

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL AVIARY

The National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is America's only independent indoor non-profit aviary. It is also the largest aviary in the country, and the only one accorded honorary "National" status by the United States Congress. The Aviary is located in Pittsburgh's Northside, within Allegheny Commons West Park in Allegheny Centre. Since 1999, annual attendance has consistently topped 100,000.

The Aviary recently added a series of interactive encounters for visitors. Some of these being: Penguin Connection, a private encounter with an African Penguin, Penguin & Me, a penguin encounter for toddlers and parents, Wings of the World, a free-flight, outdoor bird show, and the bird-feeding adventure Lories & Friends. These programmes are enhanced by trainer talks, bird presentations, feedings and encounters that create an interactive experience for visitors.

600 plus birds representing more than 200 species are housed, many of which are threatened or endangered in the wild. The collection is one of the most diverse in North America (exceeding, for example, the esteemed National Zoo in Washington DC, and Niagara Falls Aviary).

The National Aviary also takes part in breeding programmes designed to increase the numbers of such endangered species as the Bali Mynah, *Leucopsar rothschildi*, which is nearly extinct in the wild, and the Red-crowned Crane, *Grus japonensis*. It is hoped habitat rehabilitation will allow some of the birds bred to be eventually reintroduced into the wild.

The National Aviary began is part of the Pittsburgh Aviary-Conservatory, built by the City in 1952, but Pittsburgh's dwindling urban tax revenue forced the city to cease funding in 1991.

Community leaders founded "Save The Aviary Inc." and began an intense public campaign to raise money and develop a plan to privatise the facility. The campaign was successful and Jill Sims, an active volunteer at the Aviary, became the first Chairperson of the organisation, and Dayton Baker the first Executive Director.

In January 2005 the National Aviary created the Department of Conservation and Field Research, which has so far mainly focused on bird restoration programmes in countries with a history of extreme environmental degradation.

In October 2008, a \$US23 million renovation and expansion of exhibition space was announced, the vast majority of which is to be paid for by private foundations.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia