

Buttonwood Park Zoo's Harbor Seals Undergo Surgery



This means the seals will not be viewable by zoo guests during this estimated three week recovery period.

The Buttonwood Park Zoo's two Atlantic Harbor Seals, Yellow and Blue, age 32 and 12 respectively, underwent surgery last week to improve their vision and overall ophthalmic health. The surgeries involved removing vision impairing cataracts from the eyes of both seals and the repair of a luxated or fallen lens in one of Blue's eyes.

Unlike most mammals, seals' eyes contain differences to their corneas and lenses that allow them to see under water and above water. Therefore, eye care for seals requires a highly trained and specialized ophthalmologist. Seals also have unique breathing adaptations for deep diving that requires complex and precise anesthesia. Due to the complicated nature of these procedures, the Zoo brought in Dr. Carmen Colitiz, a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist, and Dr. James Bailey, a board certified veterinary anesthesiologist, whom are recognized as the country's leading pinniped ophthalmic veterinary team, to perform these surgeries.

Each surgery took over three hours to perform and the Zoo is

proud to report that both seals are doing well and recovering as expected from their procedures.

The post-surgery recovery for the seals will occur in the off-exhibit dedicated seal holding building adjacent to their habitat. This means the seals will not be viewable by zoo guests during this estimated three week recovery period.

Much research has been performed on the care and health of marine mammals in captivity and the Buttonwood Park Zoo has taken proactive measures to provide the best environment for its beloved Atlantic Harbor Seals. Recent improvements to the seal habitat include darkening the color of the pool along with the installation of a shade structure to reduce sunlight exposure and reflection, improvements to its operant conditioning training programs to allow for voluntary veterinary procedures by the seals, significant upgrades to its water filtration system, and switching their pool from fresh water to salt water. The Buttonwood Park Zoo will provide regular updates on Yellow and Blue during the recovery period.
