

New Bedford's Buttonwood Park Zoo enters new phase of reopening

The Buttonwood Park Zoo is continuing its slow and steady reopening after being closed for 12 weeks due to the ongoing global health crisis.

BPZ00 initially welcomed back visitors in early June, with limited capacity, five days a week. Beginning Monday, August 3, 2020 the Zoo will again be open on Mondays and Tuesdays, restoring original operating hours of seven days a week, throughout the rest of the summer.

"The Zoo is thrilled to expand our reopening schedule to include seven-day a week guest access," said BPZ00 Director Keith Lovett. "We have received wonderful guest feedback on how comfortable they feel in our reconfigured Zoo and by being open all week, we are able to accommodate more guests, while still being able to meet social distance guidance."

All guests, including BPZ00 members are still required to reserve tickets online prior to visiting the Zoo at bpzoo.org/visit-overview/. Additionally, admission passes are again available through participating libraries. Tickets are available to purchase at the front desk, but admission cannot be guaranteed due to capacity limitations.

All the initial health and safety guidelines put in place in the first phase of reopening are still present, including requiring protective face coverings for all guests over the age of five, with a strong recommendation of face coverings for those aged 2-5. Social distancing markers are still in place, as is the one-way traffic flow around the Zoo. Indoor exhibits remain closed. The Northwood's Gift Shop is operating an outdoor kiosk, and the Bear's Den Café is offering window

service. The BCSB Wildlife Carousel and the Baycoast Bank Black Bear Express remain closed.

“Although some of the Zoo’s buildings have remained closed based on State capacity requirements, the Zoo has been able to create several new experiences on our outdoor campus. These new experiences include increased “keeper chats” at our elephant habitat and other areas in the Zoo, the opening of new outdoor spaces for some of our birds and reptiles, and relocating the Zoo’s ever popular sloth pair, Bernardo and Sandy, to an outdoor Zoo habitat,” Lovett went on to say.

Zoo staff is also working on completely a new home for the Zoo’s Chilean pudu, the world’s smallest deer species. Native to Chile and Argentina, these animals have been living behind-the-scenes and will soon be visible to guests for the first time.

Guests will also be treated to a brand new StoryWalk® in August, when BPZ00 changes the book to “Planting a Rainbow” by Lois Ehlert. Just as in July, the StoryWalk® will be posted in four languages, English, Portuguese, K’iche and Spanish thanks to an ongoing collaboration with the New Bedford Birth – 3rd Partnership. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.

In addition to these enhancements to the guest experience, BPZ00 has re-invented a number of popular programs and services that are traditionally offered in the summer months, including birthday parties. A limited number of outdoor birthday parties are available and include food, a designated outdoor party space and an animal encounter. For more information, email privateevents@bpzoo.org.

BPZ00 is also offering a “Summer Staycations Series” on Mondays and Tuesdays for 6-10 year olds in August as an

alternative to the extremely popular ZooCrew summer camp. For more information about these programs, visit bpzoo.org/education-and-conservation/for-families/innovation-staycation/.

Another popular program returning this summer is an outdoor, socially distant version of "Creature Creations". For more information or to register, visit bpzoo.org/education-and-conservation/for-families/creature-creations/.