

# **New Bedford's Buttonwood Park Zoo is thrilled to introduce two new female harbor seals!**

"The Buttonwood Park Zoo is thrilled to introduce two new female harbor seals to the New Bedford community – Luna, age two, and Conway, age one. These new residents arrived in early November from the New York Aquarium in Brooklyn, NY, and have already bonded with long-time zoo resident, Blue.

Blue was born at BPZ00 in 2003 to Yellow, a female Atlantic harbor seal who passed away earlier this year, one week shy of her 40th birthday. Wanting to ensure companionship for Blue, as well as support the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan, Zoo leadership eagerly accepted the recommendation to bring Luna and Conway to BPZ00.

Both seals were introduced to Blue straight away, and they quickly acclimated to their new home.

"There were lots of nose-to-nose breath exchanges at first and then Luna immediately sat on Blue's back – who was not bothered by it in the least," said Kristy Kaeterle, BPZ00's head Zookeeper. "We knew then that this was going to go well!"



*Buttonwood Park Zoo photo.*

Kaeterle describes Conway, who had darker coloring and more obvious white markings, as a little seal with lots of personality. “She made herself at home immediately – she follows us around quite a bit and is very interested in the enrichment we offer. Luna is a little more reserved but is coming out of her shell more and more each day.”

Luna, who was born on the night of a lunar eclipse and named after Luna Park on Coney Island, has a similar appearance to Blue – lighter grey with darker spots. Conway was named after the late Dr. William Conway, an iconic conservationist who retired as the president and general director of the Wildlife Conservation Society, the organization that manages the Brooklyn Aquarium.

BPZ00 has cared for seals for over five decades and as a waterfront community, is dedicated to connecting visitors to the importance of marine mammal conservation.

“The team is excited to welcome the new harbor seals to our pod at the Buttonwood Park Zoo. We are grateful to have this opportunity to create new zoo families through partnerships with our accredited zoo neighbors and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). ” said Gary Lunsford, Zoo Director.

All three seals are currently visible in the seal habitat, located the middle of the Zoo.



*Buttonwood Park Zoo photo.*

The Buttonwood Park Zoo is located at 425 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford. The Zoo is open from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm, with the last admission at 3:15 pm. Ticket prices for non-New Bedford Residents are \$10 for adults/\$6 for children 3-12; Ticket prices for New Bedford Residents are \$7.50 for adults/\$4.50 for children 3-12. For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit [bpzoo.org](http://bpzoo.org).

**About Atlantic Harbor Seals**

Seals are part of a group of mammals called pinnipeds, which translates to "fin-footed". There are a total of 18 species in the Phocidae family. Harbor seals are part of the true seal family. All true seals have short forelimbs, or flippers. They also lack external ear flaps and instead have a small hole (opening to the ear canal) on either side of their head. Harbor seals live in temperate coastal habitats along the northern coasts of North America, Europe, and Asia. They weigh up to 285 pounds and measure up to 6 feet in length. In North America males are slightly larger than females, and seals in Alaska and the Pacific Ocean are generally larger than those found in the Atlantic Ocean. Harbor seals, like all marine mammals, are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and are currently listed as Least Concern according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)."-BP Zoo.