

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 1, 2022

Contact: Anthony Puglisi
973-621-2542
Lauren T. Agnew
973-621-1590

**ESSEX COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIVINCENZO ANNOUNCES BIRD EXHIBITS
AT ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO WILL BE CLOSED
TO PROTECT ANIMALS FROM AVIAN INFLUENZA**

West Orange, NJ – Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. announced that all outdoor exhibits featuring birds at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo will promptly begin to close due to the emergence of the newly discovered highly pathogenic avian influenza. The exhibits are being closed as a precautionary measure to protect the birds from exposure to the influenza and to help stop the spread of the disease.

The virus was first detected in a non-commercial backyard flock of birds in Michigan. There have been no cases of the virus reported at Essex County Turtle Back Zoo, however, cases have recently been detected in wild bird populations in surrounding areas.

“As an accredited facility, the health and welfare of our animals is of paramount concern. Turtle Back Zoo is located along migratory routes for birds so it is important that we do all we can to prevent the birds in our care from getting infected. All of our birds that are featured in outdoor exhibits are being temporarily moved indoors out of an abundance of caution to protect them from harm,” DiVincenzo said. “Our dedicated staff is taking extreme measures to ensure all of our birds are well cared for while they are placed in quarantine,” he added.

“We pride ourselves on providing the highest level of care for these vulnerable species and that includes having contingency plans in place that allow us to be proactive during disease outbreaks and prevent any loss of the animals we and our guests value so dearly,” Essex County Turtle Back Zoo Director Dr. Jilian Fazio stated.

Exhibits affected include those featuring the flamingoes, bald eagles, condors and hawks. The opening of the seasonal aviary display in the Outback Adventure Exhibit will be delayed until further notice. The peacocks that are allowed to roam freely in the Zoo’s grounds also will be relocated to indoor accommodations. Birds in the Reptile House and the penguins in the Shores of Africa Exhibit will remain available for our guests to see because they are kept in enclosed exhibits and the birds are not exposed to outdoor conditions.

Essex County Turtle Back Zoo will remain open to the public. Hours are seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Because several exhibits will be closed, admission is being discounted to \$14 for adults and \$12 for children under 12 and senior citizens. Children younger than 2 receive free admission.

Essex County is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Zoological Association of American and American Humane.

###