife conservation centers internationally, including offering educational opportunities for veterinarians.



## African Penguin Neonatal Care

Routine neonatal exams are important to detect potential health conditions early. After two African Penguin chicks hatched, a health exam revealed one chick developed a respiratory infection. It was promptly treated, including inhaled nebulizations, resulting in a full recovery. As the chicks grew, they received vaccinations and other essential healthcare for penguins.



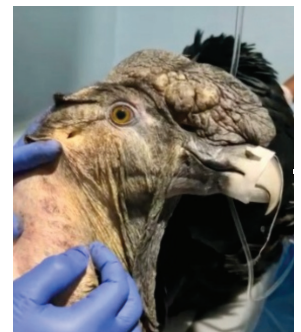
## Wildlife Conservation

In 2025, the Aviary welcomed Dr. Sofia Astorga from the Rescate Wildlife Rescue Center in Costa Rica to train in our Teaching Hospital. Cutting-edge treatments were shared for preventative healthcare practices, beak repair techniques, and diagnostic tests. The Aviary's educational program assists wildlife veterinarians to develop new techniques that will help injured and ill endangered species.



*Dr. Sofia Astorga received specialized training in the National Aviary Teaching Hospital which has directly benefited wildlife in Costa Rica.*

The ongoing partnership with Bioparque Amaru in Ecuador led to successfully treating a critically injured, wild Andean Condor. When the debilitated condor was rescued, veterinarians and conservationists in Ecuador reached out to the National Aviary to assist with developing emergency treatment plans. After months of collaboration, the condor made a full recovery and was released in the Andes Mountains.



*Collaborations with wildlife veterinarians and conservationists led to a wild Andean Condor's recovery and release.*

# CONSERVATION HIGHLIGHTS

## Helping Penguins At Home

Thirty years after the very first **African Penguin SSP Program** meeting took place, the National Aviary was honored to host current program leaders from nearly 20 **AZA**-accredited institutions for a multi-day Masterplan Meeting. Just over a year ago, African Penguins in the wild were uplisted by the **International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** from **Endangered** to **Critically Endangered**: the need for human care support for these plummeting populations has never been greater; that's where we come in! The data and other information that we observe from the penguins living in our care help us work to address the many challenges that wild African Penguins are facing.



## ... And Abroad

With populations plummeting in the wild, Aviary Expert Kurt Hundgen journeyed to the island of Halifax alongside Chris Gaus, the Vice Chair of the **African Penguin SSP Program** to deploy 35 artificial nest burrows. African Penguins in the wild typically use layers of dried seabird guano to make their burrow nests, but due to unsustainable harvesting, penguins now often nest on the surface and success rates have plummeted. Thanks to the Jeniam Foundation for supporting this critical work.



## Wild Andean Condor Takes Flight

Valentino, the Andean Condor whose precarious health was helped in part by the Aviary's veterinary team, was successfully released in an area carefully selected to promote his survival and adaptation in Cajas National Park. With this release, Valentino is one of only nine previously injured condors to have been returned to their natural habitat in the last 46 years! He is also one of three Andean Condors in Ecuador to be tagged with a satellite tracker provided by the National Aviary, with the others being two juvenile females.

## Ivory-billed Woodpecker Search Continues

With the National Aviary's leadership and a small cadre of part-time, very dedicated and skilled volunteers, we have had a year-round presence at the site, with intensive studies completed during February through June, the species' presumed nesting season. We also located many examples of a rarely seen foraging method unique to the Ivorybill which involves extensive stripping of the bark from live trees to uncover the beetle larvae, a primary food of the woodpecker, living underneath.

# EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS



## The Waddle-ful World of Penguins

In addition to the African Penguin Master Planning session, the National Aviary spearheads a Public Engagement Initiative: a foundational, collaborative component of the **African Penguin SAFE program**. Our team's core mission is to raise public awareness regarding the Critically Endangered status of the African Penguin and to inspire conservation action among the vast audience that annually visits **AZA**-accredited facilities. To achieve this, we have successfully developed and implemented several strategic public outreach tools and created and disseminated comprehensive educational materials for use by formal and informal educators (*read on for programming examples!*). Stay tuned for more outreach results in 2026.

## Two New Shows: Countless Flying Feathers

Starting last Spring, visitors could jet-set on an international trek through national parks during our newest Immersive Bird Show: *Passport to Parks*, presented by AAA Travel. The show tours world wonders while meeting the bird and mammal species that call them home, alongside two National Aviary experts!

The Holiday-only show, *Jingle Bell Flock*, had sell out audiences over the months of November and December, highlighting the natural abilities of birds like the American Crow and Hooded Vulture.

## Community Outreach in Action

- **631 students** participated in CyBIRD distance learning programs in 2025, a 42% increase from 2024.
- **7,245** students and community members received free services, many with multiple free experiences.
- **347 children** and **28 teachers and chaperones** enjoyed the Aviary's flagship education program, *One Northside For Every Student*, which serves under-resourced second graders through a multi-visit, yearlong program with **8 schools**.
- **13,633 students and adults** were educated through offsite outreaches in Allegheny, Washington, Greene, and surrounding counties.
- **409 people** participated during our free *Sensory Friendly Time*, a sensory-inclusive experience designed for those with sensory processing needs.
- **Two** new education programs for kids were launched based on our work with the **African Penguin SAFE program** that will reach students pre-k-5.

# 2025 EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

### Gentlemen's Night Out on the North Shore

Held in the PNC Champions Club at Acrisure Stadium and hosted by Michael Mascaro, Executive Vice President of Mascaro Construction Company and member of the National Aviary Board of Trustees. This popular evening raised a record-breaking \$222,000. Guests enjoyed Animal Ambassador encounters and a special VIP tour of the Pittsburgh Steelers locker room led by alumni Craig Bingham and Randy Grossman.



*Michael Mascaro, Executive Vice President, Mascaro Construction Company and Cheryl Tracy, Executive Director, National Aviary*

## MARCH

### Pints & Penguins

Our inaugural Pints & Penguins, hosted by the Friends of the Flock committee of emerging leaders, sold out at 400 guests and raised more than \$23,000. Attendees enjoyed an after-hours Aviary experience with craft brews, live music, penguin-themed activities, Animal Ambassador meet-and-greets, and bites from Atria's Specialty Catering.



*Night in the Tropics emcee Joe Klimchak and wife Jennifer*

## JULY

### Night in the Tropics: Evening in Paradise Presented by UPMC Health Plan

Nearly 1,200 guests joined us for one of Pittsburgh's favorite summer celebrations, raising more than \$380,000 to support the Aviary's education and conservation programs. The evening featured exceptional food and libations, a lively silent auction, entertainment, and appearances by our feathered ambassadors.

## SEPTEMBER

### Champagne Brunch: Birds & Bubbly Presented by 535media

Hosted by the Friends of the Flock committee, Champagne Brunch welcomed nearly 100 guests and raised \$15,000. Guests enjoyed brunch, mimosas, live entertainment, and an Animal Ambassador program highlighting the Aviary's conservation impact.

## NOVEMBER

### National Philanthropy Day Celebration

More than 100 supporters gathered to celebrate the donors, foundations, and corporate partners who sustain the National Aviary's programs, conservation work, veterinary care, and research. Guests enjoyed lunch and a special Animal Ambassador presentation recognizing the impact of philanthropy.

# INNOVATION TAKES FLIGHT



**Innovation Takes Flight** is the name of the transformative project underway that will significantly develop two connected campuses:

**Northside:** A new, state-of-the-art Veterinary Hospital providing advanced emergency, reproductive, and preventative care for birds of all sizes and life stages. The centralized facility will improve efficiency, elevate animal wellness, and support hands-on training for future avian care professionals, as well as provide visitor viewing windows for daily behind-the-scenes looks at our veterinary programs.

Also planned for the Northside campus is a complete renovation of the existing office building, as the Aviary's exponential growth over the past decade continues to attract additional staff and volunteers.

**Fox Chapel:** The *National Aviary S Kent Rockwell Conservation Center* will be the home of a new Avian Conservation Research Center, Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Center for Avian Preservation, Education Center, and International Resident Internship Center. This integrated campus will unite breeding and reintroduction, research, veterinary medicine, and education in one location, expanding our ability to protect **Threatened** and **Endangered** species.

Together, these two components form the \$22.4 million Innovation Takes Flight initiative, positioning the Aviary as a global leader in conservation and training the next generation of avian experts. The National Aviary has raised 50%, or \$11 million, towards its fundraising goal and expects to break ground in late 2026, pending reaching its fundraising goals.



*S. Kent Rockwell and Patricia Babyak; photo courtesy of TribLive/Shady Side Academy*

## S. Kent Rockwell and Patricia Babyak — A Visionary Plan

A friend and supporter of the National Aviary, Kent Rockwell learned of the Aviary's need for a space for a conservation center and veterinary teaching hospital. At once, his vision for the soon-to-be-vacated Shady Side Academy Middle School property in Fox Chapel took shape. In 2025, Kent and his partner Patricia Babyak announced that the SK Rockwell Conservancy would purchase the 35 acres of property in Fox Chapel and donate it to the National Aviary.

The partnership will create the *National Aviary S Kent Rockwell Conservation Center*, a pioneering, world-class avian conservation center that will revolutionize the future of avian veterinary care and the conservation of threatened and endangered bird species both in the U.S. and globally. In addition to the donation of the property, the SK Rockwell Conservancy is contributing an additional \$10 million to endow Rockwell Center operations.

S. Kent Rockwell's passion for wildlife and environmental protection, paired with his dedication to the Pittsburgh community and Shady Side Academy, underscores a deep commitment for making the world a better place.



*Northside Veterinary Hospital*



*National Aviary S Kent Rockwell Conservation Center building*

# DONOR SPOTLIGHTS



*Western PA School for Blind Children Field Trip to the National Aviary, made possible by Dr. Steven Belle*

## Dr. Steven Belle — Honoring Family, Nature, and Community

For Dr. Steven Belle, the National Aviary has always been a place where lifelong memories were made. As a child, Steven visited the Aviary regularly with his parents and siblings, discovering the beauty of birds, and forming a lasting connection with nature.

Steven would go on to build an extraordinary professional career. As a respected biostatistician in epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Belle led clinical trials and studies in areas including transplantation and Alzheimer's disease, making meaningful impact on the medical field. Yet, the Aviary remained a special place where he could reflect on family, nature, and the memories that shaped him.

Upon retiring in late 2025, Dr. Belle found a meaningful way to say "thank you" to his late parents, Ed and Betty, by naming a pair of Palawan Peacock Pheasants in their honor through the Aviary's Name-A-Bird program. He also named a Roseate Spoonbill, further deepening his connection to the birds and the place that meant so much to his family.

Dr. Belle's generosity extends beyond these symbolic gestures. He funded a field trip to the Aviary for the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children and an educational outreach program for the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf—helping to ensure that more students in our community can experience the wonder of birds and wildlife.

We are deeply grateful for his support, which helps the Aviary provide impactful education programs and uncompromised animal care.

And if all of that wasn't enough: Dr. Belle recently became a National Aviary Volunteer! So, the next time you're visiting the Aviary, keep an eye out to say "Hello!"



*National Aviary staff accepting a contribution from U.S. Steel at a Pittsburgh Penguins game*

## Avian Education in the Mon Valley

In 2025, the National Aviary deepened its commitment to conservation education through a powerful partnership with U.S. Steel, built upon the company's longstanding collaboration with the Pittsburgh Penguins and the sustainability-focused Penguins Pledge. **With a generous \$50,000 investment, U.S. Steel supported the development and implementation of avian education programming in eight schools across the Mon Valley.**

The initiative focused on third-grade classrooms that were already participating in the highly successful Reading Champions program coordinated by U.S. Steel and the Penguins. Aviary educators delivered customized, in-class presentations designed to complement existing curriculum while introducing students to the wonders of birds and their habitats. Each visit featured a live ambassador bird, creating an unforgettable experience that brought conservation concepts to life in a tangible, personal way.

To help students continue their discovery beyond the classroom visit, each participating class also received an age-appropriate birding guide designed especially for young readers.

While not a substitute for visiting the National Aviary, these in-school programs ensured access for students who might not otherwise encounter wildlife education firsthand. The program's success is measured not only by the hundreds of students reached, but by the lasting understanding they gain about stewardship of the natural world. Together, U.S. Steel, the Penguins organization, and the National Aviary are helping inspire the next generation of environmental leaders in the Mon Valley.

*The second-ever Critically Endangered Hooded Vulture to hatch at the National Aviary; he was diligently raised by his father.*



*Wookiee, our Linnaeus' Two-toed Sloth, making the slo-oo-ow journey across the Tropical Rainforest.*



*A juvenile Inca Tern calling to its parents for a midday snack. This juvenile hatched in June 2025; the first Inca Tern chick to hatch at the Aviary since the 2022 Wetlands habitat renovation!*



*The National Aviary welcomed a potential new mate for female Andean Condor, Lianni, in April: Chauvin, who came to us from another accredited zoo.*



# 2025 BY THE NUMBERS



## Conservation Statistics

- **156.56 hectares (386.87 acres)** of Amazon Rainforest protected in Ecuador via an **International Union for Conservation of Nature Netherlands (IUCN NL)** Land Acquisition Fund grant awarded to the National Aviary and Amaru Foundation.
- **100** artificial nest burrows installed for African Penguins on islands off the coast of Namibia, bringing the total to nearly **300**.



## Vet & Animal Care Statistics

- In 2025 we welcomed our **first Black Kite chick!** The only Black Kites in U.S. zoos are here at the National Aviary!
- **15** veterinary professionals were trained in the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, including **9** pre-veterinary students, **4** veterinary students, **1** veterinary technician student, and **1** wildlife veterinarian.

# 10-year

celebration for the One Northside For Every Student program

# 4,079

students and teachers served at no cost over the past decade



# 7,974

offsite outreaches to individuals



# 19

In 2025, the Aviary trained 19 interns across all departments



# 20,228

individuals joined in on **20 Special Event Days**

during the year such as Flamingo Fest that are free with admission



# 200+

children participated in summer and winter camps!



# 17,000

Pittsburgh Penguins hockey fans met African Penguins at PPG Paints Arena during 10 games of the season



Our social media channels saw extraordinary audience growth in 2025. Our Instagram channel saw a **22%** increase in followers, and we gained a nearly **9%** rise in Facebook 'friends.'



Our Garden Room saw more than **18,000** guests enjoy **233** private rental events.

# 2025 BY THE NUMBERS



**43** successful hatches from **15 species!**



**25,537** students that took a field trip to the Aviary or had an Aviary program at their school



**502** birds representing 147 species as of January 1, 2026



**12,967**  
Free or Discounted Admissions

through community-support programs such as RAD Pass, Tickets for Kids, and ACCESS Cards



**4.83**  
Average Rating

The National Aviary had an average 4.83 rating out of 5 from TripAdvisor and Google in 2025



**4,910**  
Member Households

**8g** LIGHTEST BIRD:  
Saipan Whiteye

**23lbs** HEAVIEST BIRD:  
Andean Condor



Congratulations in gratitude for our 2025 Volunteer of the Year, Doug Bruce! Doug volunteered at the National Aviary for the past eight years, serving more than **4,500 hours**. In 2025 alone, he volunteered more than **400 hours**. We are beyond thankful to Doug for his invaluable contributions to helping the Aviary fulfill its mission.

In 2025, we benefitted from **125** volunteers who provided **15,068** hours of service. According to the Do Good Institute, every hour of a volunteer's time is worth \$34.70, so for the Aviary, this translates to **\$532,159** value!

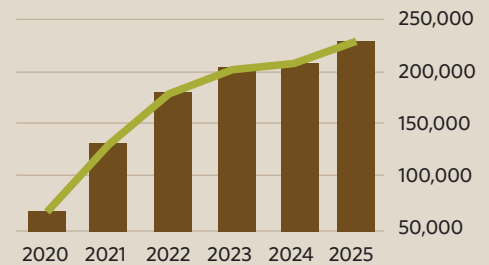
**Thank you to all National Aviary volunteers!**



## Soaring to New Heights in 2025

It is only thanks to the generosity of our community that we are able to achieve these impressive statistics. Imagine how far we can go with your continued support.

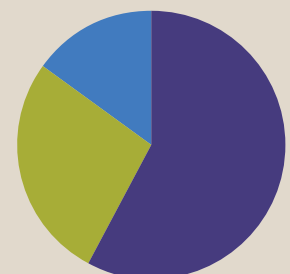
**228,741**  
Total Visitors



**\$10,223,471**  
2025 Operating Budget

## Funding Sources

Earned	58%
Contributed	27%
Government	15%



# NATIONAL AVIARY

## - 2025 DONORS -

### **MARTIAL EAGLE**

**(\$2,500+)**

Judith Albert  
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**(\$1,000-\$2,499)**

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The National Aviary values all donors and has made every attempt to accurately recognize each one. If you see an error or omission, please accept our apologies and contact the Philanthropy Department at [gregory.kottler@aviary.org](mailto:gregory.kottler@aviary.org) or 412-258-9465. Visit [aviary.org/about-us/annual-reports/](http://aviary.org/about-us/annual-reports/) to see a complete list of 2025 donors.

Cheryl and Rick Tracy  
Deborah Twardy  
Debra Usrey  
George Weir  
Brian and Leslie Williams  
Sandra Wittman  
Susan Zeff and Ray McGunigle  
Dennis and Pat Zerega

## **SCARLET MACAW** **(\$500-\$999)**

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Jennifer Bartek  
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Damien and Elaine Wissolik  
Stephen Yanity

## **FOUNDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT**

Adams Foundation, Inc.  
AEO Foundation  
Allegheny County Parks  
Allegheny County Parks Foundation  
Allegheny Regional Asset District  
America's Best Local Charities  
Anderson-Brownlee Charitable Fund  
Atkins Family Foundation  
Baird Foundation  
Steven H. Belle Charitable Fund  
Stacey Berg and Mary Brandt  
Charitable Fund  
BNY Mellon Community Impact

Helen Brach Foundation  
Jane Fox Bradley Fund of The Pittsburgh  
Foundation/Community Foundation of  
Westmoreland County  
Brookfield Zoo Chicago CBOT  
Endangered Species Fund  
Brooks Foundation through the PNC  
Charitable Trusts Grant Review  
Committee  
Jack Buncher Foundation  
The Burkholder Foundation  
The Bush-Haynes Family Fund  
Casey Family Charitable Fund of The  
Pittsburgh Foundation  
Caterpillar Foundation  
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Build with MD  
Butler Garden Club  
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Children's Museum of Pittsburgh  
Chipotle  
Cintas  
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Cleveland Brothers Equipment Company  
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